

**Negotiating Nationhood through Images: The visual language of French
political cartoons from 2015 to 2017**

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Abstract

Particularly pertinent given the explosive power of political cartoons that has been witnessed in Europe in recent years, the central focus of this research is a decoding of the visual rhetoric of satirical media in France today. These images are analysed as rich sources of coded content pertaining to concepts of nationhood and identity, a pressing issue of contention given the current tumultuous socio-political climate in France. Conceived primarily through an argument of images and play of metaphor, these political ephemera are powerful sites of symbolic meaning-making, wherein 'elite' concepts of national identity may be challenged as well as strengthened. With this research, then, I hold that an exploration of the poetics of political imagery reveals enduring myths about France and its inhabitants, one that arguably forms part of a wider, nationwide dispute about citizenship that extends beyond formal, legal definitions. Within these connoted elite concepts of *Frenchness* and its corresponding marginalised *Other*, the signifying practices of satire, and its purpose and misuse, emerge as especially significant.

Remarkably central in renewed nationhood debates stoked by the current identity and ideological crisis felt in France, the satirical political cartoon often appears to represent an irreconcilability between French and Muslim values. In such a context, further, the customarily subversive deployment of satire in contemporary France, whilst 'punching up' at threats and intimidation, often simultaneously appears to align with elite, hegemonic scopical regimes and social positions, dislocating its proper societal function. For a postcolonial France with an increasingly fractured populace, the 'dangerous signs' of the satirical political cartoon, then, become disputed space for meaning-making, with its contemporary application, and the semiotic ideologies contained therein, entangled with new socio-political implications.

Summary of Research Questions, Methods and Conclusions

The central premise of this study concerns the visual rhetoric pertaining to French identity, or *Frenchness*, and its construction of a normative ideal, semiotically connoted in French political imagery. The ways in which nationhood, belonging and, conversely, exclusion, are signified in political imagery in French visual culture is my chief research question. To this end, I investigate persistent myths about French national identity, discernible in its visual discourse, and their socio-political implications for today's postcolonial, multicultural France. Lastly, I examine the contribution of satire, whose purpose is to redress power imbalance, to such debates. Through posing these questions, I aim to deconstruct dominant configurations of French nationhood, with particular regard to an apparent incompatibility of French and Muslim values and the latter's subsequent exclusion, often connoted therein.

Operating as case studies, the selected series of cartoons analysed here were collected between January 2015 and June 2017. The selection was made based on the presence of compelling analytical points that signify 'Frenchness', 'Otherness', 'belonging' and 'difference', through the transferal of signifieds onto a signifier, and are not intended to be deemed statistically representative. In order to locate the 'preferred meaning' of the polysemic images, I focus on the compositional and social modalities at the site of the image itself. Through the deployment of Barthesian and Greimassian semiotic analyses, alongside semiotic morphisms such as visual metaphor (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009; El Refaie 2003), the meaning of the political images is here decoded and interpreted. First, a literal, denotative reading of the image is conducted, followed by its deeper, connotative interpretation, whereby the symbolic transformation from denotative to connotative meaning is traced. Utilising Barthes's sign system (1977), I identified the signified and signifier in the image, before locating the source and target domains of the metaphor.

A number of findings and insights have been unearthed from this study, explored in detail in subsequent chapters. Firstly, the cultural, as well as socio-political,

significance of the public and private spheres has emerged particularly prominent. Across these domains, performativity and semiotic management are revealed to be critical for one's assimilation and inclusion. In conducting this research into the ways in which nationhood is performed and signified, then, the *requirement* of such a performance in order to belong has been emphasised.

A further noteworthy finding from this investigation has emerged from the ubiquitous and potent portrayals of Marianne and other nostalgic and romantic depictions of a shared, revolutionary historicity. Within the national narrative such figurative imagery endorses, exclusionary signifiers are evident. Alongside such nationhood mythologies, concurrent myths pertaining to the Muslim subject are evident, namely their supposed political cohesion and singularity of purpose. Shifting signifiers are also a key finding from this study, with conceptions of secularism often appearing to describe 'non-Muslim' rather than a uniform irreligiosity, and satire interpreted as either freedom of speech or incitement to hatred, depending, it would seem, on the identity of the content creator and of its target. Here we may see that, through its entanglement in such contested configurations, satire appears encumbered with new, problematic socio-political implications in contemporary, postcolonial France, where perceptions of power, threat and vulnerability often vary considerably.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 *'Every joke resembles a tiny revolution'*¹

As social critique that effects a 'punching up' from below at those in power, the potency of the satirical political cartoon is reflected, alongside that of the joke, in George Orwell's above observation. The role of this popular medium at times of social upheaval and its arguable contribution to sparking revolt is evident throughout French history. Through first poking fun at the hegemonic elite, the seeds for revolution may be planted, as a previously unchallenged and unquestioned authority is undermined in public discourse. As explored throughout this study, whether the outcome is to overthrow a king or a concept, the target's infallibility must first be contested and undermined, a capability the political cartoon exercises with aplomb.

Today in France, consistent with the current populist wave and rise in nationalism in Western Europe and the US, the crisis of identity is palpable. This identity crisis, ignited by slowing economic growth, rising unemployment and a continuing influx of immigrants, has sparked nationwide debate about *Frenchness* and citizenship, and is widely apparent in French media. A crucial tool for imagining and representing a nation, print media can function to enable separate individuals to conceive of themselves as a unified body, despite divergent interests and agendas. Through mediated discourse, they could 'think about themselves and...relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways' (Anderson 1991: 36). The capacity of media to characterise as well as to diffuse those characterisations (Blankenship and Kang 1991) is arguably more pertinent still in the readily accessible visual language of the political cartoon. Within these illustrations, disputes about citizenship and social hierarchy are negotiated through the use of metaphor in a figurative 'argument of images', and a communal or national identity thus envisioned. By utilizing the conventions of nuanced satirical media, the political cartoon, therefore, acts as a site wherein

¹ Orwell, S. and Angus, I., eds. 1970. *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell. Vol. 3, As I Please. 1943 - 1945.* Penguin.

hegemonic relations are contested and power subverted. Through these 'tiny revolutions' of subversion, metaphorical repudiations and other semiotic contestations, new guidelines are proffered regarding nationhood, citizenship and belonging. Alongside the 'us' that may be constructed and disseminated in this way, however, an 'other' is synchronously created.

The expression and assimilation of Islam is, perhaps not surprisingly, a pertinent issue in French identity today. Since the Revolution, French nationhood has been understood as a creation of the state, subsuming subnational identities, and composed, therefore, of individuals rather than communities. This historic integration of subnations and ethnic communities led to their delegitimation, creating a nation of undifferentiated members, underscoring the voluntarism aspect of French national identity and its emphasis on the adherence to Republican principles (Safran 1991). Additionally, a shift towards *laïcité*, or secularism, was evident during the Third Republic, further informing national identity, and was expounded following World War II. Ostensibly in opposition with this contract definition, Islam is seen by many to be more than a religion, and, further problematically, to frequently cross from the private to the public sphere. Arguing that Islamic culture threatens French secularism, freedom of expression and gender equality, Islam is argued as being at odds with central French values.

Yet, others are optimistic about the possibility of the full assimilation of Islam into French identity, pointing out, for instance, that the integration of French Catholics posed a similar challenge to the nation during the formation of the First Republic, where accepting and internalising the central political values were problematic. Furthermore, it is argued that Islam in France is increasingly becoming Westernized, as was the case for French Judaism (Safran 1991). Also, it is important to note the potentially differing perspectives of various subsets of the Islamic community in France, such as Harkis, converted Muslims, the devout and the secular, as well as the proliferation of a 'sociological' Islam, whereby categorisation refers to one's identity more than one's religious belief. Additionally, systems of integration, although currently overburdened, have

proved historically successful in the assimilation of various cultures, and may function as a line of defence against fanaticism. As former Minister of Defence, Jean-Pierre Chevenement, has argued, Islamic *intégrism* (fundamentalism) can be fought with *intégration* (integration) policies, carried out with cultural sensitivity.

In the meantime, however, there appears to exist an obstinate belief in the irreconcilability between Muslim and French values, as advocated by nationalist parties such as *Rassemblement National* (previously *le Front National*). Others in the French presidential elections have reiterated this nationalist sentiment. Francois Fillon of *Les Républicains*, a devout Catholic, proclaimed the incompatibility of Islam with French values, whereas, Catholics, Protestants and Jews ‘don’t denounce the values of the Republic,’ (Nowak & Branford 2017). Competing with this integrationist or assimilationist ‘*droit a la ressemblance*’ definition of Frenchness is the pluralist ‘*droit á la différence*’ (right to be different) perspective, whereby French identity ‘is compatible with supplementary or complementary identities, such as Breton or Armenian’ (Safran 1991: 226). However, the possibility of hyphenated identities, of *Franco-Maghrébins*, for instance, seems generally unsatisfactory, generating unease among the French populace as it implies ‘a double cultural loyalty’, as well as being at odds with a unifying concept of nationhood (Safran 1991: 234).

A difference-blind, integrationist concept of *Frenchness*, that has at its foundations the central republican tenets of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, as well as *laïcité*, then, is integral to the concept of an ‘elite’ configuration of national identity, ubiquitous and predominant in both popular and political discourse. As is observed throughout this study, however, disparate perspectives in public discourse and in party rhetoric are nonetheless similarly conceptualised as those of the ‘elite’, with Le Pen and RN unseating in their rhetoric a Parisian *uban elite* in place of a *popular elite*, whose conditions for membership as explicitly ascriptive are at odds with those of the liberal left. While membership of the ‘elite’ appears, then, to include people and parties from oppositional sides of the political divide, and of varying socioeconomic status, their commonality and

categorisation under the crown of 'elite' stems, in this study, from their relationship to satire. The 'elite' described here are privy to the semiotic signifying practices of satire, its logonomic system and scopic regime – they are, in effect, 'in on the joke' - and are not disproportionately targeted in its lampoons. Where they *are* the target of the satirical joke in mediated discourse such as *Hebdo*, it is arguably not the 'tiny dose of arsenic' that it is for other groups in French society, whose satirical lampooning is much more nuanced and problematic, as exemplified in many images in the counterpublic of Muslim self-representation imagery. Their targeting, in other words, may not reasonably be deemed part of a discursive, and insidious, ostracisation. In contemporary, postcolonial and multicultural France, the ruling elite is not the monarchy of the *Ancien Régime* nor the revolutionary people of the first French Republic whose revolt against the elite was a defining characteristic, but a populace for whom primarily its satirical jokes are intended, in a society wherein the Bourdieusian social capital (1987) of satire is especially productive. The 'elite' described here, therefore, are a group whose, albeit occasional, satirical targeting in publications such as *Charlie Hebdo* would in fact align with and reinforce, through the unproblematic propagation of the satire genre as evidence of freedom of speech rather than instrument with which to 'punch down', their concept of *Frenchness* and thereby reaffirm their sense of belonging and national identity, quite contrary to the satirical caricature of the Muslim in France. While both Renaud Camus and Emmanuel Carrère might well read *Hebdo*, with the former's 'Great Replacement' concept aligning more closely to the position of RN while the ideology of the latter is oriented perhaps to a leftist 'elite', their imagined concurrent reading of the provocative satirical publication is arguably what marks them both equally as 'elite', for the purpose of this investigation.

1.2 Visual Anthropology and a 'pictorial turn'

The foregrounding, and apparent reconceptualization, of the culture concept, as conveyed most explicitly in the rhetoric of the political right, posits this study firmly within the anthropologist's remit. With culture increasingly becoming the 'key semantic terrain' of political discourse (Benthall and Knight 1993: 2),

anthropology is a fitting discipline through which to conduct its analysis, envisioned by some to have a 'special authority in interpreting ethnic politics in the years ahead' (Benthall and Knight 1993: 1; Gellner 1993). Offering 'the clearest commitment to countering ethnocentrism that imbues all discourse about society', anthropology is well placed to interpret such culturally-based rhetoric of exclusion, and to perhaps 'help the other social sciences to be less subliminally propagandistic than they would otherwise be – even when they aim to be subversive' (Benthall and Knight 1993: 1). The arguable 'subliminal propaganda' of the visual metaphor and rhetoric of political cartoons is a central hypothesis of this study, appearing at times to convey 'culture' as a contemporary 'racism without race' (Stolcke 1995; Gilroy 2010). Aligning with the charge of anthropology regarding nationalism to 'expose the seductive simplicities which invoke primordial loyalties to ethnic origins' (Danforth 1993), then, this study seeks to deconstruct the nationalist sentiment and visual expression evident in contemporary French discourse. This study has been further informed and built on the influential research into nationalism and national identity, such as that of Fredrik Barth, in particular his rejection of ascriptive ethnic identity (1969) and Gellner's nations (1995; 2006).

Apparent in many traditional applications of visual anthropology, a distinction is made between the 'anthropological relevance' and the 'aesthetic composition' of an image, with a clear preference among its disciples for the former (Wright 1998; Banks and Morphy 1997; Grimshaw 2001; Hockings 1995; MacDougall 1998, 2006; Asch and Chagnon 1975). In an increasingly mediated world, however, the previously privileged standing of the 'anthropological' over the 'aesthetic' is being put into question, with growing support for their combined complimentary application in visual anthropology (Wright 1998), and a subsequent blurring of the boundaries between these two perspectives. Throughout this study, along with other emerging work in visual anthropology, the judgement of an image as 'anthropologically relevant' is based on its author's choices regarding the aesthetic composition of the piece. In interpreting the visual as an object of study in the field of visual anthropology, more than being

solely an ethnographic technique, then, I attempt to acknowledge its representational potency – its ‘relations of communication’ (Wright 1998: 19).

Comparative to the conventional classification of visual anthropology as ‘anthropology conducted visually’, such an analysis *of* the visual as opposed to *via* the visual in Western cultures has only relatively recently begun to garner serious attention in the social sciences (Wright 1998; Pink 2006; Schneider 2008; Thomas 1997). In exploring an increasingly mediated culture, a renewed value is placed on visual artefacts as cultural material in current investigations, leading some to revisit and build upon historical studies in visual anthropology. Inspired by the intrinsic value afforded to the visual in such seminal studies as Benedict’s and other’s ‘anthropology at a distance’, for example, whereby anthropologists interpreted visual material as cultural patterns (Benedict 1934, Mead and Métraux 1953), current studies identify an application of similar approaches to attend to more contemporary phenomena. This expanding field of visual anthropology, likely further influenced by Barthes’s ‘mythologies’ (1972) and his unveiling of a ‘complex world of hidden sign-systems’, encompasses new areas of research including news photography, home movies, advertising, industrial design, comic books and vernacular architecture (MacDougall 1997: 283). Further, in these burgeoning realms of visual theory, potential for new semiotic ideologies of visibility may be unearthed. The emergence of publics from, more than solely being denoted by, visual semiotic processes, invites reflexive explorations of visual theory, wherein theory itself as ideological, and its reciprocal relationship with social practices, may be acknowledged.

Decoding the visual culture of French political imagery falls under the remit of one of the two primary functions of visual anthropology, then. In apparent contrast to the aforementioned recording through visual means of cultural processes and the ‘fixing, through film and photography... of everyday action in a more concrete form’, this study purports to dematerialise ‘artefacts by recasting them as concepts embedded in systems of knowledge and action’ (Banks and Morphy 1997: 17). It is my intention with this study, therefore, alongside other contemporary work in visual anthropology, to locate and explore the inherent

value of the image, moving from the traditional application of visual anthropology 'as a mode of representation by the anthropologist to visual anthropology as a study of people's own visual worlds' (Banks and Morphy 1997: 13).

In postcolonial, multicultural societies such as that of France, contemporary artistic expression is 'closely engaged with the imaging of nationality and ethnicity' (Thomas 1997: 273), reflecting a national anxiety and an arguable identity crisis, as conveyed most notably in its frequently atavistic themes. As Nicholas Thomas contends:

'As marginal ethnicities struggle to discover or redefine themselves within nation-states, as nation-states struggle to retain sovereignty and coherence in an epoch marked by radical economic internationalisation and by the growth of supra-national quasi-states such as the European Community, it is surely evident that national collectivities are increasingly tenuous and provisional' (Thomas in Banks and Morphy 1997: 266).

Graphic satire, due to its potential to function 'as a site of identity formation and the production of nationalist discourses' (Nielson 2016: 104), is particularly pertinent in such mediated nationhood debates, with the immediacy with which the image can convey meaning clearly among its primary advantages. A notable preference for the visual, evident in the growing barrage of images throughout contemporary Western public discourse, has led to such societies being deemed ocularcentric (Jay 1993) with messages increasingly conveyed visually above verbally (Mitchell 2005). For some scholars, this heralds a 'pictorial turn' in academic debate, one that also acknowledges the centrality of the visual to an individual's psychic, as well as social, development². As will be discussed below, in line with this pictorial turn, the political cartoon emerges as active social

² Lacan's analysis of the mirror stage of human development demonstrates, for these scholars, the significance of the visual to one's sense of self (Lacan 1977). This psychoanalytical perspective further informs the 'pictorial turn' - applicable, in particular, in commercial spheres, whereby advertisements arguably construct a sense of their spectator's self (Williamson 1978).

agent, replete with its own agency, underscoring their operational import in debates and performances of nationhood and constructions of (Muslim) otherness.

Notwithstanding the tradition of cartooning in France and its contemporary ubiquity in French life, recent studies emphasise, further, the central role played by the visual in the construction of social life in Western societies (Rose 2001). Alongside various visual devices such as film, photography, advertisements, sculpture and so on, the political cartoon contributes to a rendering of 'the world in visual terms' (Rose 2001: 6). The primacy of the visual is corroborated by writers who describe the form as the most fundamental way through which 'most human beings come to know the world as it really is for them' (Berger 1972: 7). These images, however, portray the world from their own vantage, offering their own interpretation of an event, individual or concept.

Acknowledging this *visuality*, defined as 'how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein' (Foster 1988: ix) is central in this study. In each of the following chapters, this *visuality*, or scopic regime, of a selection of images is analysed and interpreted.

Acknowledging also the frequent correlation made in French and Western societies between seeing and knowing, political images of 'us' and 'other' are therefore additionally potent. As cartoons are, further, uniquely equipped with the capability to portray universals, as opposed to particulars, their study is exceptionally pertinent in an exploration of national identity constructions.

A significant art form in France, political cartoons are commonplace, displayed on the front page of newspapers at every *tabac* and street stall. However, their power to inspire and incense public opinion, although of historical record, has not much altered its misconception as 'epiphenomenal paraphernalia, rather than as... a single, integral system of signification' (Worcester 2007: 225).

Consequently, although there is much investigation into the political rhetoric of nationalism and identity, there is little research currently exploring the potency and socio-political implications of the political cartoon in such debates. Likewise, the crisis of the French nation-state and French national identity have been

explored in recent years (Callahan and Curtis 2008; Safran 1984, 1991; Wygant 1999; Nossiter 2017) without sufficient consideration given to the role of satirical media. With this study, I hope to address this current deficiency, a dearth that seems especially startling given the immediate, explosive power of cartoons witnessed in Europe, and their close association with nationhood and identity, seen in the cartoons themselves, in the violent reactions to them, as well as in the subsequent reactions to the reactions, such as the *Je Suis Charlie* movement.

1.3 Research Question, Aims, Objectives & Hypothesis

Through an investigation into the semiotic constructions and negotiations of French identity in political cartoons, I explore the ways in which the visual rhetoric connoting belonging in France reveals growing widespread tensions regarding Islam and immigration. The central premise of my research, therefore, is the rhetoric of French identity, or 'Frenchness', and its construction of the normative ideal in the social imaginary, semiotically connoted in French political imagery. The ways in which this construction is deployed to legitimise the exclusion of certain groups from the nationhood concept through their apparent deviation from this archetypal standard, as well as how this construction may be challenged to reimagine French nationhood, are central in this project. My research question, then, asks: what are the ways in which nationhood is connoted and disputed in political imagery in French visual culture? How is belonging, and conversely exclusion, signified in this popular medium? What myths about *Frenchness* persist in elite, liberal media, and what are the socio-political implications of these historical concepts of nationhood for a contemporary postcolonial, multicultural France? Finally, the ways in which satire is used, and misused, in such debates and constructions, are also attended to in this investigation. The customary revolutionary utilisation of satire to redress power imbalances is thereby questioned, with its application evaluated in the new context of contemporary France, whose elite and marginalised groups differ considerably from the historical contexts in which the device has previously been deployed.

The question of national identity is notoriously problematic, and its construction as a singular, unified concept is frequently contested. Multiple identities converge within the configuration of national identity, and so too it is for Muslim identity in France today. Deconstructing the hegemonic configurations of nationhood that may be expressed through, and contested by, visual rhetoric is, therefore, a primary objective of this research. The operation of satire within nationhood debates, further, and the ways in which the specific scopic regimes, depictive practices and conventions of the satirical device attend to these power structures and their contestations is central. From these deconstructions, the ways in which an apparent incompatibility of French and Muslim values is argued discursively, rather than legislatively or statutorily, are explored. Additionally, how counternarratives may be posed through similarly discursive methods is a further priority of this study, with particular attention paid to the political imagery created by French Muslims to redress their (mis)representation and regain control over their own representation.

Throughout this study, then, the relationship between dominant national identity and that of minority communities in France is explored. Attempts to reconcile subnational perspectives with those of hegemonic France, identified through the signifying practices of its visual culture, and what this means for concepts of French identity, is of interest to this research. To this end, the investigation will begin with a historical analysis of satire as part of the nation's revolutionary visual culture, an exploration that subsequently informs an analysis of contemporary *Frenchness* as conceived by secular French mainstream national press, retrieved during the recent presidential election campaign. In the subsequent chapters, it will also explore nationhood as depicted in satirical press and in the ensuing 'solidarity' imagery, before finally investigating minority and Muslim efforts to represent themselves in the media with images that challenge their widespread stereotypes.

My hypothesis, therefore, proposes that, through the deployment of such signifiers of nationhood, a portrait of the idealised French citizen emerges, from which, in turn, the construction of the Other may be discerned. In the current

context, the Other appears predominantly Muslim, whose exclusion is connoted through signifying practices. Further, I contend that, in their endeavours to dispute their elite representation through similarly discursive practices, the largely Muslim Other encounters a number of obstacles. Metaphorical construction is frequently used in the creation of such identity constructs, which, I suggest, frequently further serve to bolster elite narratives of identity and exclusion. Within the context of a postcolonial France, the satirical device arguably becomes, therefore, a contested site for meaning-making, entangled with new socio-political implications in its contemporary application.

1.4 Methods

Taking a semiotic approach at the site of the image itself, the selected images are read within their social context, an interpretation that is further supplemented by an intertextual reading, and a content analysis of the discourse in which they are embedded. Eschewing reflective and *intentio auctoris* (Eco 1990, 1992) approaches to representation, this study takes a constructivist approach, wherein the scopic system operates. Informing this interpretation, attention to *intentio operis* uncovers the embedded intention of the images themselves, producing, in turn, its 'model reader' (Eco 1979). The symbolic function of the image is in this way explored, discussed further in the following chapter, Methodology. I present each editorial image in this collection, therefore, as a visual semiotic text, or "a complex and multidimensional element, interwoven with its social, cultural, and interpretive reality" (Cian 2012: 57). Whilst predominantly taking a Barthian approach, the deployment of Greimas's semiotic square was also useful for interpreting the depiction of nationhood in certain case studies, as outlined below. Floch (2000, 2001) also provided analytical tools and semiotic models for the operational analysis of the images below. Any extended meaning derived from text within the image, or *relay* in Barthian terminology, as well as elaboration, issued through accompanying captions or titles for example, are analysed along with an image, anchoring its meaning from the otherwise 'floating chain of signifiers'. Notwithstanding the use of analysing these image-text relations, however, following Kress and van

Leeuwen (2006), I posit the image as a stand-alone communicative device, with its own complete 'grammar'.

In the diagram below, Barthes's 'myth', as a 'second-order semiological system' (1972: 123), is illustrated, whose categories and associations form the structure of my analyses. Building upon the denotative meaning expressed in the first order, signification - at the level of myth - is unveiled. In his exemplary analysis of the cover image of a Paris-Match publication, Barthes plots the deployment of knowledge, past, memory and ideas in the conception of France and its citizens along the terms of this semiological system (1972). The black youth in the image, saluting the tricolour with eyes uplifted, ultimately signifies that 'France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors' (Barthes 1972: 125). In this way, through myth-making, historicity is removed, with myth instead presented as 'truth' as well as 'natural'. Myth, as non-historical truth, then, becomes an ideology (Rose 2001), thereby naturalising hegemonic concepts of nationhood. In this study, French national identity may be similarly traced along these lines in the second-order semiological system, as illustrated in the second diagram below. Here, the conceptual grounds for the republican, assimilationist ideal of French nationhood, rather than the pluralist *droit à la différence* perspective, for instance, may be understood.

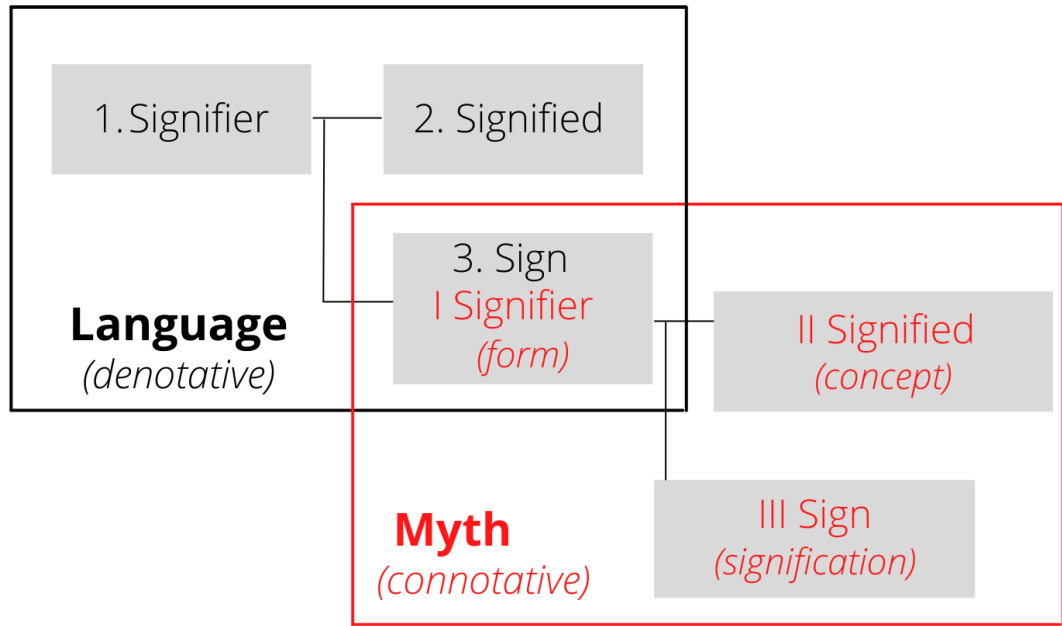


Figure 1. Second-order semiological system (Barthes, R. 1972)

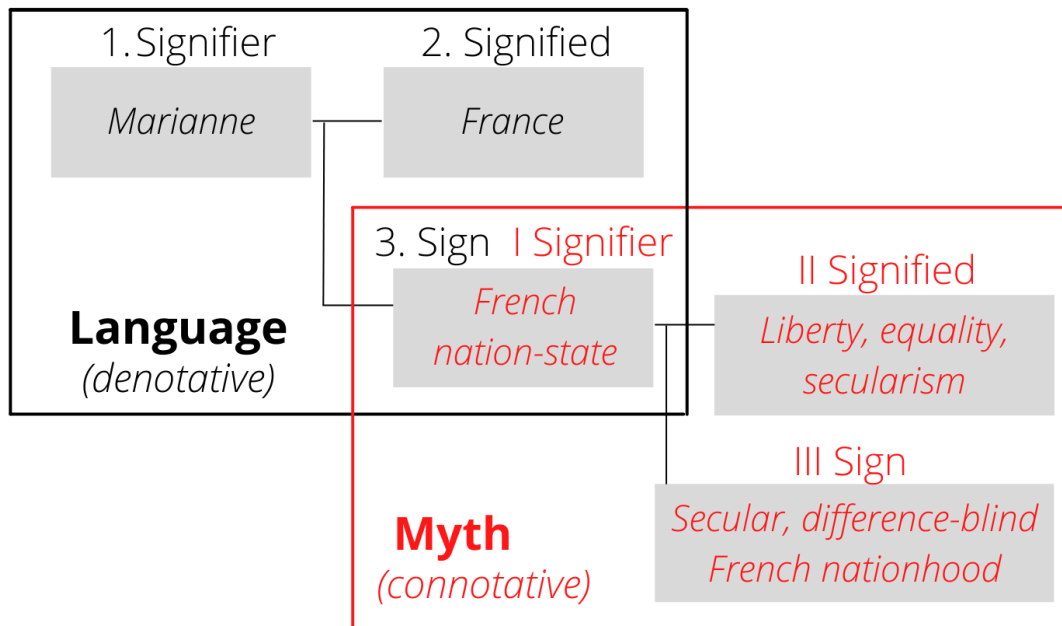


Figure 2. Barthes's second-order semiological system, illustrated

As introduced above, Greimas's semiotic square is also useful throughout this investigation, whereby a typology of intercategorical relations is formulated. In

this approach, two forms of binary relations are expressed: ‘the first, of the type A/\bar{A} , characterized by the resultant opposition of the presence and absence of a definite trait, and the second, of the type $A/\text{non-}A$, which manifests to some extent the same trait, present twice in different forms’ (Greimas and Courtés 1982: 308). The terms may then be plotted in the form of a square ($S_1, S_2, \bar{S}_1, \bar{S}_2$), with the complementary and contradictory relations between terms likewise represented, as illustrated below. Here, too, in the complementary relation between S_1 and \bar{S}_2 , as well as S_2 and \bar{S}_1 , implication is presented, whereby ‘the two primitive terms... appear as presupposed elements of the terms asserted’ (Greimas and Courtés 1982: 309).

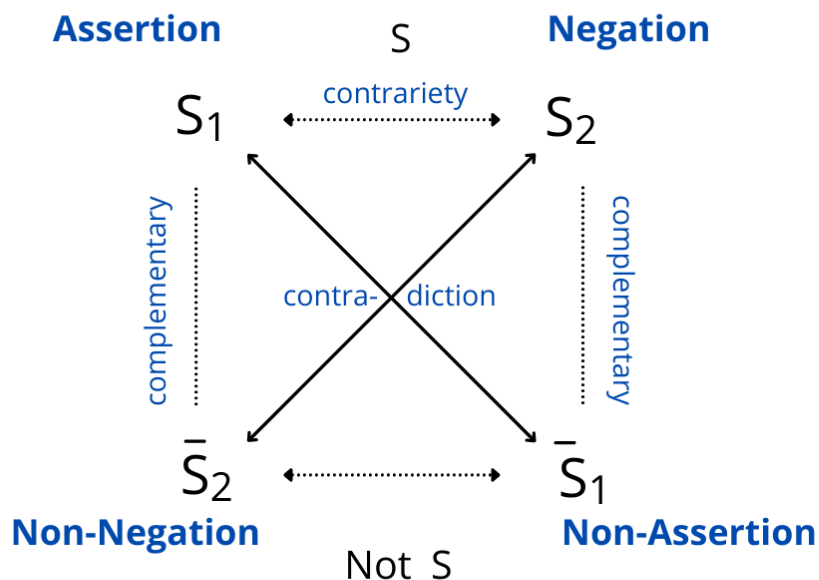


Figure 3. Semiotic square (Greimas, A.J. and J. Courtés 1982)

To illustrate, plotted in the semiotic square below are the terms and their relations generated from the two initial binary terms, masculine/feminine (Hébert 2006). In this diagram, a number of compound terms, or metaterms, are explored, demonstrating complementary and contradictory relations, as well as relations of contrariety. The first metaterm – *the complex term* - is comprised of S_1 and S_2 , and here combines Masculine and Feminine, from which classifications such as ‘androgyné’ or ‘hermaphrodite’ may be derived. The *neutral term* combines \bar{S}_2 and \bar{S}_1 , while the *positive deixis* and *negative deixis* are found through the combination of S_1 and \bar{S}_2 , and S_2 and \bar{S}_1 , respectively.

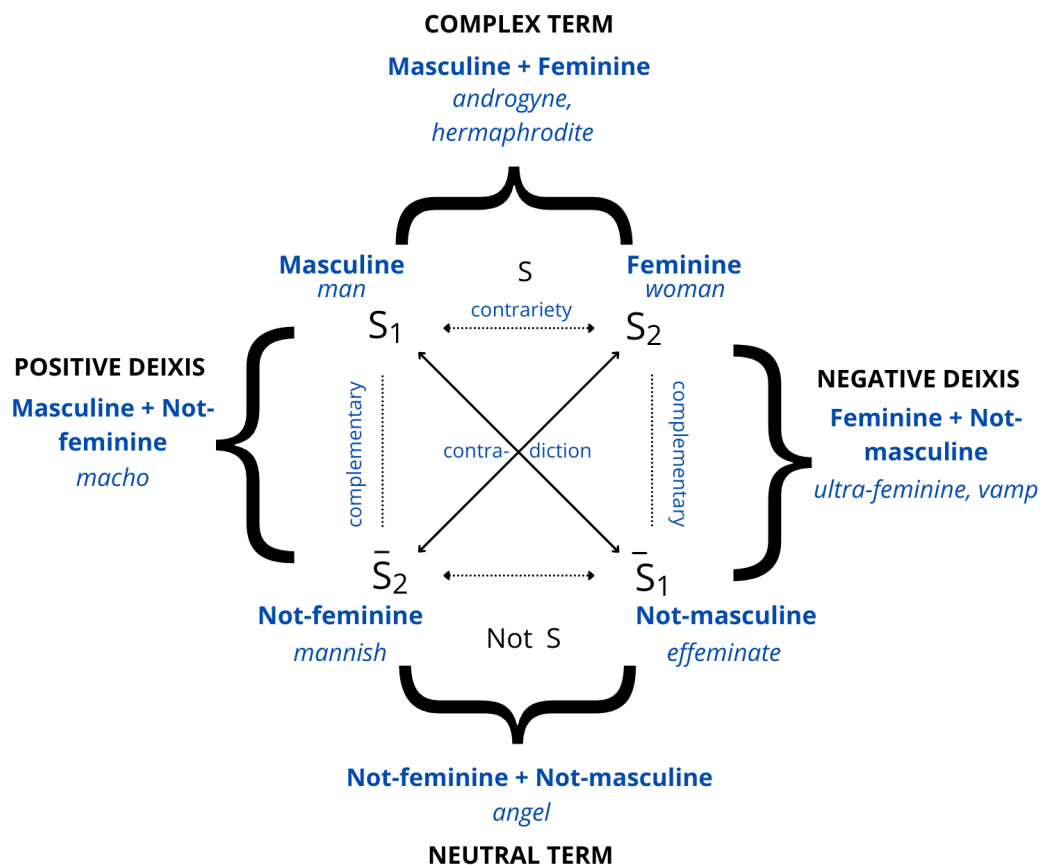


Figure 4. Greimas's semiotic square, illustrated

Through the application of the above methods, then, this study plots the transferral of signifieds portrayed in a political cartoon from signifiers onto the signified concept of French identity. In a similar vein, the ways in which concepts such as secularism, Christian, Muslim, non-European immigrants and *Frenchness* are depicted as well as contested by such signifiers as the flag, Marianne, a Delacroix painting and a pencil, for example, are of interest in this study. Through an investigation into the symbolism of political cartoons, selected signifiers such as these may support a dominant ideology or pose a challenge to it. The ways in which narrow definitions of French nationhood, congruent with the Republican secular ideal, are portrayed through the cartoon's symbolism, regardless of their author's intention (but not that of the text), will be analysed by these methods.

The ability of the political cartoon and caricature to connect disparate entities and thereby imbue it with new meaning, or unveil hidden meaning, is a defining characteristic of the medium. These central traits of the political cartoon and caricature, alongside their potency, will be further explored in the subsequent chapters, as outlined in their following synopses.

1.5 Chapter Synopses

Chapter 4. Historical Constructions of *Frenchness* in Political Cartoons

In Chapter 4, I look to the historical tradition of the political cartoon in France in order to historically contextualise the imagery in the subsequent analytical chapters. This chapter offers insight into the role that graphic art has played throughout French history and the extent of the cartooning tradition of France. The importance of cartooning in France, and the power of political imagery in French public discourse, is thereby explored, and is readily apparent in its ubiquity at times of political and social unrest, from the Revolution through to the country's modern history. In this chapter, we see that attempts to appeal to the French populace through political imagery are made from all factions. In the context of the French Revolution, the deployment of satire to lampoon the ruling elite and thereby challenge and undermine their authority was evident, an initial mocking renouncement that arguably contributed to the ensuing violence and revolt. Here, furthermore, the fundamental role of satire and caricature in the formation of the revolutionary character may be observed. Following on from this, a number of iconic images that appeared during the riots in May 1968 are presented and discussed, which, anchored by Situationist-influenced mottos such as 'Be young and shut up', offer a window into this later experience of French society in revolt.

Considered more dangerous than text, political art addresses 'passions' low chords of the heart' (Goldstein and Nedd 2015: 64), and so we see in Chapter 4 Historical Constructions, commensurate censorship legislation alternatively revoked and reinstated, and frequently defied by illustrators. Deemed more

sedition than text, the creators of such images were more harshly punished than those of equally critical text, due to their relative accessibility and immediacy to both the literate and non-literate populace. In this discussion, the sanctions imposed against French political cartoonists during times of societal tensions throughout the country's history are discussed, and are contrasted to the considerable freedoms of the press and of speech enjoyed by cartoonists in France today.

Throughout this research, furthermore, the recurring allegorical depiction of Marianne is also of note, to whom we are first introduced in Chapter 4. Across a range of visual material and throughout various epochs in French history, Marianne (or Liberty) captures the archetypal French citizen, replete with its ideal values and norms. Observing the deployment of the Marianne allegory and its metaphorical implications for national identity creates a serial history of this visual trope, one which traces a contemporary national identity narrative back to the French revolution. In this instance, my methodology follows Hunt's (1992) nonquantitative serial history, which focuses on a single central metaphor that encapsulates the nation's revolutionary ethos and renewed focus on national identity that emerges in the country's visual discourse, most notably at times of socio-political tension.

The popularity of this representation in the form of the 'bare-breasted freedom woman' was evident in the towns and villages throughout France whose statues and bells bore the name of Marianne (gouvernement.fr). More recently, the image of Marianne has been modelled on the features of French celebrities including Brigitte Bardot, Catherine Deneuve and Laetitia Casta (*ibid.*). 'The assimilation of the French Republic to La Marianne', *gouvernement* declares, 'is now a fact. Marianne has survived five republics and the vicissitudes of history, and her symbolic capacity has increased as the idea of the French Nation has become more firmly established' (*ibid.*). In this feminised national personification of the Republic, alongside the configuration of the ideal French citizen, the figure of who may be excluded from nationhood is also discerned. The ubiquitous personification of France as a semi-clothed Marianne appears

problematic for a group whose traditions typically including the veiling of women's bodies. The characteristics of the national identity of France as embodied in the figure of Marianne, then, are seemingly at direct odds with those of Islam, as signified by such clothing as the veil and the hijab. In much public discourse, a modernised, liberal French woman, as connoted by Marianne, is contrasted to the veiled bodies of the traditional Muslim woman. In this chapter, the visual rhetoric of this corporeal cultural symbolism that underscores an elite concept of nationhood and the ways it may be felt as further marginalising among Muslim groups in France is discussed.

In Chapter 4, *Historical Constructions of Frenchness in Political Cartoons*, then, the nation's long tradition of cartooning and of satire is explored and a number of key visual themes pertaining to nationhood are identified, to reappear throughout this investigation. Evident in this discussion, the origins of the visual referent system of contemporary political cartoons may be traced back to the French Revolution and beyond. By exploring the historical context of the use of this medium in France, a deeper understanding of the discursive struggles faced by non-native or non-secular (or rather, non-Christian) French, such as Muslims, may be gained. Insight into a rhetoric running throughout French and Western discourse that habitually frames Muslim marginalisation predominantly as a 'failed integration' (Fredette 2014: 3) on their part, may, further, be gleaned. Through a critical assessment of this frequent narrative of a 'failed integration', prominent throughout French political, media and intellectual discourse since the 1980s, the difficulty with which Muslims may convey their own diverse political claims, claims that may even suggest an adoption of French norms and values (ibid.), may be discerned.

Chapter 5. Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign

As may be observed, then, political cartoons function as a witness to societal and cultural attitudes and values in times of socio-political tension, a snap shot of a particular social climate at a point in time. Explored in Chapter 5, an analysis of imagery disseminated during the presidential elections in France in 2017,

attempts at identity-construction and nation-building, so prevalent throughout French historical political art, are revealed again in the imagery of contemporary French media. Here, the configuration of a rural 'heartlander', as embodiment of *Frenchness* comparable to the aforementioned Marianne, is particularly noteworthy. Identity construction in the contemporary French political imagery of cartoonist Plantu, of centre-left *Le Monde*, Chard's nativist imagery, as well as the political rhetoric of Le Pen and *Rassemblement National* (RN) (formerly, *Le Front National*), amongst others, will be discussed.

In this chapter, the propagation of an elite concept of nationhood is seen further supported at government level. This is illustrated by the priority given to the protection of elite national identity as government policy - with a notable precedent in postmodern France set in de Gaulle's government - through attempts made to preserve national sovereignty, influence and pride (Safran 1991). Four elite models of nationhood are here outlined, including 'a racial or ethnic view, a "single shared culture" view, a difference-blind abstract republicanism, and a critical republicanism', with only the last approach providing for the inclusion of Muslims as distinctly Muslim (Fredette 2014: 17). In this discussion, the image of French identity, as espoused throughout its mass media, emerges primarily as one of difference-blind republic nationhood, in contrast to other international approaches, such as the American multicultural model of citizenship, for instance. In these renewed debates over citizenship and belonging in France, the public identity of the Muslim and its apparent incompatibility with this elite concept of *Frenchness* may also be interpreted. Here, appeals for recognition of difference pose problems for proponents of a difference-blind republican model. In this abstract republicanism, the French Muslim is typically characterised as an 'unfit citizen', or 'inassimilable other' that threatens French national identity, due in part to their often high visibility of difference, and is a frequent stigmatising characterisation. Such doubts about the membership status of Muslims appear as 'a product of 1) contemporary fear generated by elite stereotypes of Muslims; and 2) timeless philosophical concerns rooted in French norms of citizenship' (Fredette 2014: 15).

Obstacles to challenge this elite discourse abound. Predominantly outside of the tools and techniques deployed by elites to direct public discourse, Muslims in France encounter obstacles to oppose their stereotypical representations. In this chapter, for instance, we see French periurban, working class housing projects linked to international jihadist networks in public discourse. The Paris attackers, whose identity as *banlieuesards* was a key component of the narrative, reaffirmed an earlier moral panic ignited by the radicalisation of young residents of the *banlieue* and their recruitment as fighters for Islamic State (Silverstein 2018). Supported by this narrative, which pointed to a failure of French authorities to dismantle jihadist networks, a call for a declaration of a state of emergency was heard, whereby an individual's civil liberties may be eschewed in favour of increased surveillance and detention (ibid.). An uptake in racial profiling and heightened suspicion of people due to their ethnicity, address or religion was effected, disproportionately targeting moderate Muslims, thereby further cementing their marginalised position in France.

Chapter 6. Êtes-Vous *Charlie*?

Similarly, the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices and at the kosher supermarket in Paris in 2015 are configured local instances of the “‘global war of terror” in Syria and Yemen’, alongside ‘the multiple commando raids, targeted assassinations, and drone strikes in which the French military and intelligence had participated’ (Silverstein 2018: 90-91). From this vantage, satirical press such as *Charlie Hebdo* and its images of Muhammad, besides their reiteration in arguments in support of the fundamental freedoms of speech and of the media, also often appear appropriated into Islamophobic discourse in the French post-colonial republic (Silverstein 2018), as will be explored in this chapter.

The place of Islam in France acquired renewed attention following the publication of these cartoons depicting Muhammad in *Charlie Hebdo*, and the subsequent attacks at its Paris offices by two al-Qaeda gunmen in January 2015. Through the creation and dissemination of the irreverent Muhammad cartoons in *Charlie Hebdo*, the performance of freedom of speech and of the press as an

intrinsic characteristic of French nationhood is played out. In these images, a liberal, progressive, 'Western' identity is performed and made visible. Difference is here embodied in the figure of Muhammad, further underscored in the violent reprisals of extremists acting in his name. This imagery, then, appears as a form of knowledge-making, one that conveys both the secular French citizen and the divergent foreign out-group, informing both self-knowledge and knowledge of the Other.

The irreverent humour of the popular French satirical publication, concurrently, became central in international debates concerning the advocacy of freedom of speech and of the press, on the one hand, and of religious tolerance on the other. Regarding the original publication of the Muhammad cartoons in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten*, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène, declared that the Danish government's somewhat muted response to the publication of the Muhammad cartoons in 2005 represented a 'lowering of the guard' (Diène 2006: 2), one, which Diène asserts, enabled a climate of religious intolerance to take hold across Europe.

In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, a heightened vilification of Islam and of Muslims became apparent, with frequent correlations drawn between the violent scenes at the *Hebdo* offices and moderate Islam, not unlike the 'enemy image' of Muslims and Arabs portrayed throughout American and foreign media following the September 11 attacks in New York (Merskin 2004). For some, the controversial cartoons of Muhammad in Western media formed part of a 'global post-September 11' discourse, wherein Muslim men were terrorists (Jørgensen 2012) and Islam barbaric. In this chapter, further metaphorical constructions connoting *Frenchness* and Otherness are circulated, a visual discourse in which Marianne again returns. Plantu's recreation of Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, published in response to the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in 2015, is illustrative of the key visual themes of the ensuing 'solidarity' imagery, in which the signification is clear: freedom of speech is inherently French, inferring that restrictions or limitations on this fundamental right are distinctly *unFrench*.

The application of the satirical device to propagate elite nationhood constructions, whose primary operation is as a tool to redress power imbalance, is here questioned.

Chapter 7. Countering Elite Depictions of *Frenchness*

This operation of satirical political imagery as a voice for the voiceless is further explored in Chapter 7, *Countering Elite Depictions of Frenchness*, wherein it may be seen to enact a 'weapon of the weak' (Scott 1985) in a struggle against dominant concepts of French identity, and of Muslims and Islam, in the media of Muslim-minority France. In this light, comparisons may be drawn between the self-representation imagery created by minority and marginalised segments of the French population and classic studies in visual anthropology exploring indigenous media production, such as its use as 'political action (as among the Kayapo), cultural reintegration and revival (as among the Inuit) or as a corrective to stereotyping, misrepresentation and denigration (as among many Native American groups)' (David MacDougall in Banks and Morphy 1997: 284; Faye Ginsberg in Banks and Ruby 2011). In this chapter, the voices of immigrants and Muslims are given primacy, with a number of responses to the elite normative ideal heard from Muslims in France. Seeking inclusion in this nationhood concept, other voices are heard in similarly discursively framed debates. Rather than an appeal to formal rights, these arguments recount the discursive exclusion experienced by Muslims in France.

In this chapter, the previously described wariness and uncertainty regarding the place of Islam and of Muslim immigrants in France, as illustrated in their increased stereotyping in public discourse and advanced further in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, is addressed in responding imagery. While the prohibition of conspicuous religious symbols in a number of state institutions in France are ostensibly neutral and apply to all religions, they often disproportionately impact Muslims. Similarly, related laws pertaining to secularism, such as banning prayer on the street affects Muslims more than other groups due to the scarcity of Islamic prayer rooms and mosques in France

(Fredette 2014). The marginalisation of Muslims in France, then, is effected more so in discourse than in law, since their exclusion is nowhere legally sanctioned. In order to dispute their exclusion from elite citizenship, then, the legal ‘strategy that frequently has been the backbone of political counternarratives made by disfavoured groups’ (7) is annulled. Instead, beyond this acquisition of rights and political equality through formal, legal methods, their discursive exclusion, engendered further through misrepresentation such as stereotyping, in elite public discourse, requires their similarly discursive repudiations, and are evident in the imagery discussed in this chapter.

In this discussion, the various ways in which Muslims in France attempt to create a public identity that counters that created for them, as disseminated in mediated political discourse, whilst contesting narrow concepts of nationhood, is explored. One such counter-identity offers an alternative view of citizenship in its challenge of the abstract, difference-blind republican model espoused throughout elite discourse, proffering in its place a ‘multiplicity of identity’ (Fredette 2014: 18). For some French Muslims in particular, an acknowledgement of their ‘various affiliations, such as “French” and “Muslim”, in a nonhierarchical way’, as well as the compatibility of these affiliations (18), informs their concept of nationhood, and is evident in the imagery discussed here. From this perspective, the practical application of the republican ideal of *laïcité* is arguably not denounced but reconfigured. Acknowledging that this central republican tenet allows for the freedom to practice one’s religion, provided that they do not proselytise, the question as to whether the visibility of religious symbols may be considered proselytising is raised by these groups (Fredette 2014), and is a central and contentious issue in such debates.

Throughout this chapter, then, elite images of French Muslims are contrasted against their depictions of themselves. The creation of counter-identities and counter-narratives faces significant challenges, however, not least their closer discursive reach than that of elite media. These challenges, subtle but pervasive, faced by Muslims in France regarding their inclusion and belonging are clear in imagery analysed in this chapter. Also among these challenges is the ubiquitous

elite depiction of a homogenous Muslim population, with a unified self-identity and common aspirations and perceptions of citizenship, as well as a cohesive agenda primarily concerned with religion. However, as noted in this chapter, the cultural affiliations, political and social goals, as well as beliefs and opinions within this group are multiple and diverse, and, inevitably, at times conflictual. Rather than describing solely the religious aspects of Muslim identity and the challenges they face in national inclusion, parallel identities such as gender, sexuality, race and socio-economic status further shape their experience in France, and further convey their internal variation. Even equipped with access to the same platforms of elite discourse, then, the Muslim population of France would have difficulty composing a unified public identity and counter-narrative. Through these mediated reconstructions of Islam and the Muslim, as analysed in this chapter, then, the projection of Muslim subjectivities is arguably countered and reimaged in a figurative 'war of images' (Gruzinski 1990; Fernandez 1991).

1.6 Closing remarks

Reifying collective identity and experience, satire appears as 'the graphic metaphor for revolutionary protest' (Boime 1992: 256), nowhere more so than in France where it has been utilised by elites and non-elites alike. Its revolutionary potency and deployment is due, in part, to its apparent immediacy. Lacking the affectation or elaboration that may encumber more classical artworks, the caricature favours spontaneity without concern for 'taste' or refinement. This defining characteristic further supports its suitability for the expression of revolution and its subsequent position at the forefront of a society in revolt. Alongside this revolutionary application, the political cartoon bears witness to the daily, lived experience of the topical socio-political concerns of a certain time and place. Through this ironic, enduring characteristic of the ostensibly ephemeral political cartoon, the viewer is granted 'a window into the past of exquisite nuance that written accounts or other art forms rarely equal' (Klahr 2011: 558). This visual record put forth by graphic art such as caricature and the political cartoon offers insight into French life and society, both

contemporary and historical, as well as concepts of *Frenchness* and Otherness. The stories told through images over time have constructed an enduring national identity, bolstered by its historical configurations. Rather than reflecting a world already in existence, however, these images are arguably world-making, with such visual representations of national identity therefore requiring close evaluation.

The ways in which political imagery attempts to alternately support and oppose or undermine hegemonic and elite concepts of nationhood and the 'ideal citizen' - as well as to mobilise its readership - through the deployment of identity markers and other meaningful signs, are investigated throughout this study. Through political imagery, the archetypal French citizen is redefined and constructed, an ideal citizen for whom the new republican values of liberty, equality and fraternity appear central. Alongside these ideals, the spirit of revolution and resistance resides as a core characteristic of French nationhood. An ancient echo of the social upheaval of the French revolution, its key visual themes have reappeared in recent years, reimagined in modern portrayals of Marianne for a contemporary audience. The present-day socio-political context for her reappearance, however, compels the question of belonging, asking who is included in this conception of national identity, who is not, and on what grounds. The contested position of French Muslims has been a particular focal point in these on-going debates over national identity and belonging. Discussions pertaining to the membership status of Muslims in France have become increasingly prominent following the arrival of a seemingly homogenous immigrant cohort, whose cultural origins are often highly visible in the public sphere. This development has stoked heated discussion about how *Frenchness* should be defined today. For many, the definition could be found in the 'Republican' concept, with a willingness to assimilate, regardless of ethnicity or skin colour, appearing to be of particular significance (Raissiguier 2010), alongside the republican ideals of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*.

The disputes over nationhood, identity and belonging have played out, often violently, in a very different France to that of the Revolution, at the Paris offices

of *Charlie Hebdo*, at the Bataclan, at the *supermarché*, and across the country's geographically and socially peripheral *banlieues* – disputes in which the representational labour of political imagery has frequently appeared central. In this study, the struggle for a coherent national narrative and identity is explored and unpacked, as told through its mediated political cartoons – imagery that serves as cultural artefacts illustrating what it means to be French today.

Chapter 2. Methodology

Through the deployment of semiotic analyses (Barthes 1977; de Saussure 2011; Floch 2000, 2001), Greimas's semiotic square and semiotic morphisms such as visual metaphor (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009), whilst attending to the *intentio operis* of the graphic texts (Eco 1990, 1992), the meaning of a selection of exemplary political images is here decoded and assessed. Central to this study are the rhetorical devices deployed in these political cartoons through which groups are included and excluded in definitions of *Frenchness*. To this end, a literal, denotative 'reading' of the image is first conducted, followed by its deeper, non-literal, connotative evaluation, wherein pictorial devices such as that of visual metaphor are deconstructed. In order to examine the semiotic meanings of an image, the connotative and denotative functions of signs and symbols are explored. In deciphering the ways through which the sign may be imbued with meaning in the image, then, the symbolic transformation from the denotative into the connotative is tracked. Barthes's semiotic analysis (1977), supported by Greimas's semiotic square, will be used to analyse the images, alongside Floch's semiotic models pertaining to visual narrativity (2000, 2001) and El Refaie's visual metaphor 'grammar' (2003), to interpret the metaphors contained therein. Informing these primary research methods, Peircean theory provides ancillary support for my analyses.

2.1 Methods

Due to its highly qualitative subject, this study upholds a subjective, interpretivist approach, whilst applying the Paris School semiotic theory of Barthes and Greimas to the subject, alongside a contextual orientation. While I present in this study an argument for my interpretation of the cartoons, following Hall, I acknowledge the absence of a singular, or fixed, 'true' meaning of an image (2003). Concurrently, the 'intention of the text' must be unearthed for its meaningful interpretation, alongside its cooperative interplay with my own scopic regimes. My approach, therefore, acknowledges Eco's consideration of the text as one that 'is enriched by the various interpretations it underwent along

the centuries and, while considering the dialectics between textual devices and the horizon of expectations of the readers, does not deny that every interpretation can and must be compared with the textual object and with the *intentio operis*' (1990: 52). The graphic text, then, both encompasses all possible readings *and* simultaneously bounds its interpretation, whilst also necessitating the cooperative, generative activity of its reader. The expectation, then, of the text for its reader is to complete the message it 'intends' to convey, thereby assuming a familiarity and, by extension, an intimacy, between text and reader that we will see again later with regard to satire. Such expectations of the graphic text and its presupposed intimacies arguably reveal the *intentio operis* of the image, bolstering my later arguments for its textual strategies.

In exploring this cooperative relationship between the text and its interpreter, scopic regimes and their temporality are here of note. Against the backdrop of increasingly ocular-dominant post-industrial societies, noted in the 'visual turn', the interpretive instruction such regimes provide for the reader powerfully shapes individual and social interpretation. With widespread and instant dissemination of political imagery across country borders and cultural boundaries, these political imagery and the frequent clash of their encumbant 'Western' scopic regimes with those of the various and diverse cultures they reach make this a timely and contemporary investigation. Viewers' differing readings and their active interpretations of an image, alongside my own, may be due to a range of contributory factors, such as the current socio-political context in which the image appears, its relation to other contemporary texts, as well as the viewer's past experience, their current, specific needs and personal interests, and so on (Feinstein 1982). As explored below, conflicting semiotic ideologies also account for variations in interpretations, most vividly conveyed in the heated debates surrounding the Mohammad cartoon controversy. Furthermore, following Eco's *intentio operis* concept (1992, 1990), the seeds for such wildly diverging interpretations arguably lie dormant in the graphic text - unearthed, favoured and subsequently encouraged by each reader.

Confronted with myriad 'intended' meanings in an image, the analyst, then, must ensure that their interpretation is 'referentially adequate' (Pepper 1945: 6). My intention in this study, then, is to locate and analyse the 'preferred meaning' of frequently polysemic signs (Hall 1980: 134), in order to reveal the graphic text's *intentio operis* (Eco 1990, 1992). Specifically, I have focused on the compositional and social modalities at the site of the cartoon itself in order to discern this preferred meaning and decipher its coding. Prompted, to a large extent, by the effects of the depictions of Muhammad in Western media and the strikingly potent symbolism they evidently contained, I identified the site of the image itself as being a particularly powerful one, and so this research is centred here, above the alternative sites of production and reception. In line, then, with a Barthian semiotic tradition in related analytical literature, I determined that a close investigation of the image would be well placed at this site in order to best understand the meaning contained therein. Through the application of a semiotic methodology, the ways in which social difference is created, in relation to debates surrounding nationhood in France, may be discerned.

With its roots in Lévi-Strauss's classificatory systems, whereby the analogical relationships between paired signifiers generate systems of meaning (1970, 1972), Greimas's semiotic square may be similarly deployed to uncover organising cultural practices and prevailing myths. As Greimas describes (1989), the semiotic square may be understood as a metalinguistic representation of the elementary structure of signification, with meaning defined first as translation or transcoding, followed by orientation or intentionality. In this study, following the terms of the semiotic square, I plot Term A and Term B (S_1 and S_2) to denote the explicit in-group and out-group in elite concepts of French nationhood. From the dilemma of national identity in contemporary multicultural France, the 'tetralemma' of *Frenchness* is thereby outlined in the semiotic square. The capacity of the semiotic square to unblock conceptual paralysis by 'highlighting ways in which cultural ideologies curtail imagination and oppress open inquiry, usually without our conscious realization' (Pelkey 2017a, 2017b: 221; Jameson 1987), is of particular benefit to this study.

By deploying the square in the visual analyses of this study, ‘ideological closures that inform the deep structure’ (Pelkey 2017b: 253) of French (and Western) culture and social systems are therefore discernible. For instance, when applied specifically to concepts of ‘French’ and ‘Muslim’, respectively S_1 and S_2 , as discussed below, the double bind in which many French Muslim and Muslim immigrants find themselves in their efforts to assimilate is illustrated. By operating the semiotic square to this end, false or misleading polarised dichotomies of *Frenchness* and *Muslimness* may be uncovered, thereby avoiding the ideological trap of nativism and demarcated Us/Other categories, enabling a response to its narrow, elite concepts of nationhood, more fitting for a multicultural world.

Unearthing the stories told by the images below, their narrative identity unfolds, telling too of the ways in which its social positions are negotiated (Floch 2000, 2001). Following Ricœur’s concept of narrative identity, wherein a dialectic is enacted between ‘character’ and ‘truth towards others’ [*parole tenue*], ‘the self looks to the level of the whole life for its identity’ (Floch 2000: 30). A temporal mediation between character and *parole tenue*, for Ricœur, narrative identity thereby constitutes a negotiation between the pole of “character”, wherein the constant *idem* and the changing *ipse* collide, and that of “preserving oneself” (2000). Throughout the political imagery analysed in this study, stories – never ethically neutral - are told of *Frenchness* whose protagonists are primarily ‘us’ and ‘them’. Props such as language, education, irreligiousness (or religious affiliation), behavioural habits and attire are subsequently at their disposal, semio-narrative components deployed in such a way as to identify each character and their social position. The narrative status and dimension of these various elements are illustrated in various graphic instances in the discussions below.

Alongside these methods, by being at once an analyst and a general viewer, my own immediate response to a political cartoon also guided my choice and interpretation of the images, bounded by the graphic text’s uncovered *intentio operis*, an approach supported by a number of other visual culture researchers

(Forceville 2002; Hall 2003; Rose 2001). Following common semiotic approaches to visual content (Rose 2001), and with consideration of my own potential scopical regimes throughout, the series of cartoons in this study was chosen on the basis of their inclusion of compelling analytical points signifying 'Frenchness', 'Otherness', belonging and difference, and are not intended to be deemed statistically representative. These analytical points include an identified transference of signifieds onto a signifier, specifically French and *un*French onto such signifiers as the Phrygian cap or the hijab. In this way, the signifieds attached to the Phrygian cap, for instance, such as liberty, primarily, may be transposed to a signified *Frenchness*, in the same way that a connoted 'non-authentic French' may be inferred from a hijab signifier.

This study, therefore, serves as a case study of a selected series of cartoons, collected between January 2015 and June 2017. Bolstering this ethnographic period, I conducted research into the visual culture in which French political cartoons are embedded at my fieldsite of Paris from September to December 2016, as discussed below. In Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign, I conduct a case study analysis of the imagery of *Le Monde* and *l'Express* illustrator, Plantu, contrasted and further contextualized with the political rhetoric of *Rassemblement national* (RN) as well as that of Françoise Pichard (or Chard), for the right-wing publication *Rivarol*, that were collected during the campaigning for the 2017 presidential elections. Subsequently, Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, is an investigation of the imagery that was created and disseminated in the aftermath of the attacks at the publication's office in Paris in 2015, referred to in this study as 'solidarity' cartoons. Here, Plantu's imagery is read alongside international responses, thereby contributing to a dialogic interplay between internal and external concepts of national identity. Finally, in Chapter 7, Countering Elite Depictions of *Frenchness*, in response to the depiction of nationhood espoused by Plantu and liberal, so-called elite press, the visual discourse of *Oumma* serves as a contrasting case study. Strategies of public identity activism and efforts to counter their elite representation, such as through trans-coding, are here explored.

In line with Rose (2001), I sought to provide an analysis of the visual that considers 'the cultural significance, social practices and power relations in which it is embedded', as well as the power relations that may be expressed through, and challenged by, visual rhetoric (3). These power relations may be seen in the ways in which social difference is conveyed and naturalised. Through these images, then, the construction of artificial social categories may be evident, arguing against a supposed 'natural' classification of social groups, which also, in turn, further informs processes of opposition. In these processes, the clear depiction of each opposing group is reliant on their symbolic construction, a tool required for the intended interpretation of the image, underscoring the import of such a study in debates on nationhood and connoted belonging.

2.2 Intertextuality

Rather than offering to the viewer a neutral view of the world, then, an image is acknowledged as 'never innocent', conveying inherently its own interpretation of reality (Rose 2001), as well as its *intentio* (Eco 1992). In line with other visual discourse, the political cartoon may similarly enact a symbolic transformation, through which the viewer attempts to both comprehend *and* create meaning. The meaning of signifiers included on the connotative level, unlike denotative referents, may be heuristic rather than conventional, socially established and universally agreed upon, and so are 'created' by the viewers, based on a relational interplay between signs within and without the image, as well as other factors. These connotative signs, for Barthes, become naturalised myths whereby normative bourgeois ideology is conveyed as common sense, with contingency appearing eternal (Barthes 1972). The bearing of the image recipient's identity, furthermore, as well as the interpretation of the relation between two visual elements in ways other than as metaphorical, such as in 'contrast, intimacy, balance, mutual attraction' (Forceville 2002b: 16), may result in this unintended interpretation of an image³.

³ For more on the cognitive, social and personal impact on metaphor creation, see Daniel Serig's 'A Conceptual Structure of Visual Metaphor' (2006).

Signs chosen from the common visual lexicon, deployed and manipulated to create meaning, therefore, may give rise to a plurality of interpretations. As described by El Refaie, '(m)eaning is never simply inherent in a (visual) text, but it is jointly negotiated by producers and viewers' (2003: 81), with the ultimate meaning taken from the image by the viewer depending on a range of factors, such as personal experience, values and attitudes, as well as the position of the image in relation to other content. In publishing their artwork, the cartoonist assumes the viewer to have a certain knowledge or understanding of the person, object or concept depicted in the image in order to identify its intended meaning. This knowledge, however, is specific to 'an individual speaker, in a specific setting, in a particular culture, in a given historical period' (Pollio 1996). As El Refaie (2003) further expounds, the metaphors and symbolism inherent in political cartoons, may therefore be seen as 'indicators of the culturally shared preoccupations of the moment' (84). To conduct their study, then, the researcher looks for a potential or preferred meaning, without the assumption that all viewers will take precisely the same reading (2003).

For this reason, I looked, too, to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic context of the cartoon - that is, the visual and textual content surrounding the image in the publication, as well as related content broadcast in other news media. Since the ways in which the viewer comprehends and interprets the image may be affected by the social and political environment from which the image emerges, my interpretation was further guided by those relevant issues pertinent at the time of the image's publication. An exploration of these concurrent issues, alongside the historical significance of the depicted actors, objects or concepts, allowed for an intertextuality in my analysis. The most meaningful intertextual content was deemed to be that of images relaying a similar, recurring topic, namely that of national identity and 'otherness'. This syntagmatic relationship across images was deemed to be most significant for contextualisation, above the physical location of images, and it is through contextualisation in this way that an argument of images may be seen. A number of images that were relevant for my interpretation of the selected cartoons are included in the Appendix, for reference. Further guiding my interpretation is the anchorage of meaning

provided by both the text included in the image as well as the captions at times found underneath (Barthes 1977). Since an image may convey multiple meanings, this 'anchoring' text that often accompanies the image guides the viewer towards a specific interpretation. In this way, my interpretation of the image amongst myriad other possibilities may be further supported.

Furthermore, the expectations that the viewer has of the image, for example due to the viewer's perceptions of the publication in which the image appears, also influence the meaning that the viewer takes from the cartoon (El Refaie 2003). This context in which the image is 'read' therefore invariably includes the publication in which it is found. The viewer may assume the social position of the cartoonist to be aligned with that of the newspaper in which the image was printed, which may offer an explicit socio-political position. *Intentio auctoris*, although outside of the remit of this study, being more pertinent in analyses at the level of production of the image, may be of note here. The 'contract' between creator and the recipient of a metaphorical image, or its saliency, to include the viewer's awareness of the creator's intention to portray an element metaphorically, is posited as a key consideration of the pictorial metaphor (Forceville 2002: 3). Regarding this saliency and contract between image creator and recipient, it is possible for the latter to interpret metaphors in ways unintended by the image creator. Further, playing with these unintended interpretations, a deliberate ambiguity of the pictorial elements of an image may be discernible in the work, wherein the viewer is invited to seek meanings in the image that haven't been explicitly depicted by the creator, as is the case in artistic works (Forceville 2002). At the site of audiencing, the ways in which an image is made meaningful, through a viewer's unique way of seeing as well as the viewing environment of the image, is most pertinent (Fiske 1994).

This study, therefore, acknowledges that the meanings interpreted by the viewer may not be those intended by the artist, but are arguably contained within the text's *intentio operis*, with inferences taken varying further between readers, resulting in potentially divergent interpretations. Regarding intentionality and auteur theory, however, since this analysis occurs at the site of compositional

and social modalities, the explicit intentions of the illustrators were deemed extraneous to this study. Instead, contextualisation of each image by placing it within its time, space and relation to other signifiers is favoured in order to interpret the imagery meaningfully. In my analysis of the images, I include explicitly only the text that is incorporated into the image. However, a reading of the page or publication in which the image appeared, or of the website in the case of online cartoons, as well as of discussions in public discourse pertaining to the topic, further placed the image within its socio-political context, thereby informing my interpretation. The analysis of the imagery was further informed by an exploration of the wider contemporary visual culture of France and its broadcast media in order to more fully comprehend its context, but will not be directly included in this study. This socio-political and cultural contextualisation and intertextuality was required in order to enable a more meaningful interpretation of the coded messages contained within the imagery, as well as their broader implications.

2.3 Metaphor

Before we explore metaphor, a note on rhetoric. Distinguishing rhetoric from general language whose texts are produced spontaneously, the process of producing rhetorical text is 'deliberate' and 'learned' (Lotman 1990). Recent conceptions of rhetorical figures may be seen to broaden their function, interpreting their meaning-making in a wide range of semiotic systems, from still and moving images to psychoanalysis (ibid.). For Eco, metonymy is the central trope in linguistic rhetoric, due to the metaphoric configuration brought about through the connection between linguistic and cultural codes. For others⁴, this position is reserved for synecdoche, of which metaphor and metonymy are derivative figures (ibid.). In line with neo-rhetorics such as Eco and Jakobson, this study has at its basis three concepts – metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche – whose substitutions align with principles of similarity (metaphor), contiguity, association and causality (metonymy), and participation and partiality

⁴ The Liège Group in 1970 arrived at this conclusion following their taxometric classification of tropes based on their semantic-lexical features (Lotman 1990).

(synecdoche) (1990: 40). Following this neo-rhetoric, then, a trope may be defined thus:

A trope is a semantic transposition from a sign *in praesentia* to a sign *in absentia*, 1) based on the perception of a connection between one or more semantic features of the signified; 2) marked by the semantic incompatibility of the micro- and macro-contexts; 3) conditioned by a referential connection by similarity, or causality, or inclusiveness, or opposition (Lotman 1990: 40).

Embodying the structure of creative consciousness itself, such rhetorical figures may be conceived as 'the very foundation of the mechanism of thought, of that supreme Genius which gives life both to mankind and to the universe' (Lotman 1990: 43). Far more than ornamental device or embellishment, then, (neo-) rhetoric cannot be expressed non-rhetorically, its structure resolutely in the domain of content, rather than of expression (1990: 57).

Similarly, iconic rhetoric alludes to the 'illusion of identity' created in visual texts between the object and image, necessitating a further connecting text for the production of an artistic sign. To this end, then, a transferral of entailments from text to image must occur, illuminating 'the moment in poetry when non-verbal (iconic) features are ascribed to the verbal text' (Lotman 1990: 55). Elements of a painting, for instance, such as its aspect, the method of painting, as well as the subject itself, have typically took for instruction the coded systems of other arts, namely those of theatre and literature. Such visual objects, furthermore, effect a replication of ourselves and our reality - a semiotic structure acting as a mirror in which we may see ourselves (Lotman 1990). Comparable to Classicism critics, for many political cartoonists, a similar rejection of stylistic 'gesture' associated with classical training in art is evident; a rejection itself gestural, a coded convention of considerable semiotic significance.

The metaphor, then, whether *physical* or *moral*, as the presentation of an idea using 'the sign of another that is more striking or better known' (Ricoeur 2003:

67), together with its sudden blossoming of meaning (135), here would suggest its creative potency. The newly invented metaphor, further, in contrast to habitual and increasingly standardised metaphors, provide the best conditions for good metaphor – ‘realism, clarity, nobility, naturalness, coherence’ (72). Through the invention of new meaning whilst retaining its original sense, the double vision of the metaphor, and hence its innovation, may be understood, with the polysemic nature of this stereoscopic invention further underscoring its creative capacity. Through the crossing of the semic field, Ricœur argues, new metonymies ‘bring into play an “active, selective perception”’ (2003: 238), with the interplay between the metonymic expansions of the metaphor’s source and target domains invoking a double metonymy. If *semic focalization* is ‘the fundamental “creative mechanism”’, metonymy is its ‘simple expression...on the level of figures’ (239), its function to drive metaphor by emphasising aspects of its source and target domains.

By ‘innovating upon...the extensions of their significances into other areas’ (Wagner 2016: Introduction section), metaphor is a creative agent, one that continually refashions previous meaning into newer configurations. Embodying a ‘new or innovative sequence...it also changes the associations of the elements it brings together by making them part of a distinctive and often novel expression’ (Wagner 2016: Control section). The cultural creativity of the metaphor, then, is achieved through the unconventional use of the symbol, producing in turn a new referent in its novel symbolization (Wagner 2016), and subsequently an event – the act of invention in which form and inspiration come to figure each other’ (2016: Control section). A revelatory dimension of this innovation is here of note, whereby the metaphor arguably reveals characteristics of the world hitherto hidden or obscured, transforming them - or metaphorizing them - into understandable and communicable conventions (Wagner 2016).

Within this semiotic inquiry, I posit the analysis of visual metaphor as a useful approach with which to understand the differing argumentative strategies pertaining to national identity, as well as the persuasive power of political cartoons, within the current socio-political climate of France today. At the outset,

the ubiquity of metaphor in these cartoons, similar to its verbal counterpart, may be understood by its capacity to condense complex political situations or issues through the deployment of humour and satire, serving as both a tool of propaganda and of entertainment. This creative condensing of a social or political issue into an iconic representation arguably allows for potentially greater persuasive power and influence through visual rhetoric (Moss 2007).

An efficient instrument of political imagery, visual metaphor may be understood as visual representations of metaphoric concepts, with metaphoric resemblance and the moment of the image described in terms of Le Guern's 'associated image', for instance (Riceour 2003: 246). However, some important distinctions between verbal and visual metaphors should be made, and will be discussed below. Although in recent years, visual metaphor has enjoyed increased attention from researchers (El Refaie 2003; Forceville 2002; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009; Serig 2006), relative to its verbal counterpart, there is still comparatively little investigation into the device. This comparative dearth of analysis is remarkably incongruent with the role of the political cartoon today. Since the political cartoon quickly responds to and reflects the events of its socio-political environment, it may be studied as a record of societal values, attitudes and salient concerns during significant historical moments. Through an investigation of visual or pictorial metaphor, then, significant insight into the society in which it was created may be gleaned. Recent scholarly works, for instance, have explored the mind-set of a society in revolt through an investigation of the imagery it produces. For France, the value of symbols and visual expression to revolutionaries lay in their capacity for spreading new attitudes and values. From an analysis of this graphic art, then, new understanding of the transformation of a society may be uncovered, unearthing unique insight into its revolutionary mentality (Popkin 1990). In this study, the meaning and expression of visual metaphors, particularly those found in political cartoons, and to their value as historical artefacts, are investigated. Of consideration in this investigation is the potential of visual metaphors relating to national identity, as a result of frequent repetition, to become accepted as an

authentic or 'natural' method with which to express meaning, thereby revealing societal configurations of *Frenchness* (El Refaie 2003).

In addition, Kress contends that verbal and visual metaphors are effective at expressing essentially different things, namely the temporal and spatial qualities of a concept, respectively: 'The sequential/temporal characteristic of language-as-speech may lend itself with greater facility to the representation of action and sequences of action; while the spatial display of visual images may lend itself with greater facility to the representation of elements and their relation to each other' (Kress 2000: 147). For these reasons, visual metaphor may not easily or effectively be analysed using theories of linguistic metaphor, an oversight seemingly based on the inaccurate assumption that visual metaphors are purely representational expressions of language (El Refaie 2003). Deploying theories pertaining to verbal metaphors is useful; however, the researcher must be aware of their limitations with regard to visual metaphor analysis. Regardless of their differences, the definition of metaphor remains the same for both types – 'the transfer of attributes by comparison, by substitution, or as a consequence of interaction', and while it at once 'reorganises and vivifies, it paradoxically condenses and expands, and it synthesizes often disparate meanings' (Feinstein 1982: 50). Often expressing an abstract referent in more familiar terms drawn from human experience, through the deployment of the visual metaphor, new or deeper meanings and associations are arguably generated.

Similarly, Burke's 'entitlement' (1962), that which conceptualises 'the capacity of symbolic action, including metaphoric predication, to give identity...to persons, situations, or things otherwise uncertainly conceived' (Fernandez 1991), is of use in this study. Throughout this investigation, the manipulation of a metaphoric construction through metonymic negotiations of the source domain is explored. Through this argument of images and play of metaphor, conventions may be challenged and established hierarchies contested (Fernandez, ed. 1991). Comprised of condensed meaning, metaphors are built upon dense layers of intertextuality. In political cartoons, the content of metaphorical images often references popular culture, as a kind of 'visual shorthand' (Connors 2007),

connecting the reader with the cartoonist, as well as to the images depicted, through the deployment of a current, accessible vernacular. This cultivation of intimacy is further expounded by the nature of metaphor, functioning as ‘an instrument of consensus and thus community’ (Fernandez, ed. 1991).

In order to understand the metaphorical content of a cartoon and its productive potential, I identified its source and target domains, as well as the metonymic entailments alluded to in the image. In this way, I hope to demonstrate how the source domain of a chosen metaphor relates to its target domain, and to show how the metaphor, and its corresponding metonymic extension through entailments, correlates to socio-political experience in France today. The selection was made using Medhurst and DeSousa’s (1981) four-themed framework, referring to content relating to political commonplaces (tying the campaign to current events), personal character traits, situational themes, and literary/cultural allusions. The latter is defined as ‘any fictive or mythical character, any narrative form, whether drawn from legend, folklore, literature, or the electronic media’ (Connors 2007).

2.4 Analysis

For this visual analysis, then, being focused on the site of the image itself, I look at both its compositional modalities, such as layout, colour, and content, as well as its social modalities, namely ‘the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used’ (Rose 2001: 17). With each image, I begin with their compositional interpretation, a diegesis in which elements such as colour, the graphic organisation on the page and the size and space between elements are noted. At this descriptive stage, the initial visual impact of the image is of primary concern. For instance, included at this level of analysis, may be how bodies are represented, namely through signifiers such as age, gender and ethnicity, as well as the activities in which they are engaged. Representations of their manner, too, are examined here, with particular attention given to expression, eye contact and pose (Dyer 1982), as well as the significance of the

settings denoted in the image. The use of colour may also prompt a transferal of signifieds within an image (Williamson 1978). Connection is made between signs through their chromatic design, whereby meaning is transferred from one sign to another, with the possibility of a 'whole world retinted' to sell a product (Rose 2001: 84), or in the case of the images discussed in this study, an ideology.

Probing deeper into the meaning of the image, the next stage in their interpretation, that of its semiotic analysis, begins. The visual narrativity (Ricoeur 1991; Floch 2000) of the image, as told by its signs and signifiers, as well as the ways in which the aforementioned signifiers create signifieds, is here analysed. The relationship between signified and signifier is at this point considered, with indexical and symbolic signs identified and discussed (Peirce 1932). The constructed relationship between signifier and signified in Peirce's symbol further informs my analysis, for instance, noting the ways in which depictions of Marianne, a presidential candidate, an immigrant, or (later) an Al-Qaeda terrorist may produce signifieds of '*Frenchness*' or '*Otherness*', '*secular*' or '*religious*', or '*Christian*' or '*Muslim*', and so on. Utilising Barthes's sign system (1977), I identified the signified and signifier in the image, before considering the source and target domains of the metaphor contained within the image, where required. The artist's choice of signifier, as well as the artificial, constructed relationship between the identified signified and signifier, was then explored. Through the deployment of these semiotic methods alongside an exploration of the 'grammar' of the visual metaphor (El Refaie 2003), the workings of the pictorial metaphor could be subsequently understood. Specifically, the ways in which the above signifieds of *Frenchness*, '*secular*', '*Christian*', '*Muslim*', and '*immigrant*' are expressed through signifiers including Marianne, the hijab, the Phrygian cap and racial characteristics, becoming semio-narrative components in the story of France and its people, as well as their visibility relative to other signs, are explored.

Regardless of which side of the debate on nationhood the image creator may be on, furthermore, such relationships between signified and signifier often appear to be constructed either metonymically or synecdochically. This is exemplified,

for instance, in the narrative of much nationalist and nativist rhetoric, which frequently seeks to redefine French nationhood to explicitly exclude its Muslim cohort by synecdochically conflating isolated acts of terrorism with an Islam signifier, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?* Interpretations of the ways in which signifiers such as those listed above may contribute to ongoing contested debates about French identity and nationhood are in this way postulated.

Through this methodological approach, the meaning of the image at the denotative level of the sign as well as the signification at its connotative level may be grasped, thereby unveiling the aforementioned 'mythologies' (Barthes 1977) on which ideas pertaining to *Frenchness* today are conveyed and disputed. The diverging and converging concepts of French identity, as well as who might be excluded from these concepts, each group's apparent desires and fears, and also their relationship to one another, as told through the narrativity of French visual discourse, may therefore be gleaned. Through an analysis of the construction of social difference through signs, exclusive, elite concepts of nationhood, as well as ways in which they are challenged, may be exposed.

2.5 Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

As noted above, the meaning interpreted from an image may differ between viewers, due to numerous contributing factors. Throughout my analysis, in my efforts to ascertain the preferred meaning of a polysemic sign and the *intentio operis* of a graphic text, then, a reflexive approach was taken. In line with my findings and recommendations for the societal use and consumption of satire in contemporary France, as investigator, recognition of my potential bias and assumptions, the interplay and intertextuality of texts and my own scopic regimes brought about by the bearing my cultural background, gender, ethnicity, ideology, experiences and educational background may have on my particular interpretations, was therefore essential. Far from positing my findings as universal or objective, I would reaffirm the interpretive nature of a semiotic investigation. As I acknowledge the particular scopic regimes of the viewers of

particular images throughout this study, so too I recognise my specific interpretations as situated and partial. From this viewpoint, then, notwithstanding the careful application of semiotic methods, I posit my findings as potentially one interpretation amongst others, in recognition of the differing results attained by different relations between critic and visual materials.

A number of ethical considerations also arose during this investigation, with acknowledgment and recognition of the cultural sensitivity of subjects analysed in this investigation particularly pertinent. Throughout this study, I broach culturally sensitive subjects, which some readers may consider contentious. In my evaluation of the function of satire in a multicultural France, for instance, avoiding further discursive marginalisation of Muslims was a crucial concern. Alternatively, care to eschew cultural relativism with regard to calls for media censorship, which would, thereby, effect a denial of democratic freedoms, was also taken in this research. The mounting pressure felt by cartoonists and satirists to self-censor for fear of further violent reprisals would need to be tempered, therefore, with acknowledgement of a concurrent and pervasive anti-Islam ethos in Western Europe, of which moderate Muslims appear primarily to be the victims.

2.6 Closing

The popularity and ubiquity of cartooning across France and throughout its history express the importance of visual culture in French society. Within this context, depictions of social difference and of exclusive concepts of nationhood, expressed through this medium, may be deemed particularly potent. The symbolic depiction of social difference within a cartoon yields insight into the wider cultural context surrounding concepts of national identity from which they are created. Of interest, then, is the presence of social hierarchies, or 'the social formation' (Bryson 1991), within the political imagery. Thus, ideology, 'as knowledge that is constructed in such a way as to legitimate unequal social power relations' of certain actors pertaining to the construction of nationhood, may too be exposed through a semiotic analysis (Rose 2001: 70). In line with the

view that 'any knowledge which sanctions a particular form of social organisation must be described as ideology (Rose 2001: 71), the intention of this study, therefore, is to discover through semiotic analysis the ways in which specific, in particular, elite, forms of knowledge are endorsed and espoused via the medium of the political cartoon. In this way, the construction of national identity and its corresponding narratives may be understood as 'mythologies' (Barthes 1977). Similar to the tendency to overlook the 'deep social assumptions' inherent in advertisements (Rose 2001: 71), the ubiquity of the political cartoon in France may reveal an invisible ideology of identity. Encoded within these visual images are the preferred meanings, or the 'imprint of the ideology of the dominant order' (Rose 2001: 192). In the political imagery of both right and left wing media, an inclination towards a nationalist ideology is often discerned, to varying degrees of explicitness. In this way, a semiotic analysis may, as Iversen describes, lay 'bare the prejudices beneath the smooth surface of the beautiful' (1986: 84).

Chapter 3. Ethnography

3.1 Introduction

As the chief object of this study is to decode the signifying practices conveying national identity in mediated French visual culture, my fieldwork is primarily an ethnography of the object. In order to meaningfully interpret the context from which the images arose, I referred to supplementary sources of socio-political and popular culture in France, both historical and contemporary. As part of my collection of qualitative data, informing my analysis of the selected cartoons, online commentary and diffusion on social media was similarly explored. The series of images, comprised of selected editorial cartoons published in mainstream and alternative print publications, is further contextualised from my observations and findings in Paris in 2016.

Informing my interpretation of political imagery through this contextualisation, an investigation into the visual culture from which it is created was conducted. To this end, I conducted fieldwork, through observation and immersion, into the conceptual practices of the nation's dominant representational paradigms (Wolcott 2008; Emerson et al 2011). In my field site of Paris, I collected data from September to December 2016 pertaining to the country's visual culture, which included an exploration of other forms of political and commercial art, across diverse media. Data was collected from a number of informants through interviews and surveys, alongside the exploration and semiotic assessment of a wide range of mediated visual art, namely posters; advertising, tourism and cultural campaigns; government literature; *bande dessinée*; flyers and pamphlets; photographs, as well as the imagery of other new, satirical and cultural publications, such as *Libération*, *le Canard Enchaîné* and *ARTE Magazine*. Additional study sites where direct observation was conducted included the *Festival International Jean Rouch* at the *Cinéma Ethnographique*, the visual art of the band Daft Punk explored at the *Centre Pompidou* in *Daft Punk dans les étoiles* (both discussed below), *Mon Premier Festival* (a series of events intended to introduce children to film and cinematic practices), the lively and innovative digital arts practices and concerts at *Gaité Lyrique*, as well as exhibitions and

screenings at *Art Ludique*, *Studio des Ursuline*, *la Cinémathèque Française – Musée du cinéma*, *Musée National d'Art Moderne*, *Musée Delacroix*, *l'Objet Regard* at the *Palais des Congrès Paris*, *Forum des Images* (discussed below), alongside further research at the *Bibliothèque du Musée de l'Homme* and into the extensive illustrated image collection at the *Bibliothèque du cinéma François Truffaut*. The representational practices at museums, such as the *Musée de l'Homme*, were also further analysed.

Along with the sources outlined below, as well as the use of Harry Wolcott's practice of ethnography (1995, 2008), Robert Weiss's learning from strangers (1994) and Barbara Czarniawska's fieldwork techniques in modern societies (2002, 2007, 2014) at my fieldsite, I was inspired by Loïc Wacquant's participatory ethnographic approach (2004), whereby, in order to grasp more fully a subject and its significance, I learned and practiced caricature, graphic art and design. I found parallels between choosing as a subject of inquiry political cartoons and Wacquant's subject of sport, whereby expert practitioners of both, as Bourdieu says of the latter (1988 [1982]), typically lack the inclination to subject their practice to scientific analysis or to be critical of it, while those more analytically inclined generally disregard the subject as being of little academic import. Through such participation, confronted with various decisions regarding line, colour, composition and subject matter, I gained a deeper understanding of the work of the political cartoon, of their 'armoury' and of the detailed scopic structure of the medium that I otherwise would have missed. Through this immersion into French visual culture, a picture of its conceptual universe, in which the political cartoons discussed in this study were created and consumed, emerged. Shaping my selection of political cartoons, the stories told by the various visual artefacts collected here situate the imagery against a finer interpretive backdrop.

3.2 Informants

As part of my primary data collection, I wanted to meet with artists to discuss directly their experience and understanding of their craft, as well as of its

broader societal purpose. I spoke to Alain Maindron, a 2D and 3D artist, and Maël Berreur, a director and cinematographer, and received completed surveys from six individuals working in visual art in France, including Richard Dumont, a concept artist; Christilla Huillard-Kann, a documentary producer; Fabienne Ballardras, an illustrator and visual artist; motion designer/graffiti artist Olivier Rocques; H el ene Waniowski, the director of *Studio 100*; and an illustrator based in Nice (anonymous). In our discussions and survey responses, I looked for answers and insight into the following:

- What drew them to their art of choice?
- What is the intention of using a specific metaphor?
- What popular cultural, political, social or economic references do they allude to in their cartoons?
- Current aesthetic or operational trends in their specific artistic medium
- What, in their opinion, is the current function of illustration and/or political art in France?
- Where do they predict it is headed?
- Does the interviewee see any new or interesting way in which their medium could be used?
- What makes a 'good' cartoon?
- The use of art as political expression or as a political medium
- The development of an illustrated character
- Visual art and illustration in and of France

While some of the points above could be posed directly as questions, answers to others were inferred from broader discussion. I also wanted to decipher, in these discussions and responses, how concepts of *Frenchness* might be conveyed or disputed metonymically through symbolism and metaphors of (French) national identity, as well as the use of symbolism, in their work. From these encounters, a number of ideas repeated and subsequent themes emerged. When asked about how visual art is being used in France today, a number of interviewees pointed to its function as communication, as entertainment and as historical and social record. Regarding the themes these artists would wish to see portrayed through

an artistic medium, responses pointed to more adult-oriented programming, illustrated and animated interpretations of great novels and its characters (Maël, Christilla), as well as the production of documentaries that are less literal and more poetic (Christilla). To be surprised and intrigued by a visual artwork, through an unexpected use of symbols, style and narrative with which to express sociopolitical issues, was also expressed, with the style and content of *Charlie Hebdo* referenced (Richard). More practically, most informants alluded to the autonomy of self-publishing online through websites and forums as a distinct advantage and its further development as an aspirational direction for the visual medium.

3.2.1 *Truth-Telling in Visual Art*

Alain Maindron is a freelance 2D and 3D artist, based in Lyon, who also teaches final year art students. Our interview was conducted by phone on October 11th, 2016. “‘Uncanny valley’”, it says basically as long as you have a character who is quite simple - you know, like an emoticon or, you know, a clean simple design - you can believe in it’, Alain tells me. A similar preference for some ‘distortion’ or humour in illustration is stated by Richard. By way of example, Alain points to Mickey Mouse, who we ‘believe’ as a character precisely because he is so unrealistic. On the other hand, a character that starts to look human (but isn’t quite right) enters into the uncanny valley, whereby fear, rather than empathy or emotional investment, is elicited. It is in this uncanny valley, Alain tells me, where current 3D films and their characters reside, and it is for this reason that they fail to connect fully with their audience. ‘Animation’, for Alain, seems to encompass a broader, more abstract concept than one solely of movement, instead denoting a realism, believability, and indeed a humanity. Later, exploring the gallery, *Art Ludique*, whose exposition in October 2016 centred on Disney’s approach to art and movement in the 20th century through to the early 21st century, I considered the complexity or realism of its characters’ design, their subsequent emotional impact and their ‘animation’. Wandering through chronological Disney worlds, each with its own chromatically-themed environment, their deliberate ‘cartoonishness’ and ensuing affective resonance

was noted. In a similar way, then, the political cartoon, in its simplicity and ostensible stylistic naiveté, enables connection, association and emotional resonance - it's 'believability', as Alain would put it.

Further, such unrealistic portrayals create a distance without distraction, through which more sensitive subjects may more easily be broached. This allows for a creative freedom of expression afforded to them as illustrated characters without 'any place in the real world', the illustrator-informant tells me. A 'good' cartoon, then, he states, is one that 'gets at a truth in only a way a cartoon can'. For effective political art, furthermore, he lists the following conditions: it has to be from the view of the common man; it has to be mocking in tone; to allow for a certain amount of mistrust of politicians; the political cartoon is for the people; it is never flattering, always a caricature. Corresponding to the sentiment of many across France, the illustrator-informant reasserts the importance of free speech, and that such a freedom is demonstrated by being 'unnecessarily provocative'. For him, 'satire [is] a weapon against the far right', but one that, 'if not done skilfully enough, could inspire hatred and violence'. Further, according to this informant, satire serves to calm social tensions, a potential purpose of the genre that arises again later in my research.

With current socio-political issues at the heart of her work, Fabienne states that the 'work of the artist should, in my opinion, give a parallel and offbeat reading of the world around us'. Truth, for Fabienne, and, she suggests, for many artists, is told through the 'prism of aesthetics', with all artists, illustrators and cartoonists expressing a vision of the world and a point of view from the moment they start drawing. It is a vision, further, that is recorded, as Richard points out with particular reference to the cartoons of *Charlie Hebdo*, which 'records through illustration lots of cultural and political ideas reflecting subjects in the air of the moment...They record something about the taste of the moment, both graphically and [with regard to] themes and subjects'.

3.2.2 *"Birds Without Wings"*

Limitations on the full recounting of such themes and subjects were, however, acknowledged and condemned by a number of informants, with a desire for, and the importance of, autonomy and creative freedom frequently heard by the interviewees. As noted by Alain, for instance, the simplicity of smaller teams allows for their freer creative expression and control, but, in increasingly 'factory-like' studios, for visual artists working in film, animation and video games, such autonomy is becoming a rarity. Clipped by the demands of the big studio, of the clients and by formatting and cost-based restrictions, the creative freedom of expression of such visual artists is thereby hindered. Concern for creative freedom of expression is felt, too, by Fabienne, who notes encroaching controls being placed on exhibition venues. 'We have noticed in recent years that certain "reactionary associations" have tried to put pressure on exhibitions whose subject bothers them', she tells me, alluding to the political funding such events often receive.

Similarity could be drawn between this increasingly typical experience of visual artists working in other media and that of the political cartoonist. While ostensibly intended to stimulate meaningful engagement with a subject, and unrestricted by the workings of a large creative team, the art of the latter is nonetheless comparably restricted. Beyond the basic requisite to align with the political inclination and ideology of the publication in which it is published, the political cartoon is today subject to a societal balking at satire, to such an extent that it renders its future role in public discourse uncertain. Such restrictions of visual art, whether caused by operational practice or societal, political or sponsor censorship, appear, then, to permeate many facets of French visual culture, raising questions over the future of authentic creative expression, as well as that of satire.

3.2.3. "Driving Emotion"

The emotional affect of the image was a recurring and spontaneous topic of discussion with numerous interviewees, arising naturally when asked, in particular, about the use of illustration and visual art for the expression of political or social issues. During my subsequent collection of political cartoons, this emotiveness and emotion elicited from the image became a key condition for its selection. Instilling an image with emotion appears, furthermore, to ensure its lasting impact - its longevity in the minds of the viewer - according to Alain. Reflecting on the impact of emotion in film, he states, 'It's part of the film that everybody remembers; it's so emotionally touching. It's emotion, you know; it's not talking about things...It's just what movies basically do - it's emotion'. For Richard, emotion, alongside skill, message and originality, is a key determinant of a 'good' illustration, and one that inspires expression and creativity.

The emotional impact of an image can, however, vary between viewers, and sometimes quite considerably between the image creator and viewer, with an image, furthermore, being emotive for different reasons. The nostalgic impact of *Spyro* (1998), a video game on which he worked, for instance, Alain reflects, was frequently felt by his students but was not an affect that he shared. Thinking of it as 'just a stupid game', for Alain, rather, the emotiveness of *Spyro* came from the demonstrable joy it brought to those who played the video game, who often recounted excitedly to him how prominently it featured in their childhoods. Nonetheless, combining the emotional impact of an image with the intimacy incited by the joke, the satirical political cartoon becomes palpably potent. For the illustrator-informant, laughing at the same joke alludes to a bondedness, emphasising, too, a 'desire to be understood'. Throughout my collection of political imagery, I drew from such discussions of emotion, humour and intimacy in the field, to ultimately consider humour to denote a shared cultural reference as its bonding effect became apparent.

3.2.4 “A New Hope”

Maël Berreur is a director and cinematographer from Chamonix, based in Paris. Our interview took place at *La Folie en Tête* in Paris on October 13th, 2016. While acknowledging that French animation can be quite commercial, Maël spoke of pockets of non-commercial, independent, artistic animation in France today, more so, perhaps, than in most other parts of Europe. He predicted a growing attention to adult-focused animation, echoing the opinion of a number of other informants, pointing to *Netflix* as evidence of such a development due to its range of animated films and television series, and further, its potential as a dedicated platform for the medium. For Christilla Huillard-Kann, a documentary producer in Paris, formerly deputy director of new media at *Radio France*, commissioning editor at *ARTE France* and the head of the documentary department at *Image et Cie*, webseries are equally fertile ground for illustration and animation, not least because of the funding provided by the CNC (*Centre National de la Cinématographie*) for the production of new media programmes, with content ranging from 2D and illustration to tutorials.

In apparent response to the wish expressed by all of my informants that cartooning, illustration and animation be taken seriously as art forms - justified in Maël’s description of animation as ‘a new hope’ - from September to December 2016, across from the *Centre Pompidou*, weekly *Animations Adulte* took place at the *Médiathèque de la Canopée la Fontaine*, while the month of October was declared ‘Animation Month’ (*Fête du Cinéma d’Animation*), with screenings all over the city almost every day (such as *ciné-concerts*, feature film premieres, short film collections). These weekly sessions at the library included classes on 3D art and sculpture, learning new artistic tools, software and techniques, and various troubleshooting, with each session catering to adult audiences, subjects and themes. Supporting this interest, in Maël’s experience, a more experimental use of art and animation is evident around France, seen at the *Lumière Festival* in Lyon where, through the projection of videos onto building facades, movement is created, revealing the city as one in which ‘everything’s moving’ – as well as to convey historical and factual information at museums and in documentaries.

Richard is of a similar view, having illustrated environmental issues such as Canadian tar sand exploitation and controversial mining methods. Christilla also echoed this sentiment, stating that her documentary production company uses illustration and animation to ‘represent and document thoughts and ideas in a poetic way’, as well as to supplement or replace missing archives. ‘If you want to explain something difficult’, she states, ‘nothing is better’ than illustration, with Ari Folman’s animated documentary, *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), and the intimacy it evokes, recalled by both Christilla and Maël. Similarly, the deployment of animation and illustration for educational purposes was discussed by a number of my informants, who expressed its suitability as a medium for instruction (Christilla, Maël, Olivier), as well as to teach younger generations valuable image-reading skills (Fabienne, Hélène). For Olivier, meanwhile, animation is an art form that comprises all other forms of art, mixing together architecture, sculpture, painting, drawing, photography, music, literature, poetry, performance art, theatre, dance and cinema.

The apparent trepidation regarding technology conveyed in other sites of visual art visited during my fieldwork didn’t appear to be (entirely) shared by all visual artists. For both Alain and Olivier, technological advancements were not so immediately anxiety-inducing, in that they could never, at least, render the artist obsolete, but could, in fact, enhance their work; as the latter proclaims, ‘the work you did in one week ten years ago can be done in one day now’. Aiding only in the ‘physics’ of animated visual art, ‘it’s really the brain of the animator who does the movement; a machine can’t do that’, Alain states. Regarding the future of certain realms of visual art, Alain, Olivier and Richard foretell the incorporation of more and more virtual reality technology, a prediction mirrored too in various publications (such as *ARTE Magazine*, October 2016), eventually to resemble, for Alain, the worlds of *The Matrix* (1999) and *Westworld* (2016), wherein, looking to virtual reality, characters are rendered so real that they are indistinguishable from humans – dystopian nightmares that both French and foreign visual artists nonetheless seem to wish to recreate. For Alain, the immersive and enveloping worlds created through virtual reality, together with the ‘fear of emptiness [and] the need for stimulation’ and the ‘grey world’ of reality, is a dangerous

combination, one which will require a societal adaptation and a generation to find their way.

3.3 Publications

Although the political images of this study were collected between January 2015 and June 2017, their analyses were supported by archival access in a number of instances. I accessed *Le Monde's* archives dating back to 2014, while Plantu's older published political cartoons could be found through the Cartooning for Peace blog, which placed his imagery alongside the work of non-French artists published in newspapers and magazines around the world. At my fieldsite, as well as *Le Monde*, *Charlie Hebdo*, *Rivarol* and *Oumma*, I perused a number of other publications, many of which directly addressed issues of diversity and inclusion, although demonstrable divergence from a Republican, difference-blind variety of identity was rare. They also told of events and activities taking place throughout the city, many of which related to graphic art, *bandes dessinées* and visual culture, more broadly, (including the free quarterly *Á Paris*, the monthly *Le Bonbon* and *ARTE magazine*), from which I gleaned a more detailed picture of French visual art and sometimes, through it, of a national self-perception.

3.3.1 Le Carnard Enchaîné and Les Dossiers du Canard Enchaîné

The satirical weekly newspaper, *Le Canard Enchaîné* (*Le Canard*), together with its more in-depth *Les Dossiers Du Canard Enchaîné* (*Les Dossiers*), provided another satirical voice alongside that of *Hebdo*. *Le Canard* declares its position to be neither right nor left, but one of opposition. Seeking to inform as well as to distract, through irreverence and good humour, the practice of freedom of speech for *Le Canard* and its *Dossiers* is proclaimed central. In line with both mainstream and satirical press, treatment of such topical issues as integration, prejudice and police intimidation were covered in its pages.



Figure 5: "T'as pas tes papiers?" October 2016, Delambre in *Les Dossiers du Canard Enchaîné*.

On the cover of *Les Dossiers* (October 2016), emblazoned with the words 'What do the police do?', we meet once again Marianne, looking particularly exuberant as she attempts to leap into the arms of an uncomfortable- and awkward-looking *gendarme*. The provocative image and heading opens a discussion on the crises faced by the country as witnessed in the recent terrorist attacks, and, in this light, invites the reader to consider the efficacy of the police. Police brutality and prejudice are similarly described, and conveyed through striking images, such as of a 'cop' as Dracula. A menacing omnipresence is portrayed in a subsequent image, wherein a local Parisian is asked by tourists about the location of police headquarters, to whom she responds 'It's everywhere!' The prejudice of police captured later in Plantu's imagery is here too recalled, in another image, where a police officer assumes two non-white *banlieusards* are suspicious and 'armed with evil intent', seemingly based on nothing other than their ethnic signifiers

and their hoodies. Another image by Delambre (above) in *Les Dossiers* portrays two menacing police-officers looming over a youth of presumably North African origin, with one asking for his identification papers, while the other says 'Not even a little FN card?', aligning their prejudice to FN ideology. Throughout various publications and events, then, such dissatisfaction with, negative perceptions and indeed hatred (as seen at the '*haines des flics*' protest in May at Place de la République) of the police among the population became clear, with Orwellian themes of censorship and surveillance recurring throughout mainstream and satirical media. A comparable reference to Big Brother was heard at *l'Objet Regard*, too, held in November 2016 at the *Palais des Congrès*, where the viewer, whilst configured as an *omnivoyeur*, in Lacanian terms, is simultaneously trapped in the inhibiting mortifying gaze of feeling always watched.

Alongside these themes and undercurrents, insight into the particular slang, or *argot*, of satirical press, in particular, that of *Le Canard*, was proffered, with those of some of its notable characters listed below.

- Charles de Gaulle: *Mongénéral, Badingaule* (after 13 May 1958, an allusion to Napoléon)
- François Mitterrand: *Tonton* (uncle), the codename used by the French Secret service in charge of his protection
- Valéry Giscard d'Estaing: *Valy, L'Ex* (after 1981)
- Raymond Barre: *Babarre* (from the character from the children's book 'Babar the Elephant')
- Michel Debré: *L'amer Michel* (Bitter Michael), an ironic take on the popular rhyme *La Mère Michel*
- Michel Rocard: *Hamster Jovial* (an allusion to a comic by Marcel Gotlib in reference to his past as a scout)
- Robert Hersant: *La Papivore* (a reference to the many papers that he bought)
- Christian Estrosi: *Le Motodidacte* (a reference to his past in motorbike racing)

- Jean-Pierre Raffarin: *Le Phénix du Haut-Pitou* (referring to his region of origin)
- Jacques Chirac: *Chichi, Le Chi*
- Bernadette Chirac: *Bernie*
- Nicolas Sarkozy: *Sarkoléon* (a portmanteau of Sarkozy and Napoléon); *Le Petit Nicholas* (title of a popular series of children's books)
- Francois Hollande: *Monsieur Royal* (reference to his one-time partner Ségolène Royal); the *pedalo* captain
- Jean-Pierre Chevènement: *Le Che*

Digital publications were also valuable sources of data, yielding insight into French visual culture, as were subscriptions to regular e-newsletters such as the *Jean Rouch Festival* (through the *Comité du Film Ethnographique*), and monthly *Kino Pop* newsletters, which I read and analysed throughout my research. Not only informing me of upcoming events and topical or trending subjects in French visual culture, they served as valuable visual artefacts themselves.

3.4 Venues and Events



Figure 6. Daft Lite Ltd. co, Toei Animation

3.4.1 Centre Pompidou - Daft Punk

Open daily from 11am to 9pm, except on Tuesdays and for late night openings on Thursdays, the *Centre Pompidou* comprises the national museum of modern art, the public information library, the Kandinsky library, the graphic art office, the children's gallery and workshops, exhibition galleries, studios and conference and viewing rooms. As it describes in its map brochure,

'At the end of the sixties, the French president, George Pompidou, decided to create a wide-ranging arts facility in central Paris devoted to visual culture in all its forms. The *Centre Pompidou* opened in 1977, and now houses the largest collection of modern and contemporary art in Europe. Each year, visitors can enjoy around 30 temporary exhibitions in the galleries and within the museum. There is also a programme of music, dance, theatre and performances, together with film cycles, conferences, meetings and debates. In areas dedicated to young people ages 2 to 16, awareness-raising events, artistic experiences and hands-on projects exploring art are organised. The *Centre Pompidou* also contains the BPI, a free information library, and IRCAM, the Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music'.

Further, regarding the building itself:

'Designed by the architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, the *Centre Pompidou* building is an iconic 20th century monument, striking for its glass and steel architecture, suspended mechanical stairway and coloured pipes (blue for air, green for water, red for passageways and yellow for electricity). It contains 15,000 metric tonnes of steel, and provides an extraordinary view over Paris with its 11,000 m² of glazing'.

The *musée national d'art moderne* at the *Pompidou* contains over 100,000 works, comprising 'one of the world's top referencing bodies of art from the 20th and 21st centuries', covering 'the visual arts, drawing, photography, the new media,

experimental film, architecture, design and the industrial design of the future'. A number of events and exhibitions held at the *Centre Pompidou* were of interest to my research, including an exhibition of *Art moderne de 1905 à 1965, Art contemporaine de 1965 à nos jours* as well as the temporary exhibition titled *Art et liberté* concerning the '*rupture, guerre et surréalisme, en Égypte (1938 - 1948)*' which was held on the 4th floor at the *Galerie du Musée et Galerie d'art graphique*. One particularly noteworthy visit to the *Centre Pompidou*, however, was to attend the discussion and analysis of the visual accompaniments of the music of the French pop band, Daft Punk, on October 21st 2016. Supporting this performance-exhibition, news of other animated music videos were announced in BPI's *actu bibliothèque* publication (October 2016). As part of this festival of music videos, '*Daft Punk dans les étoiles*' was the audiovisual viewing of their various visual projects, including the animated feature film, '*Interstella 5555*', punctuated by discussions led by Vincent Brunner, a journalist, author and *bande dessinée* expert. The audience was comprised of a more or less equal mix of genders, between the ages of mid-20s and mid-40s, I'd estimate, predominantly white, with most either attending alone or in small groups.

Arriving on the scene in France in the 1990s, we are told, the electronic music duo quickly became 'emblematic of the French Touch', as French house music is known. While the band had developed visual projects to accompany their first album, it was their second in 2001, '*Discovery*', that was the score and inspiration for the feature animation, '*Interstella 5555: The 5tory of the 5ecret 5tar 5ystem*'. A collaboration between Daft Punk, Japanese manga creator Leiji Matsumoto and Toei Animation, the story centres on a space pirate called Shep as he tries to rescue the abducted alien band, The Crescendolls. The visualisation of the album is entirely dialogue-free, whose themes of an often-problematic relationship between machinery, technology and the entertainment industry recur throughout the duo's visual projects. Tracks on their subsequent album, '*Human After All*' are similarly laced with these motifs, conveyed using animated cinematic techniques that ultimately create a kind of 'synthetic Frankenstein with a spectral voice', commanding the viewer-listener, in the visualisation of the track '*Technologic*', to 'buy it, use it, break it, fix it', as the words 'Charge, Point,

Zoom, Press, Snap' appear on the screen. A deadly, or at least disenchanted, vision of the future of the human species is portrayed in several tracks on this album, a thematic continuation of the foreboding tone, or at least of a technological unease, evident in their earlier work.

Of interest to my research, then, is Daft Punk's apparent import to the electronic music scene in France, as well as internationally, and what the visualisation of such apparently significant music might reveal regarding nationhood and national identity, both in France and abroad. With their frequent quasi-dystopian themes and dark sci-fi aesthetic, it certainly seemed noteworthy that the band is considered 'emblematic' of 'the French Touch'. Conveying an apparent uneasiness with technological advancement, and what this might mean for humanity, through the technology-reliant musical style of *tekfunk*, where they themselves perform anonymous robotic characters, effects a kind of performance of the future dystopia they foretell. The consistency with which they allude to an uncertain vision, not just of the future of France, but of global humanity, reveals potential fears and anxieties that clearly resonate with French and international audiences. Such centrality in French culture and resonance for concepts of self-identity was further underscored across national and international news when their music was heard on Bastille Day in 2017, performed by the French military band for an audience comprising of French president Emmanuel Macron as well as then-US-president Donald Trump. In 2022, Daft Punk was again loudly played, in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, as part of the *En Marche!* party's celebration following Macron's expected re-election as president in 2022. Although tracks such as 'One More Time' and 'Get Lucky' are typically chosen at these moments of national significance, whose mood and message are decidedly more celebratory, optimistic and uplifting – and American-sounding - than other tracks in their backlog, that the tone and theme of their music is so frequently dystopian colours their ubiquitous inclusion in such moments of national pride, whose message of outward optimism seems mixed with an inward foreboding and cautionary undercurrent. This incongruence between the ostensible outward message of an image and an

unintended, at least by the image publisher, interpretation by the image consumer is a central interest of my research.

3.4.2 *Festival International Jean Rouch*

*'Venez, venez vite, venez voir!...'*⁵

Located at the *musée de l'Homme*, the 35th Festival International Jean Rouch took place in Paris between November 4th and December 6th, 2016. The festival encompassed a wide array of visual culture, including photographic installations, contemporary sculptures, ethnographic documentaries, as well as 'remarkable everyday objects that connect us to different indigenous peoples' (#35 Festival International Jean Rouch programme). As introduced in the festival's programme, ethnologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch is not just a scientist using the image in the service of his discipline, but a pioneer constantly forging new pathways in art, through *cinéma vérité* and *cinéma direct*, to offer new ways of seeing the world. In order to honour Jean Rouch, we are encouraged to take stock of the value of exchange between science and its publics, as well as of the values of commitment, innovation and transmission. Like its founder, the event is suitably characterized by an open, attentive, scientific curiosity about the world and its inhabitants.

This year's festival, we are told, is a unique dialogue between art and the humanities, one that invites visitors to explore their world through the different lenses afforded to them by ethnographic documentaries. Central at this year's event is the transmission of meaning through music, and the value of music in imagery, and is explored in many of the documentaries, such as in *Âhlé Hava: Les habitants du vent*, wherein a ritualistic musical exorcism in southern Iran is performed to heal the 'victims of the wind', whose maleficent forces are said to penetrate fragile bodies. In *Song of Lahore*, too, the return of music after its prohibition under Sharia resulted in a cross-cultural collaboration,

⁵ 'Come, come quick, come look!' #35 Festival International Jean Rouch programme, *Cinéma Ethnographique du 4.11 au 6.12.2016*

demonstrating the ability of music ‘to bring people together across cultural divides’. This crossing of cultures through the combination of music and imagery calls to mind, too, a similar role played by Daft Punk, as explored above, whereby their music in the public sphere is used to connote contemporary France. The rendition of their music on Bastille Day could similarly be perceived as an intended bridge with which to cross a cultural chasm, alongside its use as performance of *Frenchness* for Trump, for French citizens themselves, as well as for the rest of the world, despite the band’s frequently ominous themes. As we are told throughout its various ethnomusicological sessions, music is political, or, even more succinctly, ‘Mao one day, Mambo always’, all the while music ‘makes fun of politics, of show, of work, of everything’ (*Cinéma Ethnographique du 4.11 au 6.12.2016*).

Among the sessions and screenings, I was introduced to sensorial ethnography, whereby ambient noise is artfully composed to create the textured soundscape of ethnographic fieldsites, from rural China to Queens, New York City. Told by the sounds of urban demolition and high-speed trains, themes of displacement, migration and uncertain futures could be heard, and echoed across a number of other events held at the festival. Such *imaginaires migratoires* were a core theme of the festival, a topic whose invisibility and marginalisation in the media reflected that experienced by its immigrant protagonists. My academic interest in these *imaginaires migratoires* was to observe and interpret *how* migration stories were told, paying particular attention to whose voices were heard and to anything that could yield insight into French concepts of nationhood and self-perception. Throughout these sessions, consolidating multiple allegiances was foregrounded, wherein the uprootedness, memory, integration and alienation of liminal identities - between times past and future as well as between nationhoods - were explored. Here, attempts to sketch the contours of a new geography were observed and debated – a third space wherein past and present may coexist.

When I later analyse the rural ‘heartlanders’ of French right-wing political imagery and rhetoric, I am reminded of the *paysans*, the agricultural *héritiers* and

the daily rhythm of the farm, as conveyed in a series of screenings centred on the agricultural life of the French countryside. Here, too, I find a resounding anxiety over uncertain futures, as well as an unease regarding technological advancement and generational transformation. The reported experience of farmers in industrial agriculture, who describe their fate, akin to that of their animals, as reduced to cogs in a machine of the production system, along with the description of economic reason as a 'death machine', speaks to the anti-globalisation and the anti-EU position of many of France's rural population that was stirred and exploited by Le Pen and RN earlier that year. Hearing the stories of those who ultimately comprised the majority of the RN-supporting electorate, and their palpable anxieties and hurts, imparted to my analyses a deeper, more compassionate, understanding of their motivations, as well as of the logic and potential impact of RN rhetoric.

Alongside the scenes and souvenirs, the photography Master Class, *Écran de lumière: la photo comme zone de contact originale entre le spectateur et l'œuvre filmique*, further developed my understanding and appreciation of French visual culture, through its exploration of spatial organisation, light and colour in photographic stills and cinematic frames. Instilled with a renewed appreciation for Jean Rouch's cinematic and ethnographic methods and style, discussions concerning both historic and contemporary sociocultural topics, installations, exhibitions, graphic novel adaptations and screenings led by a range of visual anthropologists, ethnographers, photographers, directors, illustrators, animators and film-makers provided a rich exploration of the visual language of France, as well as of the hopes and aspirations of its creators for the social and anthropological deployment of their craft.

3.4.3. *Forum des Images*

Proclaiming itself to be the beating heart of the 7th art, *Forum des images* attracts over 300,000 visitors every year with its 2000 yearly screenings. Constituting the 'audiovisual memory of Paris', according to its website, the *Forum des images* traverses borders, both cultural and disciplinary, to provide a space for emotions

and exchange whilst promoting the often surprising and always emotive power of the image. Its collections tell of 'yesterday's cinema', feminist struggles (at the *Centre audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir*), and provide a corner for *cinéphiles*, from 3 to 12 years old. In 2016, its festivals included *Un état du monde...et du cinéma*, *l'Étrange festival*, as well as coverage of the annual *Festival du film d'animation d'Annecy* and of the *Festival du court métrage de Clermont-Ferrand*, while its collection room contained almost 8,500 films, including documentaries, animated films, music videos, advertisements and news, as well as feature films shot in Paris. In October 2016, together with documentaries of diverse description, including an exploration into the urban cultures and trends conveyed through the videos and imagery of online social platforms, the *Forum* looked towards the schooling system. At the centre of this focus was the state-sanctioned operation of the school as a 'factory of the citizen' (*Forum des images, octobre 2016*) - a perceived functionality of the French education system I've heard in arguments and perceptions of integration and identity throughout public discourse. Acknowledging a national identity crisis, the true outcomes of the system are considered in the season's sessions, wherein a redesigning of the schooling system is proposed in order to better integrate those on the societal peripheries, as well as to better respond to threats posed to social cohesion. Challenges in schooling abroad are likewise unearthed, from access for Congolese students in Kisangani unable to pay the teacher's fee, to the diverging histories being taught in Israeli and Palestinian schools. Positioning education as a potential hindrance for the future of society, the latter film portrays the walls being erected in the minds of younger generations, far from Nelson Mandela's belief in education as means for positive global change.

Among the screenings, too, are stories of students from the *banlieues*, namely *La Vie en Grand* (Vadepied 2014) whose periurban backdrop performs like a supporting character, and those of *Entre les Murs* (Cantet 2008), where ethnic and cultural tensions simmer in an inner city Parisian school. The lecture '*Après la rue, l'école: le système scolaire dans The Wire*' (Bas 2016) also stands out as a discussion about the educational system depicted in the American TV series, *The Wire*, wherein the school, in its tough Baltimore setting, is presented as a final

utopia. Through the eyes of a young girl entering secondary school, in *Stella* (Verheyde 2008), the school is seen as an equalizing space, where students of diverse backgrounds can overcome their social and cultural divides, and ultimately where a collision of social worlds can result in their respective enhancement, rather than their destruction. Supporting the series and its theme of education and the schooling system, Truffaut's *l'Enfant Sauvage* (1969) was screened, with its portrayal of the school as socialiser, and, as before, although considerably more literal and overt, of the 'education system as citizen-producer'. Similarly, the screening of Goddard's *La Chinoise* (1967) was of interest, with its satirical portrayal of the politicisation of students and the depoliticisation of the rest of the population. From these films and discussions, I observed both historic and contemporary conceptions of the educational system, conveying, at times, optimism and, at others, anxiety, pertaining in particular to the role of the school in French society and some of the challenges it encounters in fulfilling its integrating function.

3.4.4. *The Louvre*



Figure 7. Entry ticket to the Louvre (Autumn 2016)

One might expect to see, on the front of an entry ticket to the *Louvre*, an image of the Mona Lisa, or of another immediately recognisable painting displayed here at the world's most visited art museum. Instead, when I am handed my ticket, I look down at it to see what initially appears to be a rectangular patch of graffiti effacing a surface decorated with what looks like art nouveau-style botanics. Its colours are gritty and muted, suggestive of concrete and tar – a self-consciously 'urban' aesthetic congruent with the 'graffiti', perhaps - in stark contrast to the formal and conservative serif font of 'Louvre' as printed on the ticket, as well as to the celebrated artwork beyond its doors. However, the title of the artwork, printed in a modern sans-serif font, tells me that it is in fact the *Lampe au nom du sultan* by Nasir al-Din Hasan, or, more accurately, its zoomed in, sketchy illustration. My subsequent self-reproach arising from this initial mistaken and derogatory interpretation is somewhat assuaged by the striking similarity such a portrayal does indeed bear with graffiti: the thick lines, heavy curves and segmented depiction surely intended such an interpretation?

Dating from 1357, the lamp, now housed in Paris, originates from Egypt, and whose partial depiction in a demonstrable graffiti-style aesthetic on the ticket for the *Louvre* in 2016 appears to me particularly symbolic. One year after the attack at the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters, located not far from the *Louvre*, and in the midst of the ensuing public 'solidarity' with secular French values or further ostracisation of those of traditional Islam (depending on your views), the partial depiction of an artwork from the ancient Muslim world appears as a graphic synecdoche, whose intended interpretation would be influenced by its blending with the inky, guerrilla art of graffiti – an overt symbol of anarchic urban modernity. In this light, the depiction of the lamp redrawn with a palpable resemblance to graffiti – through its simultaneous suggestion of traditional Muslim culture and contemporary Parisian street art - arguably intended to convey a cultural closeness or parallel between the ancient Middle-East and modern-day France, a divide that was daily declared insurmountable in much public discourse at the time. Its attempted inclusivity, further, is noteworthy here, whereby a broadening of the concept of art to encompass all cultures, East and West, as well as socioeconomic classes is therein evident (although, the €15

entry fee somewhat prohibits the fuller inclusion of the latter, one might argue). I am reminded here, too, of my informant Richard Dumont's reflection on the symbolism of fantasy, which here may aid interpretation - while a few informants stated an interest in fantasy, Richard explained his interest in it as being due to the surrealism of its symbolism, whereby often the viewer is unable to tell from what culture a symbol is drawn - it gives 'only a few hints', he says, in a 'mysterious subject' in which 'I can easily lose myself'.

3.5 *Closing Remarks*

From my fieldwork, the insight I gained into the conventions and practices of contemporary visual art was immeasurably useful for the contextualisation of my image analyses. Across my discussions with informants, my direct observation at events and festivals and in the close readings of mainstream and alternative literature, commonality regarding societal conceptions, hopes and anxieties could be discerned. Building (or controlling) one's own world, imagining alternative realities and expressing world views, for instance, were described by artists as a chief allure of their medium, while they counted among more external societal purposes art as a vehicle for truth-telling and change-making, particularly observable in the ubiquitous disparaging depictions of the police. Throughout, familiar symbolism and metaphorical depictions could be observed, most notably that of Marianne as France personified.

Tension between a desire for technological advancement and machinery as a source of future uncertainty frequently arose. Utopian visions intermingled with dystopia in both discussions and artistic expression, exposing an uneasy ambiguity felt among the French populace regarding such advances, with the loss of tradition, and indeed of humanity, among their foremost concerns. The personal yearning for a pastoral ideal conveyed in Richard Dumont's artwork - his 'nature nostalgia', as he put it - could be felt throughout the visual culture I experienced at my fieldsite, and illuminated for me the purpose and potency of the bucolic imagery and rural rhetoric of RN's political discourse, as well as that of *Rivarol*. Throughout, emotion was observed as a key element among artists, a

driving force in the content they chose to convey and the ways in which they chose to convey it. Belief in visual art as a medium for social change and of self-expression was clearly apparent, with its accessibility and visual appeal deeming it suitable, too, for education and instruction, according to some. Regret, dismay and, often, rebelliousness, at the various restrictions placed on art in France - whether practically, commercially or politically imposed - were, however, keenly felt too. With Orwellian themes of surveillance and censorship surfacing and abating throughout French public discourse, such feelings permeated and coloured my study far beyond my fieldsite.

Chapter 4. Historical Constructions of *Frenchness* in Political Cartoons

4.1 *The Emergence of Caricature*

An art form that ‘aims at truth by transcending reality’ (Coupe 1969: 85), caricature seeks to unmask the ‘victim’, thereby unveiling the reality behind the façade. The particular signifying practices and logonomic system of satire, alongside its customary deployment as a tool to redress societal power imbalance is evident throughout French history, most compellingly at times of social turmoil over the last 250 years. From this historical backdrop, a centuries-long nationhood narrative emerges, ostensibly bolstering the persistent *Frenchness* myths espoused throughout public discourse today. Although the practice of satirical imagery may be traced back to 1360BC, with the unpopular father-in-law of Tutankhamen being amongst its earliest known targets (Baumgartner 2008: 737), the form was first documented in Europe in the sixteenth century by Italian painter, Annibale Carracci. Arguably the originator of contemporary portrait caricature, Carracci declared the medium capable of grasping ‘the perfect deformity and reveal the very essence of a personality’, thereby being ‘more true to life than reality itself’ (Gombrich and Kris 1940: 12), a considerable departure from the idealising veneration in conventional portrait art.

Although first appearing in French culture in the 1600s (Boime 1992), the concept of caricature remained largely dormant in French society until 1762, an initial stirring indicated by its inclusion in the French dictionary (Jones 2011). Notwithstanding this early indication, it wasn’t until the French Revolution that illustrators made fitting use of the political cartoon. Before 1789, French political satire, arguably sterilized by excessive censorship and restrictions, appeared comparatively innocuous, lacking ‘the dynamic, explosively outspoken visual satire’ of English caricaturists Hogarth, Gillray, and others, that was present in British media (Jones 2011: 14). At times of social upheaval, however, throughout the country’s post-revolutionary history, inflammatory, provocative caricatures and political cartoons have been profuse. From the charged cartoons of the July

Revolution to the images that appeared in the streets of Paris in 1968, the cartoon and caricature emerge to appeal to concepts of nationhood, as well as to challenge and unmask the ruling elite through a disruption and rejection of the dominant sign system. In its place, the visual language of revolt, that of the political cartoon and caricature, takes hold.

The contemporary manifestation of caricature has been often linked with the term *esquisse* (sketch), indicative of the speed, informality and lack of apparent artifice with which the imagery may be created, propagated and interpreted. Shaped by this sketch-like quality, such satirical images could be promptly produced as events unfolded, circulating their social commentary at the peak of their relevance and potency, and thereby solidifying the medium as a language of revolt. Reflecting this capability, much harsher legislative restrictions tended to be placed on visual art than on the printed word, with the political cartoon encumbered by varied degrees of censorship throughout French history. The immediacy of images and their accessibility to illiterate consumers, as well as the frequent collective setting in which images were viewed, were recognised, further amplifying the arguments calling for their more severe censorship. Despite these constraints, however, caricature persisted in French society.

Its ensuing popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Western media, for many, mark the golden age of the caricature cartoon, with the arrival of new technologies and media in the twentieth century instigating its diminished application in Western media. Although having remained a consistent element in French popular culture (Trostle 2004; Lamb 2004), renewed interest in the device in broader Western and global public discourse in recent years has been stirred, following the controversy surrounding the publication of images of Muhammad in Danish and French media. With this reinvigorated attention, debates on censorship and freedoms and their political implications for concepts of nationhood, the historical origins of the signifying practices of satire, as well as its use, misuse and subsequent place in contemporary, postcolonial societies have been stoked.

As my research primarily concerns contemporary French political cartoons, this chapter will describe the historical precedent of cartooning in France, exploring the appearance and significance of the political cartoon across significant points in French history. In later chapters, a closer semiotic analysis of contemporary images will be conducted, informed and further contextualised by this historical investigation. In the images below, comparable to subsequent chapters, the signifiers of *Frenchness*, Otherness, belonging and difference, as well as resistance, are marked, and are similarly evaluated in relation to their constructions of nationhood.

A recurring subject of semiotic analysis, I will begin with a note on visual metaphor. A valuable tool for the cartoonist, visual metaphor can be a persuasive technique in political cartoons. Through metaphor, meaning is at once condensed and expanded, with meaning transposed from one event or object to another 'by comparison, by substitution, or as a consequence of interaction (Feinstein 1982: 45). In the discussions below, the implementation of visual metaphor in various political cartoons appears as a challenge to dominant political powers through its subversive imagery. The metaphorical transformation of the political elite into beasts and giants in cartoons such as Daumier's *Gargantua*, discussed below, for instance, illustrates the construction and deployment of the figurative 'enemy image' in efforts to contest the power relations between the artist and their subject⁶ -a ubiquitous device in the political cartoon, one which will reappear throughout this study.

⁶ For an account of the dehumanisation of the Irish in roughly the same period, one may look to the images of *Judy*. The cartoon entitled 'The Most Recently Discovered Wild Beast' (*Judy*, or *The London Serio-Comic Journal*, August 3rd, 1881), for instance, employs simianization to depict metonymically the subject's 'savagery' and to lower their status to the subhuman, alongside other metaphorical devices. Although, in this case, the deployment of metaphoric techniques as well as of binary opposition (us/other, human/non-human) here are intended to support, rather than subvert, established society and authority.

4.2 Visual Metaphor in the Political Cartoon

The creative, and often provocative, deployment of visual metaphor by political cartoonists is abundant throughout this medium. Visual metaphor in political cartoons has been framed as a major weapon in the 'cartoonist's armoury' (Gombrich 1971), due to its numerous potent attributes. The rhetorical devices of metaphor often included in the political cartoon, such as domestication, condensation, binary opposition and humour, are each further amplified by the capacity of visual metaphor to elicit an emotional reaction from the viewer. The 'vividness' of metaphor (Ortony 1975), ensuing from this emotional response, places it closer to perceived experience than a non-metaphorical equivalent, wherein 'one's sensory, emotional, and cognitive systems are readily engaged, allowing the most relevant and experiential information to be transferred not only in rich and vivid detail, but in toto' (Feinstein 1982: 49).

This emotional power of the metaphor is arguably further heightened in its visual expression, a sense deemed so potent throughout history that it could change the course and quality of life, from conception to death. As noted in ancient Greece and Rome, for instance, the affective intensity of visuality made possible an unborn child marked by its parents' observations. Likewise, in his final moments, the condemned man on the scaffold in 14th century Italy may 'come willingly', so comforted is he by the painted *tavoletta* before him (Freedberg 1989). Despite the vastly different social context and technological world in which images appear across contemporary societies, their immense affective capacity appears surprisingly intact, as inferred by the violent backlash to the Muhammad cartoons as well as their fierce support across the globe. Transgressing the 'domineering dichotomy of the cognitive and the emotive', images, then, are demonstrably understood on an emotional, as well as a sensory, level (Freedberg 1989: 25).

The emotional intensity of the image speaks to its agency, too. More than an analysis of coded images, then, a further dimension of meaning warrants consideration. Applying Gell's action-oriented function of art (1998) to the

political cartoon, the agency of such images and their potent affective intensity may be conveyed. In their arousal of emotions among viewers, the image demonstrates agency, according to Gell, as 'a global characteristic of the world of people and things in which we live, rather than as an attribute of the human psyche, exclusively (1998: 20). This agency is, of course, to be tempered with that of the viewer and does not argue for the absolution of human agency in or responsibility from their ensuing actions. Rather, the political artwork as 'secondary' agent enacts a 'channel of agency', and 'a source of potent experiences' (1998: 20) to which supporters and detractors are quickly compelled to respond. In this way, satire and graphic metaphor are far-reaching weapons in the war of images, which, in the eyes of their detractors, have the capacity to transform their creators into intolerant aggressors, or, for their advocates, into courageous freedom-fighters. The agency and active role played by the image is explored specifically from the perspective of an out-group in Chapter 7, *Countering Elite Depictions of Frenchness*, whereby an 'arena of conflict' is constructed (Padoan 2014: 581). We may see, then, the embodiment of the artist's power in their armoury of art, as their artwork also undergoes a transformation in its realisation as a 'social agent' (Gell 1998). Without their powerful armoury, then, neither the artist-as-aggressor nor the artist-as-liberator would exist, underscoring the agency of the artwork.

In order to analyse these potent visual metaphors, I follow El Refaie's proposed exploration of their 'grammar', one that frames them as 'visual representations of metaphorical thoughts' (2003: 75). Pointing to the use of visual metaphor in Austrian political cartoons, El Refaie defines visual metaphors as 'the pictorial expression of a metaphorical way of thinking' (2003: 75), a definition in keeping with cognitive metaphor theory. Along with other semiotic readings, the importance of examining the depicted visual metaphor within their socio-political context is also emphasised, echoing the sentiments of other visual metaphor and culture researchers (Berger 1972; Kress 2000; Serig 2006).

4.3 The Subversive Aesthetics of Humour

Perhaps one of the country's preliminary experimentations with the satirical cartoon, the *Livre de culs* (Book of Arses), emerged in the latter part of the *Ancien Régime*. Created in the mid-1700s by Parisian embroiderer Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livres de Caricatures tant Bonnes que Mauvaises* (Book of Caricatures, both Good and Bad), or by its aforementioned nickname, *Livre de culs*, although an anomaly in *Ancien Régime* France, denotes the potential deployment of humour in imagery as a vehicle with which to cross class boundaries and to disrupt power structures. In this collection of bawdy images, lewd humour was combined with a more intellectual comedy, with its targets often chosen from the ruling elite of the *Ancien Régime*. As illustrated by this clandestine collection, humour here was deemed a 'dangerous object' (Jones 2011), one that attended to the anti-elite sentiment simmering across France at the time. This scatological wit and quotidian bodily humour depicted in the *Livre de caricatures* would reappear later in the political cartoons of *Le Caricature* and *Le Charivari*, discussed below.

A historical shift in the function of humour, as well as in its control, is evident in contemporary public discourse, wherein the political use of humour is likewise confronted with a humorous use of politics, where humour is both put to political use whilst also choosing as its targets politics and political subjects. Such an interplay of humour and politics speaks to their often problematic, and certainly complex, relationship. For François Hollande on the presidential trail in 2012, for instance, humour as a political tool is deployed to 'establish complicity in order to avert conflict', and insodoing, 'humour says: confidence is here' (Bertrand 2014: 85). Through such a deployment of humour, characteristic of the genre, an in-group (and a concurrent out-group) materialises, with group membership depending on whether a reader-viewer 'gets' the joke or not. Plotting such memberships along the points of the semiotic square, with $S1$ comprising of those who 'get' the joke, $S2$ those who don't, and \bar{S}_1 , consisting of those readers who get the joke, but are unamused (although, not offended), and

\bar{S}_2 , being those who are offended while not getting the joke, a sense of complicity may be ascertained.

In comprehending the humour of a political cartoon, then, an impression of shared values and norms arise from this sense of complicity, as felt among its readers (Nielson 2016). In order to consume the satirical image, further, it becomes necessary for the viewer to assume a certain subjectivity, that denoted by the above term *S1*. In this interaction between image and audience, then, the viewer performs an individual identity and thereby inhabits a collectivity, accessing feelings of belonging and inclusivity engendered by the sensibilities of the political cartoon. Conversely, those 'alternative identities' left outside of the joke are 'compelled to find or forge different sites from which to claim inclusion in the national collective' (Nielson 2016: 104-105). Through the accessibility of humour, an ideal, intended recipient is revealed, and in this way, the satirical political cartoon may be seen to prompt a sense of national belonging, along with constructions of in- and out-groups.

Although outside the remit of this investigation, consideration of satirical analysis at the site of reception may here be of note, with recent audience investigations demonstrating the influential power of political cartoons on public opinion (Baumgartner 2008). Findings suggest that this may be attributed to the reduced capacity, or inclination, of the viewer to assess critically a message if conveyed through humour – an aspect that is accredited with heightened positive affect and mood, as well as engendering, towards its author, an increased likeability (Sternthal and Craig 1973). Furthermore, the function of humour in this context often serves to release tension and neutralise fear (Kris 1952). This hypothesis of an immobilising purpose of humour is strengthened by its ubiquity throughout history, such as in 'the clumsy satyrs of Greek comedy, the Devil tripping over his tail in medieval miracle plays, or the perennial jokes on sexual subjects' (Coupe 1969: 91), and also in the satirical work of contemporary caricaturists. The use of humour to strip a concept, individual or group of its apparent threat in this way is evident in the cartoons discussed in the forthcoming chapters. Testament to the ambiguity of the sign, however, the

controversial Muhammad cartoons published by *Charlie Hebdo* and other satirical press in Europe in recent years may either serve to similarly strip a perceived threat of its menace, thereby enacting the proper use of satire, or as alienating and anxiety-inducing images intent on depicting Muhammad and Islam as an Enemy or Other. Through a perceived Muslim exclusion as the joke's 'out-group', such imagery may alternatively further contribute to an ostensible anti-Islam ethos in Western societies, depending on the perspective and social location of the reader, as well as the particular scopic regimes of their culture.

Comparable to the Freudian characteristics of the joke, humour in political imagery similarly deploys such defining traits as 'condensation, abbreviation, the disclosure of hidden similarities between things, and the economy of expenditure of psychic energy' (Boime 1992: 257), alluding to the appeal and function of humour and of caricature in subverting hierarchical relations of power. Revealing the 'truth' of a person or event behind its public image as well as unveiling deeper meaning beyond literal interpretations are central objectives for cartoonists (Gombrich 1971), and are achieved through a number of techniques available to the cartoonist, alongside the use of (frequently scatological) humour. One such preferred technique is that of binary opposition, such as 'good' and 'evil' or 'us' and 'other', in order to influence public opinion, with such signifiers of 'difference' central in their construction. Regardless of technique, however, the objective of caricature in the political cartoon may be seen as a desire to inform an audience about the world, or rather to 'persuade its audience to the truth of certain propositions about real-world state of affairs', employing the visual to achieve this (Mac Uidhir 2013: 143). The purpose of these images, then, is arguably to 'puncture the pretentious showiness of urban spectacle, so as to reveal the somewhat humdrum reality (Jones 2011: 33).

Although making an accurate assessment of the quantifiable impact of the political cartoon is notoriously difficult, a *belief* in its influential potency for social and political attitudes abound. A number of prominent historical figures, through their words and often in their actions, have attested to this valuable application of the political cartoon. The anti-Papal imagery of Martin Luther, for

example, as well as Abraham Lincoln's description of cartoonist Thomas Nast as 'his best recruiting sergeant' during the Civil War, bore testament to this belief in the influence of the political cartoon. So potentially powerful such imagery was deemed to be, in fact, the silence of a cartoonist in 1871 was valued at the equivalent of half a million dollars, in return for refraining from satirical attacks relating to a corrupt New York administration (Coupe 1969: 82). The value of the political cartoon is also clear in its function as morale booster, for example for the English troops in the First World War in the figures of Old Bill and Little Alfie in Bruce Bairnsfather's cartoons (Coupe 1969; Moss 2007; Olson and Olson 2004).

Concern regarding the political potency of the visual is similarly addressed in French politician Francois-Emile Villiers' warning that a 'drawing strikes the sight of passers-by, addresses itself to all ages and both sexes, startles not only the mind but the eyes. It is a means of speaking even to the illiterate, of stirring up passions, without reasoning, without discourse' (Goldstein and Nedd 2015: 66). This also attests to the power of seeing, an aspect frequently omitted in analyses of the political cartoon. In studies into this widely accessible visual language, the tendency for the impact of seeing to be overlooked is suggestive, perhaps, of a routinization of democratic protest actions (Chatterjee 2007). Addressing this oversight, as it were, satire may serve to illuminate the 'pith' of an issue, thereby helping us to 'see' (ibid.). This belief in the potency of the political cartoon and lithographed images, through the use of caricatural techniques and capabilities such as humour, binary opposition and emotive immediacy, supported an argument for heightened control over the medium, to varying degrees, throughout French history, as will be discussed.

4.4 Images of Revolutionary France

As previously outlined, the use of political caricature to appeal to the French populace became a prominent feature of the French Revolution (Popkin 1990; Hunt 1984). Attesting to the significance of visual discourse in the larger cultural upheaval of revolutionary France, such imagery has arguably formed its

'revolutionary character' in the ensuing restructuring of French life and society (Boime 1992: 256). Guiding the illustrators at the beginning of the French Revolution was the elite, royalist publication *Actes des Apotres*, whose classical tradition was subsequently side-lined in favour of those with greater public appeal (Boime 1992). Since most creators of revolutionary images were similarly classically trained, as inferred from the prevalence of certain characteristics of elite 'high' art such as allegory and symbols, the perception that such political cartoons were not truly 'popular' (Popkin 1990), or 'of the people' was frequently heard. A subsequent eschewing of such traditional training by its creators, however, enabled the political cartoon to escape 'the manipulation that affected high art' (Popkin 1990: 254), being focused instead on its capacity to appeal to a broader public. In this way, the graphic art of caricature may be understood as 'a central medium of the popular revolution' (ibid.). Furthermore, the aforementioned connection between the political cartoon and the sketch, through both its immediacy and its sensibilities, reaffirms the former as a popular medium in an accessible vernacular, and one suited to convey a revolutionary spirit. With its primal sketch-like 'rawness', the caricature expresses revolution in both content and form. As Boime asserts, 'caricature is not only the best art form for revolutionary protest but is itself a carrier of the new idea', conveying an emotional immediacy to its viewers (Boime 1992: 261) and its above-mentioned ensuing agency (Gell 1998). In this way, the choice of medium mirrors its revolutionary content, emphasising the emergence of a society at its inception. Through the raw, half-finished aesthetic of the political cartoon, the image thereby elicits a 'state of becoming', acting as a rough sketch of a nascent society.

Throughout the nation's revolutionary and dissenting political imagery, the prevalence of a peasant, or non-elite, figure may be spotted. This recurring character will be observed, too, in forthcoming discussions on contemporary political imagery, as well as in the political rhetoric of right-wing nationalist party *Le Front National* (known as *Rassemblement National*, since June 1st, 2018). Historical precedence for the peasant figure is evident in the images of the French Revolution, most notably in Robert Chagny's study (Popkin 1990) in

which was observed a striking occurrence of peasant protagonists. This, Popkin asserts, strengthens the exceptionally 'bourgeois revolutionary leadership's claim to speak for the mass of the population' (1990: 255). In an updated version of the peasant, then-FN's non-elite 'heartlander' archetype and *Le Monde's* 'Marianne' or Liberty, based on Delacroix's construction, described below, make recurrent appearances throughout their creators' respective political rhetoric, as will be discussed in later chapters. Evoking Italian fascism through the strategic deployment of historicity and the cult of tradition (Eco 1995), an attempt is made to legitimate their makers' role as speakers for the populace, reflecting also the earlier importance of the broad public appeal and a marketplace-like collectivity for the illustrators of the French Revolution imagery. In Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), arguably the most widely recognisable image of revolutionary France, the configuration of Liberty, also known as Marianne, is here particularly notable. Painted in the same year as the event depicted, the painting portrays the uprising during the July Revolution that saw the replacement of King Charles X with Louis Philippe 1, or the 'Citizen King'. Commemorating the July Revolution, this image and its symbolism, particularly that of Marianne/Liberty, have become ubiquitous throughout times of political tensions and revolt in France, as will be further discussed through the analysis chapters, as well as in the historical imagery below.

The role of the political cartoon in challenging and developing ideas of class may too be supported in the imagery of the French Revolution, alongside a rejection of subjects previously held sacrosanct. Depictions of the royal Flight to Varennes in 1791 included unflattering portrayals of the king as a pig or drunkard, which, according to some scholars 'were essential to the process of desacralization that made his trial and execution conceivable' (Popkin 1990: 255). Dehumanising their subjects by transforming them into monsters, giants and beasts in this way, further contributed to this rejection of their target's sanctified status, and potentially their subsequent ousting. Honoré Daumier's depiction of Louis-Philippe, discussed below, offers further illustration.

However, alongside these revolutionary images, there also appeared anti-revolution imagery, as well as the revolutionary art of other media, such as those of political pamphlets and periodicals of the time. These were comparably potent, imbued with the similar capacity for a timely response to events as they unfolded, and contribute to the pictures of France in revolt. Through an exploration into the graphic art of the French Revolution, then, 'the emotional intensity of the revolutionary experience' may be grasped (Popkin 1990: 259), as well as the quest for an appropriate medium through which revolutionaries could find expression. However, within the gamut of subversive imagery, the enduring figure of Marianne appears particularly potent in the public imagination.

4.5 Marianne as Nation Personified

Some of the most overt depictions of national identity are arguably in the portrayal of the nation itself as a citizen, a visual trope that habitually sees a resurgence at times of socio-political upheaval in France. The personification of a nation, usually in the form of a woman, serves to illustrate the ideal citizen, as perceived by a dominant elite. This anthropomorphic image of a nation has been commonly used to depict countries around the world, with Western countries often using as their source a figure from Greek or Roman mythology. Such configurations, styled according to the visual discourse of their classical, Hellenic and mythological origins, appear in myriad sites, such as in statue form in a place of prominence in a capital city, on a country's currency (particularly its coins), its postal stamps, or in the editorial cartoons in the pages of a newspaper in both mainstream and alternative press. Regardless of their source of inspiration, a preference for mythological characters over real, historical figures is apparent in the personification of nationhood, with some notable examples including the figures of Britannia, Hibernia, Uncle Sam, Europa, and Germania, alongside the aforementioned Marianne or Liberty. Serving as a metaphorical configuration of the nation, the, usually female, character and persona of the figure are metonymically applied to construct the figure of the ideal citizen. As De Baecque attests, regarding the use of metaphorical analogy in the representations of

nations, '(a)llegory expressed a crucial visual narrative: it told the story of political power through metaphor, through a figurative correspondence between material things and the discourse of ideas' (1994: 111). Here, the allegorical narrative of Marianne-as-nation is a recurring component of the nation's revolutionary visual culture. The voluptuous figure of Marianne in her various depictions, from the original Delacroix painting to its various reincarnations, connotes birth and mother-protector (Klahr 2011). Signifying the birth of the Republic in the original Delacroix painting, her reappearance in the *Charlie Hebdo* solidarity imagery also arguably conveys the emergence of a newly solidified nation, untied against a common oppressive enemy.

Alluding to the concept of women as 'bearers of tradition and continuity with the past', with the duty of progression apparently falling to men, the deployment of feminine icons and allegories of the woman-as-nation are commonplace in modern nation-building and the formation of national identity (Nielson 2016 102). In this way, nations personified as female whose origins are based in antiquity, 'impart historical authenticity onto the nation while the authority to direct its present and future (is) reserved for men' (Nielson 2016: 103). The capacity to appeal to the emotions of a public is also attributed to the ubiquity of a feminine national embodiment. The depiction of woman as mother, for instance, is thought to forge an emotional attachment of citizen to their nation, transforming a body of land into a 'motherland'. In this way, utilising feminised allegories in nation-building reveals a potential of 'transferring the intensity of affective investments in familial relationships onto political relationships' (ibid.).

Considering that attachment to a nation is emotional rather than rational, political leaders have recognised the importance and value of evoking the emotions through the use of symbolic imagery to depict a nation. By appealing to an affective connection in this way, then, the citizen is compelled to conceive of the nation as one to love and protect, and, by extrapolation, to kill and die for, in effect experiencing a love for one's nation (Najmabadi 2005). Compelling a citizen to internalise a national identity, about which they feel passionate, demonstrates the power of, typically feminised, nationalistic imagery. It has been

argued that, more simply, the prevalence of the woman-as-nation trope may be explained by the tendency for most abstract terms in Latin and Italian to have feminine endings (van Straten 2000). However, this grammatical derivation for the depiction of a feminised nationhood has been disputed, with some arguing that the processes of allegory are imagined in gendered terms (Landes 2003; Delogu 2015), with 'the allegorical text...often said to be veiled...like a chaste or modest woman' (Delogu 2015: 19). As distinct from the symbol, the allegory suggests its own key to its understanding, in this case, with the embodiment of woman-as-nation seen as 'part of a long tradition - both classical and biblical - of imagining cities, provinces, or kingdoms in allegorical terms, as women' (2015: 45).

First conceived as the personification of the new Republic in the eighteenth century, the figure and allegory of Marianne portrays the French nation in physical form, with which its citizens can, theoretically, readily identify. Although a personification of a nation that is inspired 'from above' by the revolution's political elites (Popkin 1990), as inferred from her origins in the imagery of antiquity, the anthropomorphic nation as Marianne is given a traditional, common French name to embody the French populace. In a similar way, Canada, Australia and other white, settler colonies redeployed imperial imagery to fashion their own national personification using similarly inspired feminised allegory (Nielson 2016). Described as 'the embodiment of the French Republic', Marianne represents 'the permanent values that found her citizens' attachment to the Republic: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"' (gouvernement.fr). The symbolic Marianne figure is deployed by both supporters of the republic as well as its opponents, with a particular attachment to Marianne reportedly felt among the nation's working classes. Marianne, therefore, 'is a symbol of a Republic', whose populace may be united under one common, widely shared, 'representation of the motherland, at times fiery and warlike, at times pacific and nurturing' (<https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/marianne-and-the-motto-of-the-republic>). Part of a comparable visual discourse pertaining to France's national identity, the historical figure of Joan of Arc may be similarly interpreted as the nation

personified (Delogu 2015), likewise replete with metonymically inferred values and characteristics.

As well as the frequently depicted Marianne as symbol of liberty and of France, the concept of another central republican tenet - that of equality - has too been personified in the form of a young woman. In her frequent depiction, Equality typically appears surrounded by 'children carrying the symbol of the three orders of the *Ancien Régime*: the agricultural tools of the Third Estate, the Bible of the Clergy and the crown of the Nobility: synthesis of the new and old France' (gouvernement.fr). Replacing the often-depicted weighing scales in much of this art, the builder's level was chosen by artists to signify 'equality rather than equity' (ibid.). Finally, Fraternity is often depicted holding a 'staff surmounted by a Gallic rooster, following the figure are two children leading a lion and a sheep yoked together' (ibid.). As discussed, however, it was the symbol of liberty that was chosen as the representative symbol of the new republic, and repeatedly, at different politically fraught times in French history.

In the construction of Liberty, the near-constant attribute of the Phrygian cap signifier, as well as connoting liberty, appears to place Marianne outside of the present-day, locating her instead, in part, in antiquity. Interpreted as a 'liberty cap' following the French Revolution, it came to signify freedom and its pursuit, imbuing its connoted France with these values, whilst also emphasising a historical authenticity. Originating in Antiquity, the Phrygian cap, worn by the emancipated slaves in the Roman Empire whose descendants, due to their emancipation, were entitled to claim citizenship, is a particularly unambiguous attribute denoting liberty. Through the use of this signifier, then, the departure from an out-dated and unjust society is signified by the striking connotation of emancipated slaves, further emphasising the aforementioned concepts of liberty and equality. In imagery emerging during the French Revolution, Marianne is portrayed holding a pikestaff surmounted with the ubiquitous Phrygian cap. A clear and recurrent theme running throughout much of the imagery during this time period, the importance of liberty for France is underscored in its connoted willingness for war and revolt, ready to be waged in its name. During this time,

Marianne-as-warrior, then, is a particularly popular depiction. Despite women's limited participation in political life in revolutionary France, with no voting rights or legal access to military or civil posts (Freund 2011), female allegories depicting the nation and the Republic quickly became a popular way to unite and mobilise a nation. As well as marking the nation's progression from the *Ancien Régime* into modern society, the revolutionary visual discourse of woman-as-nation, and further, Marianne-as-warrior, arguably accelerated women's claim to political agency, albeit engendering a political activism that was not yet socially sanctioned (Freund 2011).

The inversion of such symbolic visual discourse, conversely, has been deployed to express scorn for the nation it signifies. Alongside its appearance at times of internal turmoil caused by national identity crises, the personification of a nation has been seen to arise in periods of international tension, such as during wartime. In the weekly German satirical magazine, *Kladderadatsch*, published between 1848 and 1900, depictions of Marianne in the period immediately before and following the First World War are profuse. In these images, Marianne was often portrayed as 'a victim of either British perfidy or Russian avarice' (Klahr 2011: 558). The messages connoted by these images that were 'woven about her character were excellent reflections of the complex attitudes that Germans had about France at this time' (2011: 558), illustrating the contemptuous deployment of Marianne in foreign configurations of *Frenchness*.

In the discussion below, as well as in chapters to follow, Marianne will be seen as a recurring character in French mainstream, as well as in subaltern and subcultural, media, the most notable and evocative example perhaps being her appearance in political cartoons following the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris in 2015. Reconfigured for such a context, her revolutionary origins in such artwork as Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, and its renewed cultural relevance, requires a nuanced and contextualised reading. Marianne appears, therefore, as a single central metaphor that encapsulates the nation's revolutionary ethos and its renewed focus on identity and nationhood, evident in visual discourse during various politically tense time periods throughout French

history. Throughout much of Plantu's imagery for *Le Monde*, the figure of Marianne can be easily discerned⁷. Most explicitly, this national personification is used to provocative effect in his cartoon version of *Liberty Leading the People*, created in solidarity with *Charlie Hebdo* specifically and in support of the satirical press in general in France. Outside of this solidarity context, however, Marianne is a frequent character in Plantu's political cartoons, representing a France and a French selfhood and citizenship that appear at times to semiotically exclude non-secular (in particular, Muslim) citizens.

Anchoring to the semiotic square this allegory of France as Marianne, ubiquitous throughout Plantu's (and others') solidarity imagery, as well as in the rhetoric of political parties - both of the right and the left - and their campaign discourse in particular, an initial identification of its general ideological position may be established. Mapping it to Bertrand's (2007, 2009) third term of four, that of Bertrand's \bar{S}_1 's, 'imagined fiction', whereby literary genres, historical figures and a playing on emotions are enacted, the Marianne figure proceeds from an $S1$ term of lived, participatory experience, where an intimacy, communication and shared experience is connoted, as attempts to persuade the viewer to identify with its protagonist may be recognised, while bypassing Bertrand's remaining utopian $S2$ and analytical \bar{S}_2 , terms. Here, while a blurring of values held by those on the political right and on the left may be discerned, the semiotic square as a mapping tool helps track their nonetheless diverging logical courses. While, for Plantu, primacy is given to the shared experiences depicted by $S1$, as embodied by his recurring Mouse character, the concurrent fictional construction of reality of \bar{S}_1 , is denoted by his Marianne.

⁷ The national personification of France-as-Marianne is commonplace, too, in other French satirical publications, such as *Le Canard Enchaîné*, and its *Dossiers du Canard Enchaîné*. In one image, Marianne, as national symbol of France and an allegory of liberty and reason, is seen leaping into the arms of an indifferent-looking police officer, suggestive perhaps of a contested relationship between law enforcement and the centrality of liberty in French life and to concepts of *Frenchness*. In the same edition, French law enforcement was portrayed as blood-sucking vampires. This powerful metaphorical image, evoking cruelty and inhumanity, calls to mind reported instances of recent police violence and brutality in France, particularly directed towards ethnic minority suspects. This image was further expounded metonymically in its corresponding article.

Through such terms and their interrelations, of concern are the ways in which the depiction of France in this way may compel Muslim exclusion from concepts of the ideal French citizen, and, additionally, stimulate anti-Muslim sentiment in the visual discourse. Through this corporeal imagery, not only is the identity of the ideal French citizen conceptualised, but also conveyed are their civic obligations. French identity, as discussed above, as personified by Marianne, appears in contrast to the depictions of Muslims, in particular, those of Muslim women. Here, we may see Muslim women as a site of projection in the public sphere. The militant, semi-unclothed figure of Marianne in Plantu's recreation of Delacroix's painting, contrasting starkly to the veiled figure of the traditional Muslim woman⁸, became a frequently recurring image in the wave of solidarity images that arose in support of *Charlie Hebdo*, projecting at once multiple discrepancies between Islam and secular *Frenchness*. The support for the satirical publication was extended to that of secular France, with much of the solidarity imagery seemingly reinforcing the place of freedom of speech as a central tenet of its national identity. This evocative image of Marianne with her hair untied and breasts exposed under a slipped *chiton* conveys, not only a sense of urgency and passion, but also, in its contemporary context, one of modernity. Opposing this semi-clad personification of a liberal, secular France, the veiled woman conversely comes to signify, and similarly embody, repression and backwardness (Ismail 2008).

The veil, in this dominant scopic regime, then, becomes a particularly provocative sign, imbued with significance pertaining to progress as well as identity. In countries such as Iran, Turkey and Egypt, the banning of cultural signs, including that of the Muslim veil, was interpreted as a modernising and civilising process (Ismail 2008), its removal a performance of modernization and a 'corporeal inscription of modern citizenship' (Göle 2002: 184) in the public sphere. Conversely, then, the absence of cultural signs such as the veil has come

⁸ Reconfigurations of Marianne in the particular style of Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* have been recurring in French visual discourse since the painting's creation in 1830, as seen, for example, in the imagery created and disseminated during the Paris riots in May 1968, discussed below (*Fig. 8*, below, '*Les Beaux-arts sont fermés mais l'art révolutionnaire est né*').

to signify a modernising society. Invisible, or absent, cultural signs denoting Islam as signification of modernity and a progressive society, then, further underscore the significance of the heightened visibility of Islamic signs, evident in numerous political imagery (illustrated in *Fig. 27*, by Plantu, in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Analysis). The deployment of Marianne, as an ideal form of *Frenchness*, arguably constitutes, therefore, a visual culture of Muslim exclusion. Similar to the shedding of the Muslim veil by supposedly modernising Muslim women, Marianne becomes part of a corporeal performance of citizenship.

Universally portrayed as white, Marianne constructs *Frenchness* as also inherently white, interpellating viewers into a white subjectivity that conversely compelled a disidentification with a non-white, or non-Muslim, Other. The claim to citizenship and belonging made by the white, secular (or Christian) viewer-citizen is thus legitimised. Likewise, that of the French Muslim is graphically invalidated in the nation-as-Marianne imagery. The strident figure of Marianne in recent Delacroix-style depictions calls on viewers to be similarly militant, invested in defending the fundamental French values of freedom of expression and democracy, whilst denoting Islam as her antithesis. In this way, the allegorical figure of Marianne demonstrates her capacity for instilling in her viewers/citizens a specific personal and political identity. Disseminated through mainstream media, we may see depictions of the personified nation of France in much political imagery. In these encoded portrayals, the values, priorities and identities that are excluded from the narrative may also be identified. Through the deployment of these signifiers, the marginalisation of the French Muslim and of Islam is recognisable, with this population segment often seen to be disproportionately targeted, whether intentionally or otherwise, by elite imagery. The visual constructions of Muslims and of Islam as inherently *unFrench* may be understood as a manifestation of anxieties pertaining to national identity, brought about by the tense socio-political climate in France.

Personifying the nation as Marianne or Liberty, then, provides a narrative structure on which national identity may be built. Through the allegory of

Liberty, a particular narrative pertaining to identity may be understood and maintained. In this way, shared beliefs bolstered by a common origin and identity may be transmitted, embedded in a specific cultural context (Agius 2017). By looking through the prism of this political imagery, then, the above-described French identity comes to be symbolised in these, often-archetypal, representational figures, with an absence of Muslim signifiers interpreted as ‘evidence of a modernizing society’ (Ismail 2008: 26). Through the national personification of Liberty-as-France, then, a sense of continuity is upheld and the idea of the nation, and the story of its identity and ‘authentic’ citizenship, can thereby be told and corroborated.

4.6 The Origins of Racial signifiers in Western Discourse

Alongside the constructions of Marianne-as-France, contemporary racial signifiers in political art may, too, have their foundations in the nation’s historical visual discourse. The signifying practices marking racial difference in popular culture and the ubiquity of the often-stereotypical depictions of the (unified) Muslim may be traced back to the scopic regimes developed throughout France’s colonial past, and from a number of critical moments in human history. Images of a non-white ‘Other’, arising from the trading of West African slaves between Europe and America in the 1600s, proliferated, replete with a nascent representational visual lexicon. Later, the ‘high Imperialism’ period, which saw the European colonisation of Africa, contributed to their portrayals, further developing their conception in the Western social imaginary, as colonial images of black people appeared on commodities such as cigarettes, soap and on biscuit tins (Hall 2003). More recently, the large-scale post-war flight of migrants to Europe and North America further amplified the visibility of a foreign Other in public discourse (Hall 2003). As Hall notes, ‘Western ideas about “race” and images of racial difference were profoundly shaped by those three fateful encounters’ (2003: 239).

From their bodily portrayals, it was thought, ideas about an individual’s culture may be extrapolated. Through these embodied signifying practices, then, ‘the

body became the totemic object, and its very visibility the evident articulation of nature and culture' (Green 1984: 31). Specifically observable, then, in this long history of racialised imagery is the opposing black/white signifier, connoting 'savagery', 'exoticism', 'primitiveness' or 'nature', and 'civility', 'refinement', 'progress', 'restraint' or 'purity', respectively. In such nativist or xenophobic discourse, the non-white Other is stereotypically conveyed, as it is deemed that such 'other' groups 'must be symbolically excluded if the "purity" of the culture is to be restored' (Hall 2003: 258). Through the deployment of such stereotypes, a supposed knowledge of the Other is formulated and disseminated, on which the basis for their exclusion is formulated. These colonial origins of contemporary images of the Muslim in French public discourse, along with the 'techniques of discipline that were developed in colonial practices' (Ismail 2008: 27), are arguably reassigned for use in the contemporary conceptual universe. The outcome of this redeployment, as Ismail notes, 'may be seen in the stigmatization of certain subjectivities, and an essentialist configuration of Arabs and Muslims, 'confining their identities to fixed traits and attributes from which they cannot escape' (ibid.).

4.7 Le Charivari & Gargantua



Figure 9: Gargantua (Honoré Daumier for *La Caricature*, 1831)

In 1831, Honoré Daumier's *Gargantua* attempted its first appearance. The artwork of Daumier, a prolific and provocative caricaturist in 19th century France, was frequently published in Charles Philipon's satirical publications *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*. This particularly controversial cartoon, however, intended for publication in *La Caricature* in 1831, was initially blocked by government censorship, and Daumier, along with the publisher, were subsequently fined, with the former also required to serve a six-month prison sentence. The image at the centre of this vexation, *Gargantua*, portrays French monarch Louis-Philippe - rotund and *poire*-shaped – in this piercing criticism of the king and his regime. In this image, we see the cartoonist's, as well as society's lower classes', contempt for the regime of Louis-Philippe of the July Monarchy. A direct inspiration from Rabelais and the grotesque, the cartoon is a reimagining of the giant *Gargantua* of Rabelais' 16th century series of novels (2006 [1532]).

Here, Louis-Philippe as *Gargantua* sits on his throne, with diminutive officials offering bags of coins, along with themselves perhaps, which are immediately devoured, as additional subordinates attend to his excrement-decrees. Serving as further visual criticism, both head and body are presented in the shape of a pear, a reference to the slang term for simpleton (*poire*). Throughout Daumier's artwork, repeated motifs such as haughty deportments and bulbous noses appear, creating 'gestural formulas' (Wechsler 1982).

Such satirical portraits of Louis-Philippe are a visual retort to his more regal representations, which serve to redouble and intensify his presence and power (Marin 1988). In these formal portrayals, the king observes the absolute monarch he wishes to be, 'to the point of recognizing and identifying himself through and in it at the very moment when the referent of the portrait absents himself from it' (1988: 8). 'The king is only truly king', therefore, 'in images', wherein his true presence resides (*ibid.*). The body of the king is here triply configured: as organic, historical body, where it 'is visible as represented'; as political body, whereby it is 'visible as symbolic fiction signified in its name, right, and law'; and as semiotic, sacramental body (1988: 13; 1989). Through his majestic portrait, in this way, 'power as representation and representation as power' (15) take effect. Such a portrait constitutes metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, as 'resemblance, correspondence and connection' are here discerned (1988). Beyond the justification of such tropes, however, the question as to when is afforded the right to give a sign the name of a thing here arises. With its iconic potency, then, a narrative of the monarch may be read, too, in the portrait of the king, as the power of its author is similarly revealed. This lofty narrative is disrupted, then, through the derogatory and deflating satirical counter-representations of the monarch. If the 'portrait of Louis is Louis' (Marin 1988: 9), one might wonder, then, of his satirical depiction.

A frequent component of satire and the caricature, too, as exemplified in *Gargantua*, the body has been the location on which societal hierarchies have been seen to play out, indicating that in 'domains of transgressions...place, body, group identity and subjectivity interconnect' (Stallybrass and White 1986: 25).

Here, the body tells a story of royal indulgence in contrast to the deprivation of the working classes, refuting too the majestic narratives of the regal portrait. Identity at the level of the abstract progresses to hardship and servitude at the thematic level, building towards a configuration of the French citizen as necessarily deprived with reason to revolt, at the figurative level. This satirical technique and aesthetic style is reflective, too, of the pseudoscientific practice of physiognomy, 'or the indication of character through the facial features and forms of the head and body', popular throughout many Western societies at the time (Cowling 1989: 9). Inferring mental and moral character from the appearance of an individual was appropriated and propagated through much of the contemporary political imagery, further accentuating caricatural features in order to promote an opinion of a person or concept. In Victorian England, for example, a range of literature on the subject was published, describing how features such as the profile of the nose or chin, size of the skull, lip shape and forehead slope signified the social status and moral standing of the individual depicted, along with their race and perceived intelligence, and were deployed extensively by scientists as well as cartoonists (Cowling 1989). In the figures below, examples of such physiognomy are evident, wherein certain bodily signifiers are imbued with meaning to connote social difference, which the viewer is then invited to decode.

Further, distorting Bakhtin's interpretation of the image of food as a symbol of the entire labour process, in which its success is depicted as a feast, we see a strikingly unidirectional flow of food. Moving from the impoverished towards Louis-Philippe's awaiting gaping mouth, 'the direct opposition between powerless and powerful, between the feeders and the fed' is signified (Childs 1992: 28). The inclusion of a jester is understood to be the cartoonist himself, indicating the role of humorist that the caricaturist typically inhabits. The character may further be interpreted as the presence of the frequently occurring 'average citizen', also evident, more recently, in the recurrent character of Plantu's *Marianne*, as well as in the figure of 'Mouse', discussed in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign.

Through these signifiers, then, we may clearly recognize a harsh criticism of the ruling elite and of their policies, as well as a conception of the French citizen as a hardworking and exploited non-elite. Clearly conveyed is the palpable disdain for the monarchy, which was seen to ignore the needs of the populace (Weisberg 1993), favouring instead their own comfort, indulgence and extravagance. This is encapsulated in the visual metaphor of the throne as a toilet (Weisberg 1993), and is suggestive too of Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, wherein power structures and social hierarchies are irreverently inverted (Forker 2012). In order to appeal to its readership, and to ensure its clear message, this disdain, earned by the monarch by both his apparent lack of concern for others' rights and his attainment of power without legitimacy (Weisberg 1993), was expressed in this scatological way, in line with other images published in *La Caricature*. Similarly deploying excretory symbolism, the artwork of caricaturist Charles-Joseph Traviès, who, as Baudelaire describes, 'has a deep feeling for the joys and sorrows of the common people' (1857), may likewise be seen as cutting criticism of the regime of Louis-Philippe, with an attempt to destabilise it also expressed through scatological wit (Weisberg 1993). Drawing from Bakhtin's grotesque realism, and reminiscent of the aforementioned Rabelasian grotesque of the *Livre de caricatures*, the country's elite culture is here again parodied through the vulgar carnival of bodily humour (Bakhtin 1993).

This subversive role of caricature in the French Revolution continued into the 19th century. With increasing literacy rates and the availability of inexpensive, mass-produced print media, political satire could extend its rebellious reach, and was 'one of the fundamental issues of the 1830 revolution'. During the July Monarchy, it came to be considered as 'the main expression of opposition, with the brilliant productions of Honoré Daumier, Jean Ignace Grandville, Charles Joseph Traviès, and others in the weekly pages of *La Caricature*' (Hannoosh in Kelly 1998: 344). The threat of destabilisation posed by political cartoons was not discounted in France, with acknowledgement made to the potency of the aforementioned processes of desacralization. As the government prosecutor remarked during the trial of *Le Charivari* in 1835, 'before overthrowing a regime, one undermines it by sarcasm, one casts scorn upon it' (Goldstein and Nedd

2015: 70). This recognition by the ruling class of the potential of the satirical image to influence public opinion is further evident from the varying censorship laws it subsequently invoked.

4.8 *'Seditious Designs': Censorship in 19th Century France*

The distinction between a joke and treason has been a contentious and unstable issue throughout the history of satirical cartoons in France, with the boundary frequently only recognised once it has been over-stepped. Together with many European countries in the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century for some, controls on political expression in France were considerable⁹. Particular attention was given to dissent expressed in the visual arts, deemed more dangerous and capable of causing greater impact due to the illiteracy of a significant proportion of the population. Graphic art in France, particularly in the nineteenth century, was subject to strict censorship, while the printed word enjoyed relatively more lenient controls. The heightened threat of defamatory imagery arose from its accessibility for a significant illiterate portion of the population, as well as the increased likelihood that the images would be viewed communally. Insight into the perception of the lower classes of French society by the ruling elite may also be inferred from this harsh management of political imagery. A wariness of an illiterate audience was, of course, a wariness of France's poorer population by its wealthy elite, due to its higher rate of illiteracy. Deemed to be more susceptible to acts of revolt, furthermore, the lower classes were treated with suspicion, along with the potentially incendiary medium of the political cartoon through which they may find political expression.

⁹ Similarly, harsher than even that of the censored press of earlier Czarist Russia, Soviet satire was met with severe restrictions. Where earlier there had been some room for political critique of the established order in the form of satire, the trope was then appropriated by the Soviet authorities 'on behalf of the established order against the exceptional and the deviant', where, furthermore, it was intended as 'explicit directive to action' (Martha Wolfenstein, 'The Soviet Image of Corruption', in Mead and Métraux [Eds.] 1953: 447-448).

For most of the period between 1820 and 1881, strict censorship laws relating to visual culture were in place, which stated that 'No drawings, engravings, lithographs, medallions, prints, or emblems of any kind may be published, displayed or sold without the prior authorization of the Ministry of Police of Paris or the prefects in the departments' (Tillier 2012: 81). The majority of images that were not granted official approval were censored on the basis of their violation of a 'moral' order, such as those which were deemed to be attacks on 'religion, the family, the courts, [and] the army' (Goldstein and Nedd 2015: 69). This focus on graphic art such as lithographs and engravings was due in part to the belief that they acted 'immediately upon the imagination of the people, like a book read with the speed of light', with the French interior minister having previously warned about the dangers of graphic art, stating that 'it acts directly upon the people and could lead them to revolt' (Archives Nationales, Paris, F18 2342; AP (1898), 741, in Goldstein and Nedd 2015: 63). Described as 'seditious designs' by interior minister Charles Duchatel, these concerns were again reiterated, underscoring the belief that such imagery directly incited disturbances to the social order (Goldstein and Nedd 2015). Furthermore, as above described, the reception of the images, more often than that of the printed word, took place in public or in crowds, with the images displayed in kiosks and shop windows, enabling a collectivity that potentially afforded the medium greater opportunity to disturb public order.

During this period, a brief freedom of expression was afforded to the press in France following the 1830 revolution, a reaction to the harsh restrictions that had been put in place during the Bourbon Restoration (Childs 1992). However, renewed fears of the potency of subversive imagery caused restrictions on offensive depictions of the monarchy to be soon reinstated, with deviances punishable by fines or imprisonment (Childs 1992). Based on this perceived threat of visual art to social stability, consistently considered greater than that of written print, it was argued in 1835 by the French Minister of Justice Jean-Charles Persil that these media were outside of the 1830 constitutional charter's assurances of 'the right to publish' and that 'censorship can never be re-established' (Goldstein 2000). Here, conveying a notable shift in semiotic

ideology, images came to signify *acts*, in a way that printed, text-based opinions did not, thereby supporting the argument for a reinstatement of restrictions for published imagery rather than for the printed word, whilst dodging accusations of censorship. Such schisms in semiotic ideologies, 'over the very status of signs', are often 'matters of ethical values, of how one should live', taking 'seriously the world it presupposes and the life that world recommends' (Keane 2018: 83). The interpretation of publishing an image as taking action, where 'one speaks to their eyes' (Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860, in Goldstein 2000), exposes, then, the perceived menace of the political cartoon and of graphic art to the political elite, as well as the prevailing assumptions of the lower classes and the hegemonic political agenda.

Censorship on drawings was therefore soon reinstated in 1835, citing the above-described dangers of subversive imagery compared to the printed word (Goldstein 1998). Nevertheless, as discussed above, caricaturists such as Daumier and Traviès, and the satirical publications *La Caricature*, *Le Charivari* and *La Maison Aubert*, among others, flouted these constraints, experimenting with the new technologies of the press, most notably the newly invented lithography, and the powers they incurred. These cartoonists and publications pushed the boundaries of a restrictive government, in the name of freedom of expression and of the press. Daumier, equipped with his 'seditious crayon', often depicted topics considered taboo, with *Gargantua* the first of many visual indictments of both a regime and of the nation's media censorship (Childs 1992: 37). André Gill, a caricaturist whose work has appeared in *La Lune*, *L'Eclipse* and *Le Charivari*, too, defied strict censorship on caricatures, although often through evasion, hiding disparaging material in seemingly inoffensive imagery. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the liberal Press Law (*Loi sur la liberté de la presse*) of 1881 brought about a rapid increase in French publications due to a renewed loosening of restrictions, which included a revised understanding of libel.

Clashes of semiotic ideology, readily apparent in colonial encounters, feature clearly in today's postcolonial France. Further glaring rupture in semiotic

ideologies, this time between nationalities, ethnicities and religious affiliation, is discernable in the debates that followed the controversial Mohammad cartoons, as will be discussed below. Exemplary of other signs, the transforming and disputed signification of the political image, evident throughout French historical public discourse, from being a sign comparable to that of text and the printed word to its reformulation as an 'act' subject to censorship, demonstrates their inherent contestability, and their subjection to historical transformation (Keane 2018). As Keane further attests, 'social worlds are constantly changing not just for reasons technological, demographic, economic, and so on, but because semiotic processes are in constant motion' (2018: 83-84).

Throughout these historical debates, the suitability and justification of the state to control political art and expression had been put into question. The threat of political imagery was countered with a popular scorn for censorship, with perhaps Daumier's *Gargantua* as prime example signifying the 'resilience of the artist's political expression in spite of the government's attempted regulation or censure' (Childs 1992: 26). Likewise, *La Caricature's* Philippon issued the following statement in an edition in November 1831: "Yes, we have the right to personify power. Yes, we have the right to take, for this personification, whatever resemblance suits our needs! Yes, all resemblances belong to us!", an ancient echo of the sentiment of resilience, and a reinstatement of the purpose of satire, evoked in the solidarity cartoons that arose in the wake of the *Hebdo* attacks one hundred and eighty four years later. In this renewed debate on censorship, ensuing from the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris in 2015, one side may be clearly heard to echo this response to restrictions of political expression, with 'Resilience!' their rallying cry, and 'Respect!' that of the other.

The supposedly traditional values of freedom of the press and of expression and their position as intrinsically and authentically French appears, therefore, more problematic than may be discerned from many contemporary debates on media censorship. From this historical context, a comparison between France's history of shifting censorship laws and the contemporary Islamic prohibition on depictions of Muhammad may be thus made, further expounding the issues

surrounding satire and the political cartoon in French and Western media, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?* The depiction of Louis-Philippe as *Gargantua*, for instance, ‘raised the central question of the caricaturist’s right to create and transform resemblance, regardless of the law’ (Childs 1992: 33). As with the *Charlie Hebdo* solidarity cartoons of 2015, the public response, certainly the cartoonists’ response, was seen to restate their belief in the ‘liberty of the (pencil)’ (ibid.). This could most notably be seen in an image appearing with a caption that asks whether or not pears were still permitted to be portrayed, due to the apparent close resemblance of the king to a pear (*poire*), or simpleton, as the joke went. Debate was stirred as to whether the image of *Gargantua* was a depiction of the king or of the government’s swollen budget, the former making it punishable by law. As Childs ascertains, the most significant argument in these documents presented in the artist’s defense revolved ‘around the issues of resemblance and signification’ (1992: 35). A post-Revolutionary France then, too, with its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, saw illustrators imprisoned and fined for defamatory depictions of the ruling elite. From the frequent controversy incited by the political cartoon over previous centuries, we may see, then, that concepts of French identity that are built on the right to freedom of speech inaccurately reflect the history of censorship and of nationhood in France, with ironic comparisons further drawn between the contemporary taboo of depictions of Muhammad in Islamic doctrine and historic prohibitions of derisive portrayals of a king in French political discourse.

We may see, then, that the 19th century witnessed intense battles over censorship laws in France, resultant perhaps from the highly politicising effects of the French Revolution on the populace, combined with the inclination of the political elites to suppress dissent (Goldstein 2000). The division of the nation could be seen along binary ‘fault lines’ such as ‘clerical/anticlerical, commoners/nobles, rich/poor, urban/rural, monarchist/republican, Parisian/provincial’, with further divisions within these categories (Goldstein 2000: 125). These divisions are reflected again in the current French political climate, as will be discussed later in Chapter 5 with regard to the contrast between the non-elite, rural ‘heartlander’ and the urban elite in *Rassemblement*

National (previously *Le Front National*) rhetoric, as well as the everyday figure of 'Marianne' in *Le Monde's* imagery. Here, we may see that perceptions of nationhood appeared, much as they did throughout France's history, divided between elite and non-elite concepts, with difference clearly marked.

From an exploration of these changing semiotic ideologies, reflected in vacillating censorship laws, the fears and concerns of a nation may be discerned, as well as both its elite and popular concepts of nationhood. French deputy Robert Mitchell reiterates this in a statement at a legislative debate on the censorship of caricature, wherein he proclaims that sanctioned and unsanctioned drawings provide:

'a valuable indicator for the attentive observer, curious for precise information on the tastes, preferences, sentiments, hates and intentions of those who have control and care over our destinies. In studying refused drawings and authorized drawings, we know exactly what the government fears and what it encourages, we have a clear revelation of its intimate thoughts.' (*Journal Officiel* (JO) (8 June 1880): 6214.), quoted in Goldstein and Nedd 2015).

This belief in the power of visual communication to stir society to revolt, as well as societal fears and concerns, is felt again in France in the twentieth century, as discussed below.

4.9 20th Century Images: l'Assiette au Beurre

Through frequently explicit propagandist content, the weekly, pre-World War I satirical publication, *l'Assiette au Beurre*, directly targeted a working class French readership. With a circulation of between twenty-five and forty thousand, *L'Assiette* portrayed an array of anarchist viewpoints relating to current events, with themes ranging from anti-governmental, anticlerical, antimilitarist and anticolonial premises (Leighten 2014). The publication provided artists with the opportunity to experiment with visual art through their expressions of

anarchism, which in turn made significant impact on modernist art (ibid.). With once again rising censorship restrictions, the deployment of covert techniques of subversion became necessary. Along with other satirical periodicals in times of tight censorship, *L'Assiette* may be understood as a weapon of the weak, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 10: Marianne in l'Assiette au Beurre, no. 455, Dec. 18th 1909 (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

In the image above, a striking departure from her usual depiction, we see France personified as a bloated Marianne, reminiscent of the above-described cartoon by Daumier, *Gargantua*. Emphasising excessive consumption, the subtitle '*le Gouffre*' (the Gulf) is written over Marianne's throat. Immediately identifiable by her ever-present red Phrygian cap, Marianne appears to be consuming a budget totaling 4 billion, 153 million, 334 thousand and 902 francs. For a French

audience - in particular, one largely comprised of a non-elite, working class readership - the publication of this image 78 years after the appearance of *Gargantua* in the country's satirical press invites a parallel to be drawn between Marianne and Louis-Philippe I, and by extension to the July Monarchy. Framing the behavior of the elites in the visual rhetoric of Daumier's infamous caricature suggests a connection between the current government and that of the regime of Louis-Philippe, with the potential danger of returning to the regime of the July Monarchy and of Louis-Philippe also signified. In a similar way, the constant, uni-directional flow of wealth and resources in order to overfill government reserves on the backs of an industrious populace may thus be inferred.

Other features are consistent also with the original Daumier image, such as the coarse, hard-working bodies of the French population, from whom the wealth is being received. An interesting distinction with this riff on *Gargantua*, however, is that the gaping mouth of the nation is being fed, not by the officials as in Daumier's image, but by the ordinary people themselves. This seems to imply that, although no longer under the rule of Louis-Philippe of the July Monarchy, the labour of the populace continued to be exploited regardless. In this criticism of a new ruling elite, this image appears to specifically condemn the allocation of public expenditure and resources in the national budget. The polysemic meanings of *le gouffre* here are used provocatively where the artist plays with its simultaneous interpretations, thereby framing the Persian Gulf and French involvement with that of Marianne's chasm-like throat (Prasad 1996).

A similar scatological humour is also apparent in this image of Marianne, with the bags of coins resembling excrement, although the toilet-throne is eschewed to accommodate a magnified depiction of Marianne's face. This vivid, 'up-close', portrayal enables greater emphasis to be placed on the distended mouth and throat, and the insatiable act of devouring, as well as signifying importance and urgency through her oversized depiction. Through this familiar deployment of Rabelasian grotesque and the vulgar, a cutting reproach of France and its social inequalities may be inferred. Here, the connotations of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* more typically signified by Marianne, are savagely mocked, with her

true representation now being that of hardship and inequality. As with the image of *Gargantua* in 1831, the viewer is encouraged to affiliate with the workers depicted in *l'Assiette's* Marianne image, a new chapter in an ancient story, while Marianne, usually conveyed to signify glory and inspire national pride and unity, is here irreverently and vividly presented as grotesque. Furthermore, the size and placement on the cover of this edition of *l'Assiette* make the image more memorable and immediate, with the respective sizes of Marianne and her serving workers indicative too of a severe power imbalance and an exploitative relationship between a ruling elite and the ordinary citizen.

4.10 *Paris, 1968*

'Perhaps the only thing one can do after having seen a canvas like ours is total revolution'¹⁰

The riots that took place in May 1968 on the streets of Paris mark another momentous event in French history, one that further underscores the place of political imagery in French society. The posters created and disseminated during this exceptional period in recent French history reflect the political sensibilities on the editorial pages, and provide an illuminating complimentary example of the use of imagery in nationhood-building in French history¹¹. During this time, approximately eleven million workers took part in a general strike, effectively calling a halt to the country's productivity. At the Sorbonne, demonstrating students were arrested and the university was subsequently closed. Resuming the deployment of this potent communicative instrument to rouse the public, reminiscent of their revolutionary forebears, demonstrators began creating graphic art with similarly revolutionary motifs. Illustrating the prevalence and significance of the political cartoon, the Popular Workshop' soon emerged (*Atelier Populaire*) from protesters' activity, enabling them to visually express their political denunciations.

¹⁰ Buren, Daniel. Feb. 1968; quoted in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, Praeger: New York, 1973, p. 41.

¹¹ See Appendix: Chapter 4, Figs. 11 and 12.



Figure 8. 'Beaux Arts Academy is closed but revolutionary art is born' (circa 1968)



Figure 13. 'Be young and shut up' (circa 1968)



Figure 15. 'Return to Normal' (circa 1968)



Figure 17. 'Nous sommes tous des juifs et des allemands'. (circa 1968).

Among the strikers were students of the *École des Beaux Arts*, who produced posters of the revolt as well as the slogan '*Usines, Universités, Union*' ('Factories and Universities Unite') (Kugelberg 2011). Similar to the imagery that arose in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, posters were created to express solidarity, with art galleries declaring theirs with the workers and students in revolt¹².

¹² For a collection of imagery propagated during this time, Artcurial's (2018) compilation of 500 posters may be of particular interest.

Twenty five images were created by a group of young artist-activists, later aided by professional artists, to create the anonymous posters of the revolution, which were subsequently sold to aid U.N.E.F. (*L'Union National des Étudiants de France*) (Castleman 1968). However, the artwork of the professional artists differed from that of the students' simpler images (Castleman 1968). Being more compositionally complex, the images of the former were judged as lacking the 'direct involvement that produces vigorous propaganda of a revolutionary art', which, had they been slightly altered, were disparagingly deemed comparable to exhibition posters (1968: 15). This preference for a more popular art form mirrors an earlier appreciation for the immediacy of the sketch for potent expressions of dissent, and the corresponding redundancy of classical training, during and following the French revolution.

For such effective expressions of dissent, the capacity of the visual to engage a viewer is crucial. In many of the political posters of the 1968 riots, an exceptional sense of urgency and affective meaning is conveyed as it appeals to the viewer and attempts to mobilise fears and frustrations. 'Anchoring' the image with text proved popular, with slogans appearing such as 'Be young and shut up' (*Sois jeune et tais toi*'), accompanying an image of a youth whose eyes directly appeal to the viewer, gagged by the ominous silhouette of an anonymous, and seemingly ever-present, *gendarme*, pictured above (*Fig. 13*). Further, in this image, a patent opposition between law enforcement and the everyday civilian is delineated, deploying, again, the familiar binary oppositions of 'us versus them' and 'good versus bad' (de Saussure 2011). The cartoonish distortion of the *gendarme's* facial features, in comparison to the more realistic depiction of the silenced youth, further invites the viewer to identify and empathise with the latter, whilst vilifying the former through his 'enemy image'. This graphic device is further developed in the following chapter.

Alongside textual calls to reject conformity and blind obedience, images of sheep were often depicted, a metaphor whose conformist, uncritical connotations can

be easily grasped. Taglines such as ‘Don’t be sheep’ (*Ne soyez pas des moutons*)¹³ and ‘Return to Normal’ (*Retour a la normale...*) (Fig. 15), above, appeared, the latter slogan combined with an image of a herd of sheep, their spiral horns resembling the cartoon eyes of someone under hypnosis. This immediately recognisable spiral symbol can be seen too in other posters¹⁴, a provocative image that not only further evokes the sense of being externally controlled and manipulated, but also that such a condition is the norm in French society. Again, the opposition between a ruling elite and a supposedly obedient, unquestioning populace is underscored.

In a comparable image that emerged during this time, the figure of Delacroix’s *Marianne* from his above-described painting, *Liberty Leading the People*, reappears for a contemporary audience, holding an artist’s palette in one hand, with the other hand raised seeming to rally, lead and inspire the unpictured French populace (Fig. 8, below). Versions of this painting permeate French revolutionary and solidarity imagery, with a more recent example by *Le Monde* cartoonist Plantu, produced in response to the recent *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, discussed later. Here, in place of the musket in the original painting, Marianne’s palette is her chosen weapon with which to challenge and overthrow a ruling class. This visual rhetoric wherein weapons of warfare are replaced by artistic and literacy devices will be deployed again in the solidarity images of the 21st century, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. Depicted alongside the slogan ‘Beaux-Arts is closed, but revolutionary art is born’ (*Les Beaux-arts sont fermes, mais l’art revolutionnaire est né*), Marianne may be seen to appeal to and incite unity and revolt, as well as conveying the revolutionary ideals of freedom, equality and brotherhood. The symbolic convention of Marianne, one of the most enduring modern symbols of revolution in French visual discourse, is ubiquitous at times of heightened political tension in France, and is a striking example of pictorial ‘official’ national ideologies. The woman-as-nation trope, seen here in Marianne as artist-activist, to be further discussed in subsequent chapters, here captures

¹³ See Appendix, Chapter 4, Fig. 14

¹⁴ See Appendix, Chapter 4, Fig. 16, ‘*Une jeunesse que l’avenir inquiète trop souvent*’

concepts of nationalism and *Frenchness*, whilst also conveying identity as a political agenda, delineating between elites and non-elites. By the deployment of such metaphorical configurations during periods of socio-political upheaval, a French national identity that is sovereign and unified is conveyed.

Recalling once again the imagery and slogans of the recent *Charlie Hebdo* solidarity cartoons, the roots of the wording of the 'Je suis Charlie' slogan may be found in the posters of 1968. A precursor to the 'I am...' in *Hebdo* solidarity slogans, the phrasing 'We are...' was seen in images across Paris. 'We are all Jewish and German' ('*Nous sommes tous des juifs et des allemands*') appears alongside one image depicting French-German Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a former student leader of *les enragés*, who was attacked for his German and Jewish ancestry (Fig. 17, above). In this image, a buoyant portrait of Cohn-Bendit appeals to the viewer - a cheerful and energetic figure with whom the viewer is called to identify. Based on a photograph taken of Cohn-Bendit, the image conveys youthful optimism and resistance in the face of a dark and foreboding authoritative government, connoted here by the stern and imposing police officer in the foreground, albeit more easily discernable in the original photograph than in its illustration. This looming dark figure, so indistinct here that it appears to resemble an enclosing darkness rather than the figure of a man, appears to surround the figure of Cohn-Bendit. Despite its lurking omnipresence, however, Cohn-Bendit appears gleefully unperturbed. It is clearly with this attitude that the viewer is invited to identify. Further, similar to the wording of the more recent 'Je suis Charlie' campaign that arose from the attacks at the *Hebdo* offices, this slogan may be interpreted as a further attempt to generate a sense of unity and solidarity among the French people. Likewise, the more recent *Je Suis Charlie* campaign arguably seeks to unite the French populace through both its rhetoric as well as its appeal to their shared history of revolt, recalling these slogans of 1968. In this way, through the political cartoon, two disparate events in French history are linked. In this image, against the foil of law enforcement, an arguably liberated, resilient ideal national character is depicted, alongside the social, political, cultural and moral attitudes that defined national identity.

We may see, then, that throughout this political imagery, a youthful population of France is being summoned. Through the signifying practices connoting resistance, disobedience, and nonconformity, a nationhood espousing solidarity, autonomy and outspokenness is visualized and propagated. In line with a description by nineteenth century writer and art critic, André Mellerio in 1898, such political imagery are 'the frescoes, if not of the poor, at least of the crowd', which are capable of putting 'the public in touch with its everyday feelings' (Cate and Hitchings 1984: viii). The function of the metaphor in the political cartoon as a tool for creating a 'visual shorthand', further connects the image viewer to the image creator, as well as to the image itself. Through this connection between various actors, as well as to their own emotions, a sense of intimacy is created, thereby creating and reinforcing Fernandez's concept of community and consensus (1991). Comparable to the visual culture during the Paris riots in 1968 and the passions it expressed and incited, the creation of community, although with differing membership conditions for and definitions of elite and non-elite groups, is similarly connoted in more recent pictorial discourse.

4.11 1980s to Present: Immigration and 'Oppositional Consciousness'

According to the *Institut National d'Études Démographiques* (INED), in France, an "immigrant" is classified as anyone of foreign nationality born outside of France. Following this definition adopted by the *Haut Conseil à l'Intégration*, demographers exclude persons born abroad to French parents, such as the children of expatriates (INSEE 2018). Between 2006 and 2019, the number of immigrants arriving in France increased from 193,400 to 272,400, while the number of immigrants leaving remained relatively low (averaging at one leaving per four who arrive). Since 1946, a notable increase in immigration to France has been recorded, with the percentage of immigrants of the total population of France that year growing to 4.4%, and increasing further to 6.5% in 1975. In 2020, immigrants accounted for 10.2% of the country's total population, at 6.8 million. Of these, 2.5 million (or 36%) have acquired French nationality. As well as an increase in immigration to France, as observed by INED, the composition of the immigrant population in France is changing. In 2020, 47.5% of immigrants

living in France were born in Africa, with Algeria and Morocco accounting for the highest numbers (12.7% and 12% respectively). The proportion born in Spain and Italy - previously predominant countries of origin for France's immigrant population - is continuously falling due to their aging cohort. Conversely, those born in North Africa, being younger and having arrived more recently (63% of new immigrant arrivals from Africa were under 30, and 90% were under 45), therefore account for an increasingly significant proportion. Furthermore, the descendants of immigrants in France in 2020 amounted to 7.6 million people (11.4% of the population), with 45.2% descendent from immigrants of African origin. Among this African cohort, Algeria and Morocco record the highest numbers, accounting for 15.1% and 12.8% respectively (INSEE 2018). Looking closer, regional variations may also be observed. In large urban areas, particularly in the Île-de-France, immigrants make up a considerable proportion, averaging at 20% of the Parisian population across 2019 and 2020. Similarly, nearly a third of the population of Seine-Saint-Denis is of immigrant origin, compared to 10% of the national population. The conurbations of Lyon and Marseilles are also comprised of a significant immigrant minority, at 13% and 11% respectively. Alongside these seemingly urban trends, an increase in immigration in rural areas of France has been noted, which, while still comparatively low, has seen an increase since the 1990s. Border regions, too, record a relatively high immigration proportion (INSEE 2018).

In the midst of this climate of growing immigration, in the 1980s, political imagery sparked renewed debate about concepts of *Frenchness* and French society, when posters were used to 'mobilize public opinion', serving as 'an instrument of information about new laws and the rights of citizens' (Lionnet 1995: 93). Much like the contentious debates pertaining to identity and nationhood in France today, these disputes were concerned with reconciling tradition and cultural ideologies with universal rights. The collection of posters in Lallaoui's book entitled *Vingt ans d'affiches antiracistes* ('Twenty years of antiracism posters') (1989), 'foregrounds the social and cultural anxieties related to historically unresolved issues of identity in France' (Lionnet 1995: 94), and depicts the contemporary struggle against racism. Such images pertaining to

identity and belonging appear at critical moments in French history, for instance in the 1980s and 1990s, when 'the presence of large numbers of visibly different immigrants from the Francophone areas of Africa [had] both threatened and reinforced the idea of 'Frenchness' painstakingly constructed since the Revolution' (ibid.). As will be discussed throughout this study, this issue remains topical across France today, permeating the visual rhetoric of its media's political imagery.

During this time, the influx of immigrants has, as Lionnet states, 'sparked heated public discussions about the nature of citizenship in a multicultural world, the rights of individuals to cross borders in order to seek political asylum or economic advantages, and the role of history and continuity, race and culture in the definition of a nation' (Lionnet 1995: 94). This debate about the question of identity played out in the images on posters, in comics and in editorial cartoons, which revealed therein 'the ambiguities that currently surround the ideals of republicanism and the contested terrain it shares with multicultural objectives' (Lionnet 1995: 106). Through visual representation, this act of *affichage* creates a space wherein 'oppositional consciousness' can be created and expressed, crafting with it 'a dialogical moment in which new definitions of community, new configurations of 'Frenchness' can begin to be glimpsed' (1995: 95-96).

However, the voice of immigrants remains unheard, as captions that address or attempt to organise such groups deploy 'an authoritarian political rhetoric that emphasises economic struggle and unity of purpose, often bordering on paternalism' (Lionnet 1995 : 97). This point will be addressed and further explored in Chapter 7, Self-Representational Analysis, wherein 'non-native' and Muslim voices will be heard. In this chapter, an investigation into the response to the images of nationhood, largely created by 'native' white secular or Christian French cartoonists, by 'non-native' French in the same visual language will be discussed. Here, an exploration of the challenges to the dominant ideology, made by 'non-native' French illustrators in this case, as attempted through the deployment of elements of that same ideology, will be conducted.

In recent decades, the critical place of political cartoons in French culture has remained clearly discernible. Reflecting the ongoing popularity of satirical and political imagery, for instance, the International Journal of Comic Art (IJOCA) was established in 1999. Published twice a year, the multidisciplinary IJOCA 'aims to publish scholarly and readable research on any aspect of comic art, defined as animation, comic books, newspaper and magazine strips, caricature, gag and political cartoons, humorous art, and humor or cartoon magazines' (ijoca.net [accessed 12/09/19]). As well as publishing a collection that contains over 200 illustrations, the journal also includes editorial, book and exhibition reviews and related academic articles. Alongside this journal, the ubiquity of satirical and political imagery is evident in the country's abundant kiosks, in satirical magazines such as *Charlie Hebdo* and *Le Canard Enchaîné* as well as in mainstream newspapers such as *Le Monde* and *Libération*. Together with the ubiquity of *bande dessinée* (BD), often referred to as the Ninth Art, the popularity of graphic expression throughout French history is evident, a clear depiction of France's enduring cartooning and satirical tradition.

4.12 Conclusion: An Eye for Absurdity

As we have seen, examinations into constructions of national identity in political cartoons have highlighted the use of popular culture, emotional immediacy, humour and the carnivalesque, as well as the practice of 'Othering' and its metaphorical constructions of the 'Other', wherein the reader is encouraged to identify as the normative standard against a foreign 'abnormality' (Brookes 1990; Vezovnik and Sarik 2015; Connors 2007). Through the use of such techniques as visual metaphor, humour and the 'enemy image', the political cartoon may operate as a 'terrain for resistance' (Hammett 2011: 206) or 'arena of conflict' (Padoan 2014: 581), wherein a struggle between the image-viewers and the image as active agent is fought, as power relations are reinscribed and challenged through the use of caricatures. Using satire to contest national imaginaries, themselves metaphorically constituted, various concepts of identity may be presented and disputed, therefore, by invoking 'the sharp satirical perspective and eye for absurdity which form the soul of a political cartoon'

(Chatterjee 2007: 304). This introductory exploration of France's tradition of cartooning, further, reveals both the country's frequently turbulent political climate, chequered with uprisings and attempted revolutions throughout its history, as well as the role played by the political cartoon in its public expression and its encompassing semiotic ideologies. Although this discussion has been concerned solely with periods of social upheaval since the *Ancien Régime*, anarchy, rebellion and uprising have long been prevalent in France, often in the form of symbolic and discursive resistance (Bloch 1970), as will be explored in the following chapters.

The symbol, then, is clearly a ubiquitous, ambiguous and highly useful instrument in political and social discourse. The symbolic transformation of 'the experience into an idea, and an idea into an image,' renders the idea expressed by the image ever active, unattainable and consequently unexpressible (Eco 1986: 142). Whilst being 'immediate and motivated', the value of the symbol relies on its significance (*signified*) and, further, on the mode of its expression (*signifier*) (Eco 1986). Through the selection and omission of its various qualities, the symbol remains not only ambiguous but powerful; in fact, as Eco maintains, 'the more elusive and ambiguous a symbol is, the more it gains significance and power' (2001: 420). According to the symbolic mode - a product of the violation of certain conversational maxims as well as a mode of interpretation - a symbol must be 'textually produced', thereby effecting a 'semiotic machinery' (Eco 1986: 157). Its content a *nebula* of possible meanings and interpretations, the symbol is without any 'authorized interpretant' (1986). It is the case instead that 'the interpreter knows that he is not discovering an external truth but that, rather, he makes the encyclopedia work at its best' (1986: 163).

Polysemic and bound to cultural memory, a symbol may be drawn by the artist 'from the arsenal of epoch, cultural trend or social circle' (Lotman 1990: 86). The creative unfolding of the symbol, further, as Lotman observes, is 'irreversible and unpredictable, (proving) that the creative process is asymmetrical' (1990: 101). In distinguishing the symbol from the sign, the former's iconic nature has been

emphasised (de Saussure 2011; Lotman 1990), although the rationality of its expression is at times contested, whereby its symbolic content, glimmering through the expression level, may be seen to 'serve as a bridge between the rational world and a mystical one' (Lotman 1990: 102). In this study, further, the innovation and creative power of the symbol, through its interaction and deployment in a variety of contexts to an array of frequently diverging ends, enable an apparent transformation of the symbol whilst retaining its structural independence. Its semiotic structure preserved, the symbol cuts vertically through a culture, 'coming from the past and passing on into the future', ensuring its memory is 'always more ancient than the memory of its non-symbolic text-context' (1990: 103). This ancient memory arguably further serves to solidify the chronological continuity of the culture, a characteristic used to great effect by various agents in this study in their attempts to conceptualise national tradition and belonging. Transformation of the symbol, then, is made possible through the use of its 'semantic reserve' within which its valency may be found. By tactically mining this reserve, the 'symbol can enter into unexpected relationships, altering its essence and deforming its textual context in unpredictable ways (1990: 104).

Through this strategic deployment of symbols to mobilise public sentiment – its 'legitimizing theology' - and 'because images do stand in for and motivate social change,' we may see, then, 'the arena of representation [as] a real ground for struggle' (Marcus and Myers 1995: 337). Attending to the potency of images in public discourse, from the controversy surrounding the Mohammad cartoons to images and artworks deemed 'indecent' or 'offensive' across Western public discourse, analysts and critics have recognised the creation of representative symbols deployed, too, by the protesters of such imagery (1995). Within the rhetoric of the political right, for instance, mass mobilisation regarding social issues such as sexuality, nationality and religion, symbols are a prominent feature, 'both as highly condensed statements of moral concern and as powerful spurs to emotion and action' (1995: 333). Often chosen for its difficulty to counter, the symbol is often taken literally and out of context, for example 'an "un-Christian" passage from an evolution textbook, explicit information from a high-school sex-education curriculum, or "degrading" pornography said to be

available in the local adult bookshop' (ibid.).¹⁵ Due to the broad reach of such symbolic mobilisations and their potential to influence law and policy¹⁶, as Vance attests, such attacks on images in the public domain may be 'the most effective point of cultural intervention now', thereby necessitating 'a broad and vigorous response that goes beyond appeals to free speech' (1995: 337).

Through its coded symbolism, addressed to intellectuals, activists and laborers, the political cartoon seeks to express social and political critique through satire to a wide audience. Since its inception in the 1600s through to its current expression, the medium has been subject to varying degrees of censorship and critique, from within France and without. The ubiquity of this controversial, often highly censored, art form during times of protest in France may in part be explained by interpreting caricature as a 'graphic metaphor for revolutionary protest' (Boime 1992: 256). In this way, caricature may be depicted as a marginalised, non-elite artistic form, similar to the sketch, devoid of the artistic ideation and status of other methods. Here, the correlation between artistic medium and the society in revolt is of note. The metaphorical inferences of caricature may be understood as analogous to the society from which they arose, with the raw, primal aspects of the sketch-like cartoon correlating with the conception and formation of a new society, instigated by revolution. In this way, embedded so thoroughly within the spirit of revolution, the caricature may be seen as a fitting medium through which rebellion and upheaval may be

¹⁵ Arguably the most graphic and widely-known symbol is that of the late-term foetus, chosen as emblem among activists in antiabortion campaigns. This visceral image as an easily-recognisable symbol, combined with a (mis)appropriation of human and civil rights vernacular, attempts to move the contestations away from concepts of 'censorship', or 'bodily control' in this case, towards a modern audience concerned with human rights. In this example, further, the image of the foetus is central in the debate, erasing that of the woman ('The War on Culture', Carole Vance in Marcus and Myers [Eds.] 1995: 337).

¹⁶ Some notable historic examples of mediated images as successful social intervention include police reporter Jacob Reis's photographs of New York City slums, which, through 'observation, synthesis, and action' (Collier 1967), helped to establish the first building codes and apartment regulations, as well as the sociologist Lewis Hine's photographs of child labour that 'were influential in passing the first child labour laws' (Collier 1967: 4).

expressed. It is within this rebellious imagery, then, that nationhood may be negotiated and renegotiated, with new conceptions of *Frenchness* reimagined and proliferated.

A semiotic analysis of French political imagery requires an extensive contextual understanding in order to identify source and target domains of metaphor. Within a contextual approach, however, interpretations may vary depending on the social, cultural and political affiliations of the viewer and their particular conceptual scopic regime. The visual discourse of popular culture, too, informs the signifying practices of its imagery, seen at times to support 'official' national ideologies, and at others, promoting a subaltern ideal. Further, in many French political cartoons, while reference to national identity is not explicit, it may be reasonably inferred by reference to a shared historicity, a unifying allegory and a signified difference through binary oppositions, amongst other devices. A case for nationalism and the ideological construction of national identity is further implied in the frequent metaphorical repudiations of authority, in the case of the police, and of obedience, servitude and exploitation, as inferred by depictions of sheep, the Phrygian cap and toiling manual labourers. Further, reminiscent of the techniques deployed by advocates of nationalism in French media, the use of ordinary, everyday speech positions the message as being of and for the people.

In the following chapters, the political imagery of the French presidential election campaigns of 2017 will be explored, focusing on the portrayals of nationhood depicted in its correlated cartoons. The symbolic and metaphoric content of the political imagery will be closely analysed and interpreted, unveiling various interpretations of French identity and nationhood today through a figurative argument of images. As will be explored in the following chapters, a consistent visual discourse of uprising and revolt may be seen throughout French media, both historic and contemporary, with imagery inspired by the revolution, in particular, recycled in protests against a perceived threat to similarly-perceived fundamental French values. The linguistic discourse, too, of recent protests in defense of French values reconfigure that of a

social upheaval almost half a century earlier, as the latter's "Je suis..." syntax is recalled and reimagined.

The historical struggles to realise in its media the aspirations of *liberté* championed during the French Revolution due to the fears and anxieties of the ruling elite were readily apparent in the oscillating censorship laws, in turn often flouted, whether openly or furtively, by cartoonists. These difficulties in fulfilling the revolutionary ideals of freedom and equality may also be observed in current debates on nationhood and identity, with public approval of satire appearing at times inconsistent, depending on its target. At times contradicting its self-perception as a *terre d'accueil*, the grounds on which current and historic disputes regarding who is and is not French are based are arguably problematic.

Chapter 5. Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign

5.1 Introduction

Coinciding with a pan-European and American rise in nationalism, and an ever-expanding cultural and economic globalisation, a desire to ascertain a national sense of self has been reinvigorated in France and is abundantly clear in its presidential campaigns for the recent elections in 2017. Illustrating the various campaigns and their respective stances, a barrage of images representing *Frenchness* emerged throughout verbal and visual political discourse. These election cartoons are rich sources of coded information, revealing differing conceptions of national identity, in the context of the current political climate in France. The two contentious issues of immigration and a lingering euro crisis are often cited as being at the centre of debates pertaining to national identity (Broning 2016). Traditional mechanisms of integration, such as the public school system, social benefits and the army (although historically successful for the most part), are currently seen to be struggling under the increased pressure from the rise in immigration (Safran 1991). The growing presence of Maghrebis on already strained systems, and the increased competition for schools, housing and welfare, has sparked resentment among indigenous French working classes, leading many to reconsider who is and who is not French.

It would seem that the difficulty in the assimilation of this influx of immigrants is due to their apparent cultural homogeneity as well as their number, and their arrival has sparked a concern about the dilution of traditional French culture with their supposedly conflicting Islamic values. This current concern expounds, and is further coloured by, earlier anxieties following such state action as the family reunification policies in the 1980s, which saw immigrants from former French colonies settling, along with their families, in France permanently (Evers 2018). This influx of Muslim immigrants was markedly different from previous cohorts, as, due to the former's interest in settling in France, they began to take a greater interest in their adoptive country, seeking greater involvement and

claiming citizenship rights, reflective, too, of contemporary cohorts. The further erosion of French culture by a broad, engulfing Western culture, as denoted by the EU, further compounds this threat of deculturalisation. The anxiety engendered by a homogenising, external EU has been strategically deployed throughout the political rhetoric of Le Pen and RN during the campaign, and has been addressed, too, by her opponents, albeit with wavering conviction, conveying, at times, quite contradictory messages, as is discussed below.

Through such contentious debates, the *actio* of the political field appears to extend beyond traditional rhetoric, as the 'production... of a speech in front of its audience' (Bertrand 2014: 76). In contemporary public discourse, rather, *actio* is the media, a rhetorical sequence 'in which the politician most radically places her competence' (2014: 76). No longer just a vehicle necessary for the transmission of political discourse, media's omnipresence marks it today a strategic issue, with the 'pressure of spectacular interaction' arguably forming the core of the political (ibid.). In such a reconfiguration, media and political roles are blurred, with 'the journalist taking himself for a politician' and 'the politician becoming a television collaborator' (2014: 78). In this ocular-centric political climate, journalist indignation against a political party becomes a spectacle and media event. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the political cartoons of the French presidential campaign, discussed below.

With the first round of the French presidential elections held in April 2017, candidates' campaigns saw many promising to address unemployment, which has risen since 2008 from 7.1% to almost 10%, and economic growth, which has slowed to 0.2% of GDP (tradingeconomics.com). The political discourse and symbolism of parties such as far-right *Rassemblement National* (RN), formerly *le Front National* (FN), is fertile ground for an exploration of identity metaphors. Parties such as these show a heavy reliance on nationalist and nativist rhetoric to appeal to the electorate by offering nationalism as a solution to their frustrations, promising 'a return to France's glory days' (edition.cnn.com). As a nationalist party, the political rhetoric of RN is suffused with nation-building and national identity imagery, inclining towards nativism, or 'national preference' in

RN terms. Following the recent terrorist attacks and the arrival of large numbers of immigrants fleeing unrest in the Middle East, and further boosted by the wave of nationalism across Europe and the US, Brexit, and the success of Trump, RN saw a significant rise in their popularity. Strongly anti-globalisation and anti-Islam, the party seems to deploy an ascriptive view of national identity whilst denouncing the former and a voluntarist, contract definition as grounds for their argument against the full assimilation of Islam into French culture.

Attempts such as these to rouse national sentiment is evident throughout mediated national identity discourse in France today, wherein can be seen a collective need, or at least a state-sanctioned objective, to perform the nation and redefine national identity. Through the implementation of policies that encourage affective connection to one's nation above ethnic and regional identities, 'nation-building', as one such process of generating national sentiment, may similarly be understood as the regimented, semiotic management of the nation brand. This branding of the nation, for Graan, is the coordinated efforts of communication and publicity to publics internally and abroad, as vividly illustrated by the state-sponsored nation-branding project in North Macedonia (then the Republic of Macedonia) known as 'Skopje 2014' (2016). A semiotic process lived by its citizens, this 'nation brand regime' called for the cultivation of 'a consistent representation of the brand image', resulting in 'new strategies to regulate the Macedonian public sphere' (S74). Through 'the semiotic regimentation of public communication' inherent in such nation-branding projects, citizenship, alongside forms of governmentality, is transformed (S75). Looking closer at the nation brand and its metapragmatic practices, then, questions arise pertaining to the practices of the performance of nationhood and belonging, as well as for whom such performances are made. Resultant government-level interventions in public communication determine the metaphorical representation and reasoning through which 'the state' may be configured whilst seeping too into the 'institutionalized practices that organize the everyday terms and expression of citizenship' (S78). This effect is strongly suggested in the images analysed below, through which oppositional discourse

and counter politics of publicity are similarly seen to emerge, marking the nation-as-branded commodity as a site of contestation and struggle.

In countries with higher levels of ethnic diversity, ‘nation-building’ has been proposed as a mechanism for integration and conflict reduction’ (Masella 2013: 437). Rhetoric to this effect is apparent in the political discourse of some publications, and is deployed to create both inclusive and exclusive definitions of French citizenship. As well as in the rhetoric of RN, this is evident in the recurring figure of Marianne (or Liberty) in Plantu’s illustrations for *Le Monde*, depicted as the French electorate as well as a *Je Suis Charlie* campaigner, as a symbol of France and of liberty. For transnational migrants and members of minority communities disinclined to relinquish their culture and identity of origin, however, doubts are raised as to the success and suitability of such a tool for integration and conflict reduction in postcolonial France, as the picture of a particular nation emerges.

5.2 Discussion

Here, I will first look at elite concepts of *Frenchness*, outlining four pervasive models. The various constructions of the French citizen will be subsequently explored, alongside the contentious issue of Islamic assimilation, through my case study of traditionally left-wing *Le Monde*’s illustrator Plantu, as well as the rhetoric and symbolism of *Rassemblement National* (RN). The images were collected between January 2015 to June 2017, covering the campaigning period in the run up to the election culminating in May 2017, along with earlier contextualising imagery relating to nationhood. These images, as before, were chosen based on their inclusion of signifiers connoting ‘*Frenchness*’ and ‘Otherness’, and ‘belonging’ and ‘difference’.

Within this collection of published artwork by the illustrator Plantu, a series of oppositions becomes apparent. A requirement for processes of classification (de Saussure 2011; Morris 1993), access to processes of opposition, and its signified ‘difference’, is critical in a study exploring ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ constructions. Some

social oppositions that have emerged in this study include French/immigrant, elite/rural, urban/*banlieue*, Christian/Muslim, and religious/secular, as discussed below. The oppositions conveyed by these spatial, behavioural and temporal semio-narrative components tell of diverging and contradictory narratives, alluding to the essence of *Frenchness* and of its outsiders. The technique, through metaphoric construction, of manufacturing authenticity and nation-building in nationalist discourse particularly will also be explored here, with further discussion in the following chapter in relation to its role in the *Je Suis Charlie* campaign.

5.3 *Elite Concepts of French Nationhood*

Four elite models of nationhood are apparent in French public discourse, for which the imagery discussed below displays varying degrees of preference. These include: a racial and religious model; a 'cultural' ideal; difference-blind abstract republicanism; and lastly, critical republicanism. Firstly, in the racial and religious definition, whiteness and Christianity are clearly critical to claim *Frenchness*. This is made strikingly explicit in the following statement from Charles de Gaulle:

It is very good to have yellow French people, black French people, brown French people. They show that France is open to all races, and that it has a universal calling. But on the condition that they remain a small minority. Otherwise, France would no longer be France. We are above all, after all, a European people, with a Greek and Latin culture, and the Christian religion. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. The Muslims, have you gone to see them? You have seen them, with their turbans and their djellabas? You see well that these are not French people. Advocates of integration are birdbrains, even if they are researchers. Try to mix oil and vinegar. Shake the bottle. After a bit, they will separate once again. Arabs are Arabs; the French are French (Fredette 2014: 152).

This racial model is, of course, problematic for the inclusion and integration of

France's growing non-white, non-Christian population. A notable advocate for this definition is Marine le Pen of *Rassemblement National*, discussed below, who succeeded with the former *Front National* into the second round of the presidential election in 2017, to eventually lose, with over a third of the votes, to Emmanuel Macron. Although propagating an ideology in line with this racial model of citizenship, RN (FN) ostensibly base their argument on traditional values and on memory, rather than overtly on ascriptive views, as discussed below. The second model of French citizenship, that of the 'cultural' ideal, on the other hand, seeks to include all individuals, ignoring their ethnicity or origin. As Fredette points out, however, how one defines 'culture' isn't clear or uniform, often seemingly referring to a 'shared history, language, heritage, and similar hopes and dreams' (2014). This does not seem to account for the exclusion of Muslims from 'authentic' French nationhood, as many are fluent French speakers and invested in the history of their country. This view of French nationhood as cultural engagement, then, proposes a limited definition of French culture (2014). Leaving behind one's other identities and affiliations, and assuming a singular French identity, may be termed a 'Frenchification', whereby former identities are relinquished (ibid.). However, for the French Muslim population of France, assuming a vaguely defined and elusive concept of culture in order to acquire citizenship is unlikely to be adequate or meaningful.

Thirdly, difference-blind abstract republicanism correlates closely to the dominant elite concept of French nationhood. This view follows the strict boundary between public and private spheres, asserting that one's religious beliefs remain in the private sphere (Fredette 2014). However, proponents of this view tend to focus on its philosophical principles rather than on the real experiences of individuals for whom its implications would have most significance. By way of illustration, the freedom from the presence of religion in public schools, under the freedom of conscience concept, 'ensures that young minds have the greatest possible latitude for developing their own ideas and choosing their own beliefs' (2014: 154). The subsequent eradication of religious clothing such as the hijab under this policy is therefore framed resolutely within the republican citizenship ideal. While consistent with a secular republican

French ideology, certain freedoms may be inhibited as a result, with the myriad potential reasons for choosing to wear religious clothing left unconsidered. For instance, familial pressure on a student to wear the hijab may result in the student being taken out of school, in the event of the garment's prohibition in the public sphere. As Fredette states, '(t)he state misses two opportunities to inculcate republican values: first, to discuss in educational establishments the meaning of freedom, and second, to promote respect for the freedom of others' (2014: 155).

The final model of French citizenship, as outlined by Fredette (2014) and further explored by Laborde (2008; 2010), is that of critical republicanism, which 'endorses the distinctive republican ideas of secularism, non-domination, and civic solidarity', yet secularism does not require a relinquishing of conspicuous religious symbols, such as the banning of the hijab in schools (Laborde 2008). Laborde argues that 'female emancipation is not assisted by the prohibition of religious symbols; and civic solidarity depends not on cultural conformism but on social equality and the politics of participatory inclusion' (2008). This model of nationhood addresses some of the ways in which difference-blind abstract republicanism may obstruct equality through its 'sociological deficit' (Fredette 2014). To redress this deficit, patterns of social inequality must be investigated, with discussions on race, gender and religion included where necessary, since being blind to difference arguably renders a fight against inequality impossible (2014).

5.4 Cultural Essentialism in Concepts of National Identity

In contemporary debates pertaining to nationhood and citizenship in mainstream French discourse, a clear emphasis on 'the distinctiveness of cultural identity, traditions, and heritage among groups' takes the place of assumed racial characteristics, on which older arguments of inclusion and exclusion were typically based (Stolcke 1995: 2). As may be observed in the rhetoric of the French political right, most notably perhaps in the discourse of RN, discussed below, the argument for the exclusion of the Other is often made on the basis of

both their apparent unwillingness *and* inability to integrate into French culture and its republican ideals. In Stolcke's view, this posits the 'contemporary cultural fundamentalism of the politic right' – as she describes their contemporary anti-immigrant rhetoric - as being both 'old and new.' In its closed configurations of *Frenchness*, both a conventional 'voluntarist idea of belonging' is emphasised alongside the attribution of 'the alleged incompatibility between different cultures to an incapacity of different cultures to communicate that is inherent in human nature' (Stolcke 1995: 1). Growing critique of the French far right's 'cultural fundamentalism' regarding its nationhood concept and its stance on immigration, then, is on the grounds that such a concept and its ensuing argument for immigrant and Muslim exclusion assume a cultural essentialist perspective (Stolcke 1995).

Furthermore, this shift from exclusion on racial grounds to that by cultural merit has strategically appropriated the concept of 'culture'. In conducting this research, whilst navigating the import of both cultural diversity as well as shared human universals, the significance of definitions and understandings of 'culture' have emerged, the implications of which appear to be wholly informing, in the social imaginary, who may and who may not belong. Here I would reiterate the historic centrality of fluidity in the culture concept, as well as its historic continuity. This definition of culture, clearly, appears in stark contrast to that denoted in the exclusionary cultural essentialism of nationhood debates in much current Western discourse. Eschewing the unabashed racism of ancient arguments in favour of a national identity qualified by culture, contemporary proponents of elite, nativist nationhood appear to envision, reify and mobilise a static, bounded and localised culture, predicated on a 'privileged access to distant pasts and origins' (Benthall and Knight 1993: 2).

Opposing the cultural essentialist rationale supporting the exclusion of extracommunitarian immigrants, however, a cultural relativism arguably appears in the rhetoric and reasoning of much liberal discourse¹⁷. This was

¹⁷ See also Gupta and Ferguson (1992) for further discussion on the reification of cultural difference.

especially pronounced in the aftermath of the attacks at the Paris office of the satirical publication *Charlie Hebdo* in early 2015. With the ensuing debates typically vacillating between freedom of speech and expression on the one hand and of accusations of hate speech on the other, at times suppressions of the former were heard on the grounds of respect for cultural diversity, uncritical inclusivity and the 'right to difference'.

Moreover, the rhetoric of both the proponents of an exclusive, nativist national identity as well as those of a multicultural *Frenchness* is arguably couched in cultural essentialism, whereby both parties describe the 'essential and irreducible cultural difference' of their own and each other's culture (Taguieff 1987). In such rhetoric and metaphorical configurations, the oft-used concept of *enracinement* (rootedness) appears particularly apt, a concern not solely that of RN, as evoked by its 'blue rose' symbolism, but shared too with the liberal left. As Stolcke points out, in order to 'preserve both French identity and those of immigrants in their diversity', collective identity is 'increasingly conceived in terms of ethnicity, culture, heritage, tradition, memory, and difference' (1995: 4). Within the figurative argument of images examined in this study, a challenge to this static, "pure" definition is at times evident in left-leaning media, but, as will be discussed, such imagery typically tends to retain signifiers of elite nationhood ideology. The premise, then, of this research is to examine and demonstrate the ways in which such exclusive rhetoric is conveyed, not solely in the discourse of parties such as RN, but also frequently in the visual rhetoric of the liberal, centre and left, suggesting a deeper permeation of cultural essentialism and chauvinism that goes beyond its most explicit iterations displayed by the political right. Rather than solely exploring the norms and symbolic systems and practices of a culture, furthermore, questions are here raised of agency in the construction of a culture, and in the culture concept generally.

5.5 *Plantu's 'Marianne' and Other Devices*

Jean Plantureux, under the professional name Plantu, has been a regular contributing artist to *Le Monde* since 1972. Positioned among the established

'prestige' or 'reference press' (Landowski 1989: 120), *Le Monde* proports to act as witness and chronicler, its content universal and 'objective', with its typical readership suitably belonging to the 'elevated spheres' of 'business leaders, high officials [and] statesmen (1989: 121). Landowski points to such social and political standing as captured in a political cartoon by Plantu, dated January 22nd 1985, wherein a *Le Monde* reader casually soars above the rest of the French populace, who are preoccupied with the supposedly less enlightening reportage of other publications (122). In this cartoon, the 'brand image' of *Le Monde* is simultaneously illustrated, whereby the publication asserts itself socially through semiotic means, its ideological orientation subsequently discernable. Providing to its readers a 'history of the present', the newspaper concurrently creates social identities through its semio-narratives (119).

5.5.1 "I'm the most anti-system!"



Figure 18. 6 February 2017: Plantu for *Le Monde*.

"I'm the most anti-system!"

Frequently featured in Plantu's artwork is the character of Marianne, a metaphorical construct of the French electorate whose actions and reactions

seem particularly pertinent in the context of the recent French election campaign. The national allegorical figure of Marianne is immediately identifiable due, in large part, to her Phrygian cap, a common symbol of liberty, included in numerous artistic depictions since the French Revolution. Along with the recurring Marianne in Plantu's cartoons, the figure of a small mouse can often be seen, representing the publication's reader as well as the normative national standard, against the seemingly absurd events and political characters in French public life. In the image above, both Marianne and Mouse are depicted, confused by the identical assertions of the candidates, Mélenchon, Le Pen, Macron, Fillon and Hamon, who each proclaim themselves to be the best choice to break from the establishment. Each candidate attempts to appeal to the electorate, who presumably upholds the revolutionary ideals associated with Marianne, by addressing the undercurrent of dissatisfaction felt among the French populace of the status quo.

Often evident in Plantu's imagery are the processes of condensation and combination, as outlined by Gombrich in his study of 'The Cartoonist's Armoury' (1971). Condensation may be defined as 'the compression of a complex phenomenon into a single image that is purported to capture its essence graphically' (Morris 1993: 200). In the image above, bearing the caption, '*Le plus anti-système, c'est moi!*' (February 6th 2017, Plantu for *Le Monde*) (Fig. 18), this process is readily apparent. Here, the entire French electorate is condensed into the archetypal figure of Marianne, who is wondering to whom she should give her vote, conveying the confusion felt by the French populace at the time. Complex concepts are thereby simplified, with the individual, in this case, transformed into an archetype representing the voting body of France.

The re-emergence and appropriation of a symbol of French nationhood born out of the semiotic ideology of the country's ancient revolutionary past is clearly not without its difficulties in its contemporary application, as will be further explored in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*. The representational economy, that is, 'the totality of technologies, media, institutions, and practices' (Keane 2003; 2018: 68), prevalent in present-day France contrasts significantly with that of

the sign's historical and social context and origin. In such a changed social milieu, historic revolutionary signs, such as Marianne, typically envisioned from Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, are imbued with new meaning. Arising from, and traditionally interpreted through, the semiotic ideology of a (largely unified) people in revolt, Liberty/Marianne now clearly conveys new, exclusionary, entailments. The contemporary application of this historically unifying and rallying symbol of revolution now arguably alienates a significant minority of the country's contemporary populace, with an immediately observable disjuncture, to infer from the image an iconic representation, connoted in her style of dress, at obvious odds with that of conventional Muslim dress.

This depiction of the contemporary French electorate as Marianne, as well as the Revolution imagery in the *Je Suis Charlie* solidarity imagery, discussed in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, frame the growing preoccupation with what it means to be French as a renewal of an old debate about national identity, nation-building and the story of France. Here, Gombrich's second process from his armoury - that of combination - may be recognised. As Morris describes, combination 'refers to the blending of elements and ideas from different domains into a new composite that remains clearly identifiable as something that contains each of its constituents' (1993: 200). In Plantu's cartoons, the depiction of contemporary French nationhood may frequently be seen to refer to its revolutionary origin. Emerging out of the French Revolution, Marianne may be understood as the national personification of France. Through her allegory, Marianne's inclusion in contemporary political cartoons is therefore an integral component of the visual narrativity of French inclusion and belonging. This is evident, as previously discussed, in an earlier cartoon marking the anniversary of the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices, wherein this revolutionary imagery is recalled again, with Marianne seen leading the French populace, this time with pencil rather than musket in hand. Here, past and present are combined to depict the signified French nationhood, with the merged signifiers of past and present, as well as of real and mythical, remaining clearly identifiable.

Although, during the *ancien régime*, Frenchness was acquired ascriptively from Gallo-Roman ancestry, the revolution effected a change in the acquisition of French identity, which could now be derived from ‘a voluntary commitment to common political values and a common fate’ (Safran 1991: 220). Concepts of post-French Revolution nationalism and nation-building are symbolised in Renan’s ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?’, wherein the historian proposes that a nation is a sentiment, based on both ‘a common possession of a rich inheritance of memories...and a common consent, a desire to live together’ (ibid.). Resulting from the upheaval of the revolution, considerable importance was therefore placed upon the construction of a collective memory, which sought a fusion of the various assortments of group identities, united under one national culture. Recalling the revolution and republican values through imagery was commonplace during the 2017 presidential election campaigns in French media. Attempts to stir the nation’s collective memory by referring to previous regimes are here apparent, through the construction of an ‘authentic’ national identity and the cultivation of national imagination. In this capacity, the potency of the processes of both combination and condensation in the political cartoon may be appreciated.

For centrist and left-leaning parties, conflicting and contrary positions in relation to the EU became apparent during the presidential campaign, as clearly demonstrated in the images below. In the first image, published during the French presidential elections of 2017, condensation is used to good effect. Under the caption ‘*La machine à perdre*’ (February 20th 2017, and April 24th 2017, Plantu for *Le Monde*), Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Benoît Hamon, both formerly of the Socialist Party, are depicted on the same bicycle but struggling to proceed in opposite directions (*Fig. 19*, Appendix), a particularly vivid metaphor of discord. At the time of the publication of the image, both were left-leaning presidential candidates in the French elections of 2017, during which time potential for a coalition between the two candidates had been discussed. Referring to this possible partnership, the image clearly depicts the problematic relationship between the two, with many readers recognising their struggle as one relating to a particularly significant divergence in their views on the future of Europe.

Mirroring their struggle, we see Plantu's recurring mouse character with a second mouse enduring the same difficulty, reflecting the perception of a similar disagreement regarding Europe within the general population.

5.5.2 "Maybe it was my hologram...?"



Figure 20. Plantu for Le Monde. 21 April 2017.

"Huh? But I never wanted to leave the Euro!... Maybe it was my hologram...?"

During the election campaigns, the hologram was used by Mélenchon to appear in person in two cities at once, as illustrated in Fig. 20, above. Presumably an attempt to benefit from the closer interaction between people that holographic technology aspires to enable, Mélenchon launched his campaign by addressing a congregation in Paris as a hologram while being physically present in Lyon, 500 kilometres away. Through this deployment of technology as a metonymic sign, Mélenchon presented himself as an innovator in political communication at the forefront of his 'citizens' revolution' (bbc.com). By presenting himself as a technological and communications forerunner, an attempted transferral of such innovative signifiers onto his supporters may be observed. Reminiscent, too, of 'demand' pictures in photography (Kress and Van Leeven 1992), wherein a

direct appeal is made to the viewer of the image in an attempt to engage them emotionally through perceived eye contact with the subject, a similar technique of appealing to the viewer through 'eye-contact' is of frequent use in political cartoons also¹⁸. Likewise, then, the use of the hologram in this way, affords Mélenchon a sense of immediacy by appearing to be looking directly at his audience at the beginning of his campaign, thereby potentially engendering a deeper connection with the public. However, in this cartoon, Mélenchon's hologram provides an ironic explanation for apparent contradictions in his public stances on the Euro and the possibility of a *Frexit*, with a split in proposed policies explained by the corresponding split in Mélenchons, as he attempts to distance himself from his holographic image. Here we see Mélenchon and his party acquiesce to the anti-EU sentiment amplifying across the country, arguably capitalising on the anxiety roused by Le Pen and RN, whilst attempting to remain firmly an EU 'remainer'.

This conflict is felt across the political spectrum, where even the staunchest EU proponents must publically acknowledge the need, at least, for its reform. For Emmanuel Macron, who has frequently and unambiguously declared himself pro-EU, such a need is similarly conveyed throughout his campaign, arguably an appeasement of the unrest felt by the French people. In the division captured in this political cartoon, furthermore, we may perceive Ricœur's *character* concept, wherein may be seen 'the set of ongoing dispositions that enable us to recognize someone; it is the set of distinctive traits, habits, and acquired identifications which become definite dispositions' (Floch 2000: 30). The contradictory duality of character satirised in this political cartoon colourfully illustrates the problematic of identity conceived as a dialectic between inertia and tension (Floch 2000). In this image, Mélenchon's publicly recognised stance and 'truth towards others' [*parole tenue*] has constituted a preference for a departure from

¹⁸ In the political cartoon, this 'demand' technique is also often used effectively to depict anonymity as well as individuality, whereby the characters are typically portrayed without eyes or faces (an example is discussed below). Whether conveying a distinct individual or an anonymous group of people, then, the significance of the subject's gaze in an image underscores the potential significance of the use of Mélenchon's hologram at the beginning of his campaign.

the EU, with his subsequent position and trajectory an apparent reversal of this position, demonstrating the problematic between, on the one side, 'that through which we are recognized; on the other, that by which we are driven' (30).

Looking to the graphic components of the image, its action lines, found near hands that are ripping apart the European Union flag and between tears in the flag itself, as well as, more faintly, nearer his lower body, suggest a clearly aggravated holographic Mélenchon. Beside the holograph stands the 'real' Mélenchon as he calmly speaks directly to the viewer, a stillness denoted, in part, by the absence of these action lines. Although outside the remit of this study, the critical contribution to the cognitive metaphor research of these action lines and their psychological significance in drawings was explored in a study by Kennedy, Green and Vervaeke (1993), whose results found comparable conceptions of movement by people blind since birth. Using raised-line drawings, these respondents, unfamiliar with pictures, depicted movement and trajectory using this device. Furthermore, these action lines are metaphoric, with, for example, the lines behind an object depicting the extreme speed at which the object is moving (Kennedy et al 1993). As noted, 'metaphor uses meaning, reference, and class inclusion in ways that at times make easy contact with perception and at other times escape even the widest and most radical definitions of perception' (1993: 254). The deployment of such techniques in political cartoons, then, renders their meaning further accessible to a wide audience, speaking to the deep-seated, and ostensibly innate, underpinnings involved in the 'reading' of an image.

5.5.3 "So, you'll rehire me?"



Figure 21. Plantu for Le Monde. 27 October 2016.

'Le léger mieux du chômage' ('The slightest improvement in unemployment')

In the above image (Fig. 21), a number of potent tools frequently deployed in the political cartoon may be observed. Firstly, the process of domestication (Gombrich 1971) may be discerned, a recurring device with frequently controversial application, as discussed below. In this cartoon, we see former French president François Hollande transformed into a tradesman, asking the French populace, here metaphorically personified as a disgruntled Marianne, if he will be rehired. Behind Marianne, the spike in unemployment with a slight recent downturn is prominently displayed on a wall chart. Emphasising the position of Marianne, Plantu's Mouse figure stands in solidarity beside her, graphically redoubling the strength of the French public's grievances. The shortcomings of the former president in relation to employment are accentuated by imagining him as a tradesman who has completed a task to an inferior standard. The public is thus invited to similarly conceive of Hollande through this more ordinary interaction, thereby evaluating the work of their president as they would that of a tradesman. Domestication here envisions 'persons and

situations that are remote from the [viewer's] everyday experience' (Morris 1993: 200) and transforms them into something or someone more familiar, which, in this case, is into an under-performing tradesman. A distinctively more provocative use of domestication in the political cartoon will be discussed below.

This image also provides a useful example through which to explore the debate about direction in pictorial metaphors. While verbal metaphor is widely accepted as unidirectional, with properties flowing only from source to target domains, debate ensues about direction, or reversibility, in its visual counterpart, with some proposing that a bi-directional flow between the two domains is more easily achieved in visual or pictorial metaphor than in verbal metaphor (Carroll 1994). Addressing this argument, in the cartoon above, we see former president François Hollande depicted not as an unsatisfactory president but as an unsatisfactory tradesman, replete with its own set of metonymic entailments. Here, the metaphor is clearly 'president is tradesman'. However, the viewer is unlikely to reverse the direction of properties from target to source by interpreting the message to mean 'tradesman is president', undermining an argument for bi-directional symmetry, or reversibility, which seems atypical in pictorial metaphor. Although reversible domains and bi-directionality may be found in pictorial metaphor, they are not representative of the form. Furthermore, even in the case of reversible pictorial metaphors, there can usually be identified a dominant source and target domain in the image, which the viewer is expected to recognise. This issue of irreversibility is significant in metaphor theory as an ease of bi-directional flow in pictorial metaphor that blurs the lines between source and target domain would undermine its cognitive paradigm and subsequently the idea of a unified metaphor theory (Forceville 2002).

Additionally, a subsequent effect of these recurring presidential protagonists in political cartoons may here be noted. The frequent appearance of political figures throughout French visual discourse, in particular during the presidential campaign, may encourage a sense of familiarity among the public with the protagonists, since, through this repetition, the figure acquires a fixed

personality and subsequently a kind of public appeal. At apparent odds with the 'punching up' function of the political cartoon, the caricature of political figures is, as Coupe argues, a sympathetic process (1969), as 'the constant repetition of a given politician's features establishes him as a person in our minds and the familiarity inevitably breeds that measure of sympathetic contempt' (92). In this light, the reader recognizes this recurring actor, and with whom they, after time, 'become old friends' (93), reaffirming an emotive connection between reader-citizen and in the process rendering them sympathetic (Coupe 1969).

5.6 Frenchness *in the* Banlieue

Across French media, discord in the *banlieues*, too, has been hotly debated. Illustrated in political cartoons as well as throughout other news media, life in these *banlieues* further contributes to debates on concepts of French nationhood. Comprised of low-income housing projects, the immigrant population of these urban peripheries, known as a *banlieue*, has surged. Further, in these styles of housing, the young and the unemployed are over-represented, with a significantly higher unemployment rate than in other areas. These high unemployment rates and a deterioration of living conditions, a hardening of street culture as well as reported police harassment, amplified tensions between the police and local youth, evident in riots that have been erupting since the 1980s (Cartier et al 2016). More in line with urban housing developments than a city's suburbs, the term *banlieue* has, since the 1970s, carried differing connotations than those typically evoked by the term 'suburb'. The former most often refers to high-rise residential towers and HLM (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré*) on the periphery of French cities rather than the middle class or more affluent periurban areas connoted by the term 'suburb'. For this reason, the term '*banlieue*' rather than 'suburb' will predominantly be used in this study with regard to these periurban areas.

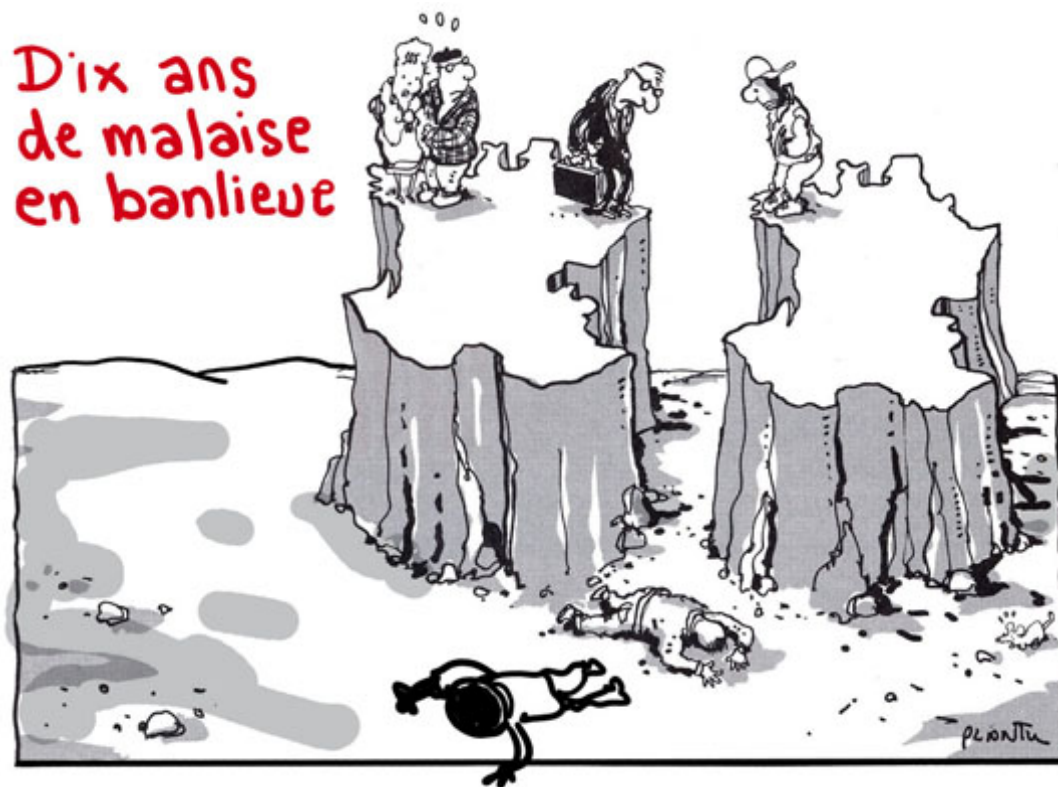


Figure 22. Plantu for Le Monde. 16 March 2015.

'10 ans de malaise en banlieue. La mort des deux garçons a Clichy-sous-Bois avait déclenché les émeutes de 2005' ('10 years of unrest in the banlieue. The death of two boys in Clichy-sous-Bois triggered the riots of 2005')

Incited by the death of two youths from the peripheral neighbourhood of Clichy-sous-Bois on the outskirts of Paris in 2005, who were electrocuted whilst hiding from the police in an electrical station, riots decrying police brutality, harassment and discrimination spread across *banlieues* throughout the country. These riots sparked debate in both the media and in academia about the limitations of the French republican model for immigrant integration, as well as the ways in which it addresses discrimination felt by young people from immigrant backgrounds (Cartier et al 2016: 3). Coverage of the riots in the media also prompted concern among the public about the often-harsh living conditions of residents of the *banlieues* (Cartier et al 2016), a concern which we may see, to varying degrees, in the image above (Fig. 22). Marking ten years since these riots, the above image tells a story of a nation divided, comprised of two separate, although ostensibly similar, Frances, with an anxious white, middle-class

population of one France, and a suburban youth population (*banlieusards*) of the other. A further internal disjunction within the former may also be apparent, with one inhabitant reflecting the grief of the youth opposite, while a couple stays back in shock, and perhaps fear, of the *banlieusards*. In contrast to their briefcase-wielding urban compatriot of the 'first' France, this fearful-looking couple of the arguably 'elite' nation seems more wary than sympathetic of the *banlieusards*, reflecting diverging public opinion of the *banlieues* and their residents. The emotion-rousing vividness (Ortony 1975) and pathos of this image, too, wherein the bodies of two boys lie lifeless between two nations, lends additional potency to the cartoon and the visual narrative it constructs, in turn likely making the image more compelling for viewers.

Corresponding to these two apparently separate French nations are, predictably, two separate French nationhoods, with clearly a deep rift between the two. Foregrounded in this image are the bodies of the two boys, who appear as the casualties of these two separate concepts of French identity. At once 'French' and also 'Other', the two youths are seen to have fallen between the cracks in French concepts of identity due to their immigrant backgrounds. In Greimassian terms, the youths may be understood to occupy a difficult space between the ambiguous complex term and a negating neutral term, with S_1 being 'French' and S_2 'Immigrant'. In this way, the visual narrative of the image tells of the harsh reality of the marginalised residents of the *banlieue*, depicting the boys as having suffered due to this perceived liminal identity in a deeply divided France, in whose elite concepts of nationhood they are not fully included. However, rather than simply marking the anniversary of a discrete event that occurred a decade earlier, the cartoon is anchored with the caption, "Ten years of unrest in the *banlieue*", placing the tensions between the 'two' Frances squarely as a current and ongoing issue. While describing the unrest as an enduring issue, however, the caption suggests that it has been an ongoing issue for only ten years. Describing the tensions in the *banlieue* as being just a decade old, the unrest in these areas since the 1980s remains overlooked in this image. The caption accompanying the image explains that the death of the two boys triggered the riots of 2005, but absent from the caption was what had perhaps triggered their

death. This suggests that the tensions began with the death of the two boys, rather than seeing their death and the ensuing riots as an outcome of long-since festering resentment and malaise among residents of the *banlieue*.

“AFFAIRE THÉO” : un peu de pédagogie avant la manif de Paris



Figure 23. Plantu for Le Monde. 13 February 2017.

‘Théo Affaire: a bit of pedagogy before the Paris demonstration’

In the above image, we may recognise some characters, as well as their corresponding attitudes and beliefs, from the above-depicted *banlieue*. This image (Fig. 23, above) refers to the violent arrest of Théodore Luhaka, a 22-year-old youth worker, on February 2nd 2017 in Aulnay-sous-Bois, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Paris. In what became known as the Théo Affaire, Théo accused police of sodomy, racial abuse and physical brutality during his arrest after he was approached in the Paris outskirts. Riots, which lasted until February

15th, erupted again throughout Parisian *banlieue* following his arrest in response to the alleged brutal treatment suffered by Théo. In the resultant image, which only directly refers to Théo in its caption, the process of condensation may again be observed. Attending to the visual narrativity of this image, the similarities between suburban, non-white youth and the police are clearly seen, with each group ironically conveying identical reports about the other. A play on the identical errors regarding the conception of each group's 'character' as well as their 'truth towards others' [*parole tenue*] is here of note, heard in the 'pff!' uttered by both audiences simultaneously when confronted with the possibility that members of the other group may be nice. The simultaneous reports are framed as pedagogy, to be of use before the demonstrations. Anonymity is evoked through the lack of eyes for both depictions of their pedagogical subjects, observed too in the learner, a reversal of the aforementioned 'demand' effect. Rather than connecting the subject to the viewer through the eyes, the eyeless faces on the flipcharts demonstrate the perception one has of the other - that is, as a stereotype - anonymous and unsympathetic, regardless of contradictory information they may receive. In both sides of the cartoon, then, we see the perception of the 'enemy' as a (partially) faceless and anonymous archetype, suggesting a reduced capacity by both parties for empathy or effective communication with the other.

Further, mistrust between *banlieue* residents and the French police may be viewed in light of the recurring perceived connection between these working class projects and international jihadist networks. Two years before the publication of this cartoon, in 2015, the *banlieue* became topical in the media again, this time as a potential breeding ground for radicalisation, following the attacks in Paris at *Charlie Hebdo's* offices in January. The perpetrators, *banlieue* residents Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, acting on behalf of the AQAP, were discovered to have made connections in prison with Djamel Belghal, a militant sentenced on terrorism charges as well as training with Al-Qaeda (Silverstein 2018). As a result, the *banlieue* quickly came to be perceived as a prominent element in the international jihadist network, wherein a connection between Islamic war zones abroad and the marginalised suburban housing projects in France was

reaffirmed. Having been similarly identified as such in times of crisis in the past, a renewed call was made ‘for the heightened surveillance and detention of suspects, regardless of the effects on broader civil liberties’, due to a perceived failure of French intelligence to ‘properly track and dismantle such networks’ (Silverstein 2018: 90). The ensuing argument for racial profiling, which resulted in the treatment of French women and men with suspicion due to their ethnicity, religion and address, received backlash, with some pointing to the nation’s postcolonial context as partly responsible, and the *Charlie Hebdo* attackers as its by-products. As Silverstein attests however, this argument obscures the agency of the Kouachi brothers as well as their explicit claim to be fighting for the AQAP (Silverstein 2018). In any case, the practice of racial profiling by both *banlieue* and non-*banlieue* residents alike, as depicted in the above cartoon, portrays the mistrust felt on both sides, even as attempts to correct bias and cross cultural divides are made.

In part as an attempt to redress this clear division and ongoing mutual mistrust, Arabic-language education became the focus of a recent initiative of the local Marseille branch of the *Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale*. In 2013, during Marseille’s year as the European Capital of Culture, much attention was given to French-Muslim youth from the *banlieue*. In order to reconstruct this marginalized group into secular, fully integrated French citizens, a rebranding and reconfiguring of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as an elite language was proposed (Evers 2018). As part of a primary level ‘heritage programme’, called *Enseignement des langues et cultures d’origine* (ELCO), MSA was taught, rather than ‘heritage languages like Algerian, Tunisian, or Berber, inter alia’, with approximately 48,000 students nationwide in 2016 (Evers 2018: 447).

Comparable to the nation branding project of the North Macedonian government in 2014, wherein interventions in the public sphere sought to (re)shape the perception of the region (Graan 2016), here, these state-sponsored actions attempted to alter or erase both the religious affiliations and class identities of the residents of the city’s housing projects in order to arguably sanitise its public perception. The ‘language-centred gentrification’ arguably targeted concepts of personhood, encouraging individuals ‘to leave behind their Muslim heritage and

working-class affiliations by communicating in a revamped MSA. The unstated, yet desired, result was for youth to acquire an iconic resemblance to the incoming secular, affluent people with whom they might well rub shoulders were they to venture into central Marseille' (Evers 2018: 439), in an attempted realisation of the above-mentioned difference-blind republican ideal.

Alongside this reconfiguration and *Mediterraneanisation* of MSA, the Marseille-Provence 2013 (MP2013) cultural programming, through its advertising, attempted to portray Marseille and the Mediterranean from a Eurocentric perspective, with both measures acting as an attempted 'antiquity-era chronotopic formulation being circulated by the French state' (Evers 2018: 446). Images on advertisements posted throughout Marseille placed considerable emphasis on its Greco-Roman heritage, rather than on its Islamic influences, discounting the reality of the city's *banlieues* and the ethnic origins of many of its residents. In one image, the man depicted to represent Marseille inhabitants bore a strong correlation to the common portrayal in the public imagination of the heroic figure of Odysseus in Greek mythology. Through such encoding and the subsequent transferral of signifiers, the inhabitants of Marseille acquire similar traits of *Europeanness*, with both the figure and its corresponding landscape inviting 'the viewer to make a parallel, between those who inhabited such Greek city-states as Ithaca and the descendants of such people who are the supposed members of contemporary Marseille's society' (Evers 2018: 453). Throughout the advertising campaign, a notable absence of conspicuous religious symbols was evident, alongside a seemingly concerted effort to create distance between the depiction of the Mediterranean Odysseus-type figure and that of the male French-Muslim youth from the *banlieue*. We may see, then, the ways in which the MP2013 cultural programming efforts sought to reconceptualise the city in line with a Greco-Roman Mediterranean vision through a revamped MSA language education and tourism. In this way, French-Muslim youth were discursively encouraged to expel their religious affiliations in order to correspond more closely to an elite Greco-Roman Mediterranean (Evers 2018).

Although described in inclusionary terms as an opportunity, a central requirement for the achievement of upward mobility by French-Muslim youth is the relinquishing of certain other aspects of the individual's identity and sense of personhood. This 'ambivalent inclusion', then, exposes the state's willingness to erase the religious and ethnic affiliations of members of minority communities in order to achieve integration (Rogozen-Soltar 2012). In this way, we may see linguistic gentrification acting as a means of erasing cultural characteristics of marginalised minority communities, through the application of their speech practices. To target and alter religious and class affiliations, 'soft power' measures such as language and advertising were deployed (Evers 2018). The image in the media of French-Muslim youth from Marseille's *banlieues* often depicts them as unable to integrate, as being unmanageable, and, frequently, for being responsible for drug trafficking and violent crime in the city. Attempts to transform these individuals, therefore, are thorough, as even their ways of speaking are challenged and 'corrected' (Evers 2018).

5.7 Rassemblement National's 'Heartlander'

The strategy of deploying 'culture' and cultural identity to appeal to marginalised segments of the French population is a particularly potent one, in large part due to the fact that cultural identity is 'virtually the only aspect of their relation to the national society that they still own and control – the only one, by the same token, beyond the control of national political and cultural elites' (Turner 1995: 17). Through the mediated political discourse of RN, an appeal to this French, non-elite demographic is evident in an attempt to create an authentic national identity through a sense of timelessness and embodiment via a deployment of 'regimes of authenticity'. Recalling numerous definitive features of Italian fascist discourse (Eco 1995), the non-elite French citizen is a frequently recurring image, and is seen to embody traditional French values and ethnicity. Ur-Fascism's cult of heroism is particularly apparent, played out in the rhetoric of these 'heartlander heroes', whose struggle against state institutions and structures draws further comparisons to Italian fascism's preference for 'action for action's sake' and aversion to pacifism (ibid.). In such depictions of 'authentic'

and 'virtuous' rural French, 'metaphors for rebirth, self-awakening and self-purification for a nation of consumers' may be perceived (Turner 1995: 17). Depictions of the country's pastoral practices may therefore be understood as metaphors for life and 'the formation of the self' (ibid.). As we have seen in Chapter 4, Historical Constructions of *Frenchness* in Political Cartoons, this non-elite, 'peasant' archetype frequently appeared too in images created during and after the French Revolution, which were seen to bolster the revolutionary leaders' claim to 'speak for the mass of the population' (Popkin 1990: 255). This purpose may also be inferred from the prevalence of the contemporary heartlander/peasant/non-elite protagonist and its corresponding myth of an 'authentic' France, depicted throughout RN discourse, as well as by Plantu's Marianne and Mouse characters, discussed below. In this way, similar to its revolutionary application, the creators' role as speakers for the French populace may be endorsed.

In the political rhetoric of RN, then, authenticity is manufactured through binary opposition by placing these 'heartlanders' in contrast to the elite Parisians and to the politics of globalisation. In this way, the party's populist rhetoric utilises and arguably contributes to the growing divide in France between urbanites and rural dwellers. Mapping these anti-Paris or anti-elite concepts of *Frenchness* espoused by the party along the semiotic square, whereby the authentic, 'true' French citizen is one of rural France, or the periphery, figurative implications emerge. Here, the elite Parisian appears to be both French and *un*French (S_1 and \bar{S}_1), a contradiction due in part to their apparent departure from, and disinterest in, traditional values and customs. Ideas of 'authentic *Frenchness*' are here conflated with pastoral scenes, a signifier of unpretentiousness and traditional French values and morality, subsequently transferred onto RN's image. Here, the denotative sign of this pastoral, rural France is imbued with new signification in Barthes's second-order, or mythological, level of meaning in his semiological system. Far from what Le Pen describes as the 'brouhaha' of Paris, the rural French belong to the supposed 'real' France, unseating a dismissive urban elite for a *popular elite*, membership of which is earned through their ascriptive 'authentic' *Frenchness*. This 'real France', *La France Profonde* (Deepest France) or

'Peripheral France', account for up to 60% of the French population (Astier 2014), and it is on the fears of this group that RN capitalises, in particular the anxiety roused by the concept of a sweeping EU, overwhelming French culture and tradition in favour of a homogenising globalisation. It is on the fears and anxieties of this cohort that the proposition of a French exit from the EU is directed. Echoing once more a central tenet of Ur-Fascism as described by Eco (1995), an appeal to the fears and frustrations of this group is heard in the party's rhetoric. Conceivably a nationalist RN heartland, Le Pen contested the usage of the term *La France Profonde*, preferring instead 'to think of it as deeply patriotic' (Willsher 2016). Le Pen toured this "forgotten France" of the rural areas and small towns suffering social deprivation ("*Tour des France des Oublies*"), lamenting the sacrifice of the 'small people' to multinationals and globalisation (Astier 2014), whilst valorising the farmer and the worker as the embodiment of morality and integrity (Nowak and Branford 2017). Perhaps not unexpectedly, omitted from this anti-EU, 'France for the French' discourse is the significant funding the region receives from the European Agricultural Fund as well as any reference to the relative scarcity of immigrants in the region (Willsher 2016). Neglected, too, in this particular brand of nationhood and national pride is the importance, frequently heard, of the EU in concepts of *Frenchness* and the prominence of France in the Union, elsewhere sources of pride and standing for the nation in similar discussions, evident in the discourse, and undoubtedly contributing to the successes, of Macron and *En Marche!* during the presidential campaign in 2017.

Furthermore, this portrayal of the 'natural', a trope commonly deployed to signify morality and goodness in public discourse since the 18th century (Williamson 1978), is connoted by the 'heartlander' in RN rhetoric in opposition to the supposed artifice of the Parisian urban elite. As Williamson (1978) attests, the significance of and value placed on nature and the 'natural' grew in relation to the distance a society moved away from it through advancements in technology. This preoccupation with nature may be seen again here, with attempts to transpose its signifieds (morality, goodness) onto those of the 'true' French citizen, typified by the heartlander. The binary opposition of

natural/unnatural is implied and used here to portray 'authentic' French citizenship, in contrast to, through its absence, those deemed inauthentic based on their supposed 'unnaturalness'. By conveying nature, then, as a 'symbol of what is good, everything undesirable in society can be called 'unnatural' (Williamson 1978: 124). Buoyed by the morality inferred by the symbol of the natural, the metaphoric concept of the rural heartlander as authentic French citizen is thereby validated.

Here, too, the required *plot* of Ur-Fascist discourse may be discerned (Eco 1995). RN's followers are suitably besieged by a growing group of international newcomers, replete with opposing values and customs that threaten those of France and French identity. Party rhetoric thereby condemns the 'deculturalisation' of France, alluding to trends of Westernisation and a departure from a 'traditional' French way of life, with the intention of prompting an ensuing sense of loss and disorientation (Chong 2011). Under the slogan "In the name of the people" ("*Au nom du peuple*"), clear comparisons with the Italian fascist feature of being the *Voice of the People* are similarly revealed (Eco 1995). Le Pen has claimed during her campaign that *the People* have been "dispossessed of their patriotism", with supporters heard to shout "This is our country!" ("*On est chez nous!*") (Nossiter 2017), arguably fulfilling their role in the 'theatrical fiction' (Eco 1995). Posing the question "Will our children live in a country that is still French and democratic?" the party's rhetoric is emphatically nationalistic. Nationalist rhetoric typically ascertains that the national move towards globalisation, industrialism and urbanisation 'undermined the traditional authority structures and social anchors of French national identity: the peasantry, the family, and the church' (Safran 1991: 223). RN discourse locates this nostalgic imagery and metaphor conjuring rural life and family alongside the depiction of a France that is modern, secular and economically strong, arguably conflating it with the more favourable outcomes of globalisation. By fostering loyalty through nostalgia, these images can be powerful and persuasive tools at the disposal of political parties. Furthermore, the literal understanding of the metaphor 'cultural heritage', for instance, is often implied in the political rhetoric of RN and other proponents of nationalism and ascriptive national identity in

France today. Morse describes the dangers accompanying this frequent literal misconception, asserting that 'a culture of arts or letters...lives and has its being only in those individuals who have become acquainted with it', as opposed to being acquired or inherited through citizenship or race (Morse 1974: 546-547). In nationalist public discourse, this literal interpretation is recognisable in the evocation of an ancestral attachment of rural French to the state, as discussed above. By privileging certain political outlooks, a reasoned, balanced debate is thereby thwarted through metaphoric manipulation. Redressing this misconception may contribute to the development of a more just and rational concept of national identity.

Conveying optimism, the symbol of a blue rose has been a recurring graphic component in the narrativity of RN's imagery during the presidential campaign, a visual semio-narrative device used to unite the French electorate by using the flower emblem of the Socialists and the colour of the politically right. The potency of political party emblems such as these reflects the use of symbols to efficiently summarise ideologies (van Het Hof and Atabek 2007: 253), and here is exemplary of Barthes's second-order sign in the semiological system (1972). Similar to the use of symbols as trade-marked brands in the commercial sphere, the emblems chosen to represent the ideologies, philosophies and political standpoints of a party, through the process of consensus, form the 'simplest and most essential expression of a product' (van Het Hof and Atabek 2007: 255). In the narrative generated by this symbol, further, the identity of its 'product' is conveyed and, through its consumption, is extended to the voter-consumer, who is invited to take on the values with which the party-product has been imbued. Such narrative identity, for Ricœur, aspires to express, among other things, 'acquired identifications by which the other enters into the composition of the same' (Floch 2000: 140). Despite their potency and metonymic entailments, however, these symbols may similarly be disputed metonymically or rejected entirely in public discourse, as observed below. Besides the first-level denotations of RN's politically symbolic choice of colour and flower for their emblem, the blue rose also, as party officials have stated, connotes the current possibility of realising the impossible. Referring to the recent unforeseen

successes of nationalism, the visual narrative generated by this poetic metaphor frames it as a chance occurrence in nature rather than a feat of genetic engineering, suggests that the current surge in nationalist and nativist discourse is a naturally, albeit unusually, occurring, unpredictable event in nature, one outside of human control. With this investigation into the rhetorical devices of identity and nation-building discourse, the metonymic repudiations of this supposed naturalness may be conveyed, revealing the true socio-political roots of RN's blue rose.

Constructing a national identity that combines the aforementioned nostalgia with the concept of a progressive, modern France, also creates grounds for the exclusion of those non-European immigrants, in particular, who may not share either traditional French values and memory or its modern values of individual liberty and secularism. Metaphors depicting the above-described rural 'heartlander' as 'true' French according to ascriptive views of national identity argue metonymically against the inclusion of non-nationals without needing to state so explicitly. In this way, nationalist parties 'fallaciously transfer modes of reasoning to more problematic arenas' of government policy (Sahlane 2013: 167), such as those that would normally be categorised xenophobic, thereby naturalising the exclusion of immigrants from concepts of nationhood. In this way, the conclusions drawn from this metaphoric reasoning may enable the perpetration and naturalisation of xenophobia and justify ethnic discrimination. Often targeted, both directly and implicitly, in this discourse are French Muslims and Islam.

This anti-Muslim or Islamophobic sentiment expressed in much nativist rhetoric may be similarly plotted along Greimassian terms, with its basic oppositional terms being 'French' and 'Muslim' (S_1 and S_2). A typical nativist 'either/or' configuration of nationhood may be understood as the positive deixis compound, $S_1 + \bar{S}_2$, or, 'French' and 'not Muslim'. Correspondingly, the 'Muslim' is construed in line with the negative deixis, 'Muslim' and 'not French' ($S_2 + \bar{S}_1$). Here, ostensibly, *Rassemblement National* disputes the legitimacy of the inclusion of Muslims as authentically French more resolutely on the basis of the perceived

incompatibility between French and Muslim values. These grounds for exclusion are based on the professed belief in the latter's inability or reluctance to assimilate into French secular society, rather than on the grounds of RN's ascriptive view of national identity, perhaps so as not to reaffirm the connection with the previous xenophobic incarnation of Jean-Marie Le Pen's *le Front National*. The inclusion of Islamic identity into French nationhood is therefore doubly negated.

5.8 The 'Enemy Image'

Evident in various international political imagery throughout the centuries, visual constructions of the 'enemy' are widespread, as seen in the ubiquitous depictions of 'Hussein as Hitler' in American cartoons in the late 20th century, described below, as well as the derogatory, simian-like Irish in the cartoons of British satirical publications in the 19th century. Observable in one such magazine, *Punch*, these derogatory portrayals of the Irish sought to dehumanise their subject, whilst also conveying a sense of threat from a given ethnic, cultural or national group, in this case, the Irish.

5.8.1 Asylum Seekers

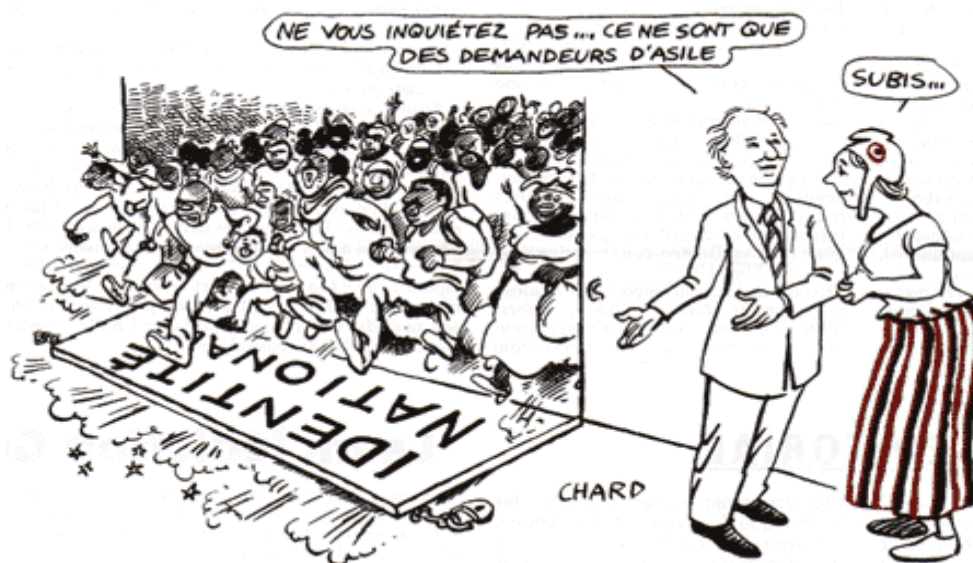


Figure 24. 'La France et les demandeurs d'asile...', Chard, undated

In the contemporary imagery of the French far-right publication, *Rivarol*, similar psychological strategies may be apparent, wherein illustrations of RN's above-described political rhetoric are arguably illustrated. An argument for a comparable deployment of ethnic victimisation may be made regarding depictions of non-white immigrants, with the imagery presenting them as a threatening, potentially overwhelming invading force, as seen in the image above by Chard (*Fig. 24*). The impression is created of the 'other' group as a psychological enemy and a continuous threat, while the in-group is constructed as 'victim', generating a fear of their extermination among its readership (Forker 2012). Numerous images published in *Rivarol* in recent years convey this threat, with one, for instance, portraying immigrants as a menacing mob breaking into a family's home, with countless more still approaching, while a speaker on the television in the home is ironically encouraging citizen-viewers to 'welcome those who immigrate'. The 'new world', heralded by the speaker on television, is juxtaposed with the supposed threatening reality of the immigrant situation. Stirring and mobilising fears and anxiety about immigration, this cartoon presents a sense of foreboding by depicting the nation as being under attack by a menacing foreign invader (Fredette 2014), through their construction in the 'enemy image'.

A published cartoonist in the French weekly *Rivarol* since 1967 as well as the RN-linked *Présent*, cartoonist Françoise Pichard, also known as Chard or Pscharr, has incited considerable controversy through her imagery. In 1994, Chard had been at the centre of one such controversial debate due to a cartoon that was deemed to incite hatred and discrimination towards the Black community, and again in 2006 for a Holocaust denialist cartoon. Heavily critical of immigration as well as of globalisation, a frequent theme throughout Chard's work concerns French identity and nationhood. In one image, we may see the meat grinder of globalism churning out a shadowy, sombre, indistinct human product, while two distinctly white individuals may be seen running away¹⁹. In another, the dystopian machinery of globalism takes the form of an oversized thug stamping

¹⁹ See Figure 25. *Mondialisme*, in Appendix: Chapter 5.

on provincial villages in the French countryside²⁰. Portraying moderate Muslims, and Islam in general, as an enemy is readily apparent in the imagery of *Rivarol*, with frequent allusions to an apparent threat of white ethnic victimization. In the image above, a stampede of asylum seekers are depicted bursting through and breaking down the locked barriers of ‘national identity’, with Chard’s Marianne being told not to worry, since ‘they are just asylum seekers’. As with Plantu’s imagery, Marianne may be recognised by her Phrygian cap, although here she appears markedly more acquiescent and meek. A number of faces at the head of the intruding mob are distinctly threatening and aggressive, while those behind them form a dark and chaotic faceless mass. Forcefulness and speed are also heavily emphasised by the stars and lines caused by the fall of the ‘national identity’ border, making more visceral still the threat of the nation overwhelmed.

5.8.2 FN as Nazi



Figure 27. ‘Je suis un insoumis!’ Plantu for l’Express. 1 May 2017.

²⁰ See Figure 26. ‘Un nid de résistance’, in Appendix: Chapter 5.

Using a similar 'enemy image' device, but this time to oppose this anti-immigration visual rhetoric, RN and Le Pen are the constructed foes in the cartoon above. Here, a decidedly different symbol to the blue rose is chosen to represent the ideologies of RN. In the cartoon above (*Fig. 27*), we see Nazi signifiers repudiating those of the aforementioned rose, with members of RN wearing the red armband of Nazi uniforms, standing beneath a large flag. Similar to the design of the armbands that RN figures wear in other related images, on the flag the letters 'FN' are in place of the swastika. The FN(RN)/Nazi flag is also foregrounded and considerably larger than the French flag, which appears faded and dwarfed in the background. The placement and relative size of these two flags arguably demonstrate the illustrator's perception of the importance of the party above that of the nation for RN, as well as graphically conveying the potential for the domination of France by the RN party. Underneath the flag, impoverished-looking immigrants are forcibly carted away by RN henchmen. Among the group of immigrants, a number of cultural symbols may be recognised, most immediately that of the hijab. A number of other signifiers, however, appear to undermine the inclusive, liberal message of the image. The deep skin tones of some of the group stand in stark contrast to the 'blank' skin tones of the white native French, with only the skin tone of the most foregrounded white figure seeming to be deliberately 'white'. The 'blank' skin tone of some of the Muslim immigrants is unlikely to also be read as 'white' by the reader, given the prominence of their other readily identifiable cultural symbols. The cartoon may therefore conceivably be read as a depiction of an 'othering' of the immigrant group that simultaneously makes a lighter skin tone appear 'natural' or neutral, or as Dyer would put it, normalises whiteness by rendering it invisible (1997).

These distinctive symbols, in fact, appear so prominent in their depictions that the immigrants appear as little else in this image. The decision to portray immigrants in this simplified way is likely due, in part, to the limitations of the medium of the political cartoon, whereby the cartoonist must often eschew detail in favour of ease of comprehension. The aforementioned processes of condensation (Morris 1993; Gombrich 1971), as observed above, wherein large

groups are compressed into one archetypal character, and compactness (Ortony 1975), as well as simplification and exaggeration (Franklin et al 2005) are useful tools, commonly used in this medium. However, a limitation more problematic in visual metaphor than in verbal, condensation may cause difficulty in conveying plurals, often resulting in the portrayal of a stereotype (Morris 1993; Gombrich 1971), as may be seen in this example. Furthermore, in this case, the prominence of the immigrants' symbolism notably contrasts with that of the RN 'Nazis', whose symbolism, although indisputably provocative, does not appear to overwhelm its bearer to the same extent. The differing visibility of each group's symbolism, along with the stereotyping effect resulting from processes such as condensation, may, therefore, be seen to weaken the inclusive, RN-critical, message of the cartoon. Through these symbol-laden social groups with their highly visible signs of racial and cultural difference, then, in line with 'the cultural turn' and constructed through the 'colonizing gaze' (Brenda Farnell in Banks and Ruby 2011: 139; Pinney 1990), this cartoon plays with a synthetic construction of social categories, wherein power relations and hierarchies are arguably naturalised.

The agency of the image, furthermore, and the active role it plays on a contested visual terrain is also particularly evident here. Enciting our passions and thus compelling us to action, such an image emerges as a nonhuman actor whose interaction with the image consumer corresponds to Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) (Latour 2005). Comparable to the *Manner Posters* displayed across Tokyo's subway system (Padoan 2014), the surprised expressions on the faces and through the body language of the immigrant actors attempt a sanctioning effect, their tangible shock underscoring the callousness and incivility of their treatment by the RN thugs. Akin to the commuter sitting aghast on the Tokyo train, the immigrant in the back of the truck acts as Sender in Greimassian actantial terminology, whose purpose in this image is unmistakably one of judgement (2014: 585), reflecting, or encouraging, the similar ethical standpoint of the image consumer. Their more detailed faces, too, convey a relational normativity, against the blank anonymity, and its construed anti-sociality and anti-normativity, of FN. The intention of the image creator may similarly be

assumed to convey the experiences of immigrants in France, specifically their interactions with its citizens and their perception of their reception. Interpreting its visual narrative, furthermore, the emotional affect depicted in and incited by this image may be framed as the first step in the 'complex passionate configuration we call anger', in which discontent and, subsequently, aggression soon follow (586). These ensuing stages of such an emotive configuration, here played out vicariously on behalf of its subject, are seen in the imagery examined in Chapter 7, Countering Elite Depictions of *Frenchness*, wherein the anger of the depicted out-group is palpable.

In similar images, Marine Le Pen, her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, and other members of her party appear to be wearing Nazi uniforms with a red armband. On the armband, within the immediately recognisable white circle on a red background, the letters 'FN', referring to *Rassemblement National's* former title, *le Front National*, are seen again to stand in place of the swastika. The provocative metaphor of 'Le Pen is Nazi' is apparent in numerous other cartoons published in *Le Monde* and *l'Express*, connoted by either the red armband, the flag, the salute, or a combination of these signifiers²¹. Depicting Le Pen as a Nazi also assists the viewer in making sense of the image through the process of domestication. In so doing, commonalities between the signifieds are highlighted while differences are minimised. By framing a political figure in this way, readers, especially those less familiar with her party's ideologies, are offered a shortcut to understanding Le Pen and RN, advanced by a Barthesian transferral of signifiers. Domestication through the portrayal of political leaders as Nazis is, of course, not unique to French media, however. A notable example may be found in North American national news media, wherein Saddam Hussein was depicted as Hitler in political cartoons. Resulting from a strategic collaborative venture between the government and the media, the then-relatively unknown Hussein was explained to the public through this tactical metaphor of 'Hussein is Hitler', thereby seeking among the American populace a justification for the invasion of Iraq (Morris 1993; Saleh 2008). In a similar way, the French public is encouraged to comparably construe RN and its political stance.

²¹ See Figures 28, 29 and 30, in Appendix: Chapter 5.

As Berger (1972) observed in European oil paintings, the principal protagonist in a female nude was not the unclothed woman in the image but the, presumably male, unpictured spectator in front of it assessing her. In a similar way, through the political cartoons that depict a supposed 'Other', non-French figure, the character of a supposed 'true' French citizen is revealed, to whom the image is addressed. In this way, through signs made visible as well as those notably invisible, political cartoons may richly contribute to ongoing debates about French identity. As the oil paintings promoted a consideration of the construction of both femininity and masculinity, the political cartoon too paints a picture of the unpictured typical French citizen, who, although absent, invites us to consider what may and may not be deemed to constitute French nationhood. Furthermore, the process of appellation (Williamson 1978), after Althusser's concept of inter appellation, whereby the consumer is created by the advertisement, may be seen to contribute to identity-creation in the political cartoon depicting nationhood. Regarding advertisements, Williamson states, 'Every ad necessarily assumes a particular spectator: it projects into the space out in front of it an imaginary person composed in terms of the relationship between the elements within the ad' (1978: 50).

Similarly, in the political cartoon, through appellation, the viewer is constructed, who in turn is invited 'freely' to create themselves 'in accordance with the way in which they have already created us' (Williamson 1978: 42). The viewer of the political cartoon may move through similar stages to that of the advertisement. Transferring signifieds across signs in order to give meaning to a person, such as, for example, Le Pen in this case, or concept, such as French nationhood, marks the viewer's initial interaction with the cartoon. After this stage, as with the ad, the viewer interprets themselves in relation to the elements of the image. Finally, along with the viewer of an advertisement, the cartoon viewer is addressed by the 'Hey you!' expressed by the image, 'often quite directly, and thus incorporates us into its signifying world' (Rose 2001: 93). While ostensibly a critique of the treatment of immigrants and the ideologies of RN, this image may also reveal its political enunciation (Latour 2001, 2003; Padoan 2014), whereby a concept of the archetypal French is white but not RN, native but not nativist,

and secular (or Christian) but not Muslim. Through the construction of 'Other', then, the 'Us' may be exposed.

5.9 Conclusion

Whether depicting immigrants as threatening or to contest this depiction, the scopical regimes of opposing political ideologies may both operate at times to marginalise the immigrant - apparent in the imagery of the recent French presidential elections - placing them outside standard or elite French nationhood. In both arguments, they retain the status of 'outsider', as evident from such signifying practices as the heightened relative visibility of cultural and racial signs, such as those of Plantu's cartoons, or as a dark, encroaching threatening mass, as seen in the imagery of *Rivarol*. Despite their ostensibly opposing 'social locations' (Rose 2001) and their respective intended meaning, French mediated political imagery of both left and right orientations often appear to bear similar symbolism, regularly exclusionary. Alongside the Othered Muslims and immigrant populations, we may see, then, that depictions of *Frenchness* are concurrently revealed in the nationalist publication, *Rivarol*, as well as in Plantu's imagery in the traditionally left-wing *Le Monde*. In order to signify the immigrant, certain visual themes are apparent in both *Le Monde* and *Rivarol* imagery, most notably this heightened visibility of cultural and racial signs such as clothing and skin tone, relative to depictions of the 'native' white French figure. Similarly, in portrayals of the French citizen in various political cartoons, the viewer may recognise recurring signs selected from the same visual lexicon, such as a more subtle display of cultural signs such as clothing (e.g. the Phrygian cap) and a supposed 'neutral' or 'natural' skin tone.

Often taking a social stance, caricaturists are frequently 'representational artists' who, rather than depicting their figures literally, sometimes 'claim to substitute inner for outer appearance, revealing by exaggeration and distortion the 'true' character of the person portrayed' (Morris 1993: 196). However, the group-specific, conventionalised ways of meaning-making, or 'codes' (Hall 1980), presented in the images above, are those held by the same demographic to which

the illustrator also belongs, that of white and native French, to whom the image appears to be most specifically addressed. In Chapter 7, *Countering Elite Depictions of Frenchness*, we may see a mobilisation of a separate system of codes, specific to creators from a differing group. The semiotic ideologies, or 'metacodes' (Hall 1980), relating to nationhood and identity built upon their respective codes, as well as the ways in which they are signified, will then be discussed. In addition, frequently overlooked in this rhetoric is the divergence of opinion, beliefs and practices among the country's Muslim population. In this argument for the exclusion of Muslims from 'true' French identity, the frequent interpretation of a singular, united system of beliefs and values, shared by all French Muslims, is commonly expounded. This unity is plainly erroneous, and will also be investigated in this chapter. By arguing against Muslim inclusion, the internal diversity of the Muslim population is flattened and simplified, ignoring, for instance, the differing stances on desire for recognition, as will be explored.

We may see, then, that the technique of constructing collective memory and appealing to nostalgia are readily apparent in contemporary political discourse. As observed above, utilising a nation's collective memory by referring to previous regimes is a common method of constructing an 'authentic' national identity and cultivating national imagination in the signifying world of the political cartoon. By analysing this metaphorical imagery and the scopical regimes of press cartoons, the ways in which the trope constructs social hierarchies and challenges power relations, supporting or rejecting the authority of the metaphor-producer to create a world, may be revealed. Through public platforms, a racialising discourse may thus be seen. Although often difficult to dispute due to its insidiousness and subtlety, this type of 'soft power' discourse is often 'couched in value-laden discussions of integration that draw multiple semiotic practices into relations with one another, mapping ways of speaking on to dress, eating, and religious and economic practise in ways that establish indexical chains between person types and diverse behaviours' (Hawker et al 2016: 45). Following Dick and Wirtz, 'covert racialising discourse' manages to stigmatise and racialise without being denotatively explicit to race, focusing instead on specific moral viewpoints (2011). Like Sundiata's figurative battle for

authority in ancient Mali, conflicting representations of *Frenchness* through an 'argument of images' are evident in the country's media today. The political cartoon may therefore be grasped as a stage for negotiating national and cultural identities, and metaphor as a powerful prop. In the following chapter, the role and prominence of this 'hybrid but highly visual form' (Wygant, ed. 1999) will be explored, alongside its implications for identity- and nation-making processes in France today, in the wake of the terrorist attacks at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*.

Chapter 6. Êtes-Vous *Charlie*?

6.1 Introduction

As part of the 'Ninth Art' in France, satirical publications such as *Charlie Hebdo* and *Le Canard Enchaîné* constitute 'a distinctly French blend of journalism, politics, satire, art and unrepentant provocation known as the *Journaux irresponsables*, or irresponsible press' (Philips 2015). Although historically choosing its targets from diverse sections of French life, however, religion has increasingly become the preferred subject of satire for *Charlie Hebdo*, frequently stoking controversy and debate about freedom of expression and religious tolerance. In the early 21st century, prior to the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters in 2015, violence had been enflamed following the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad that had been subsequently reproduced across northern Europe. Powerfully demonstrating the potency of this medium, as well as the clash of semiotic ideologies, the ensuing violence included a planned attack at the office of the Danish broadsheet *Jyllands-Posten* and plots to kill its cartoonists, as well as at least two failed attempts on the life of Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks for his Muhammad cartoons, and a suicide bombing in 2010 in Stockholm that was attributed in part to the cartoons (Agius 2017). In response to a perceived concurrent attempt to censor the media, and in defence of the right to freedom of the press, a number of publications in Europe chose to reprint these controversial illustrations of Muhammad. The events that followed the reproduction of these images appeared to highlight a perceived incompatibility between religious tolerance and freedom of speech, and in France, by extension, between Muslims and concepts of French nationhood.

The attacks at *Charlie Hebdo*'s Paris headquarters, as well as those at the Bataclan theatre later the same year, were deemed to be resultant from problems within the country's system of social integration and cultural education (Silverstein 2018), as particularly evident by the disenfranchisement felt within the country's *banlieues*, discussed in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign. As outlined in the discussion

below, the integration of Muslims into French society face a number of discursive and semiotic obstacles. Through a Barthian analytical approach, 'France' in the republican narrative has arguably come to connote 'secularism', 'liberty' and 'equality', whose nuanced and strategic use forms the basis on which a different-blind republican model of citizenship has been argued. Here, the extent to which a Muslim may be accepted as French and integrated into French society appears to depend on the degree to which they subscribe to its republican values, with success or failure ultimately deeming them either a 'good' Muslim or a 'bad' one. Through its proclamations of the importance of freedom of speech, then, the cartoons published in response to the terrorist attacks that took place in France in 2015 reveal concepts of French culture and identity pertaining to these aforementioned republican values, and equally signify an exclusion of those who would prioritise ostensibly conflicting values such as religious tolerance in the public sphere and hyphenated nationhoods.

Further, a blurring of the lines between religion and race is apparent, with one's identity increasingly being informed by one's religion. Combining this conflation of race and religion with the minority status occupied by Muslims in Europe, the vulnerability of this group as targets of satire may be grasped (Keane 2008). For this reason, then, the opinion that cartoonists must exercise restraint and consideration in their subject matter has been voiced by certain segments of French and Western society, despite this restraint and self-censorship being at odds with the nature of satire. Unchecked, however, through this satirical political imagery, similar to the conceptions of Danish national identity, *Frenchness* appears to be frequently narrowly defined and exclusive, with dominant narratives of identity frequently based on concepts of 'authenticity' and tradition, further expounded by the blurring of boundaries between religion and race. On these grounds, the limits of nationhood are maintained, resulting in the arguably systemic exclusion of non-native French from its articulation.

In the aftermath of the Paris attacks in 2015, a wealth of imagery in support of *Charlie Hebdo* and satirical press, here termed 'solidarity' images, appeared. In the investigation below, I continue to use semiotic and visual rhetoric tools to

analyse Plantu's contribution to this solidarity imagery. This case study, whose images were collected between January 2015 and June 2017, is framed within a context of concurrent imagery published by Cartooning for Peace, and contrasted with other satirical art in France. International human rights laws relating to definitions of hate speech as well as concepts of religious discrimination and defamation further inform this analysis. As before, signifiers of *Frenchness*, Otherness, difference, belonging, as well as resistance, were identified in the collection below. In this semiotic manner, to begin this discussion, among the *Charlie Hebdo* imagery, a cartoon portraying Muhammad wearing a turban in the shape of a bomb has been described by its creator, Kurt Westergaard, to be 'the metonym for the whole controversy' (Keane 2008: 858), a particularly irreverent image that may serve here to concisely convey the purported 'clash of civilisations' between Islam and a secular West.

6.2 Charlie Hebdo's 'Muhammad' cartoons and its conceptual world

A precursor to the debates that were incited by the publication of the more recent *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons and its offices' subsequent attacks, disputes over religious tolerance versus freedom of speech in political cartoons had earlier been heard with regard to the depictions of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish broadsheet publication *Jyllands-Posten*. In September 2005, the newspaper published twelve cartoons depicting Muhammad, following an author's complaint about being unable to find an illustrator for his children's book about the life of Muhammad (Keane 2008). This reticence among illustrators to draw Muhammad was due to the taboo in Islamic doctrine of his pictorial depiction – an ancient response to idol worship among pagan Arabs of early Islam (Saloom 2006). In Islamic teaching, following Muhammad's revelation and opposition of idol worship, a departure from this idolatry is noted (Saloom 2006), culminating in the contemporary prohibition of his image. In secular or Christian Europe, such prohibition was interpreted as self-censorship, 'caused by widening fears and feelings of intimidation in dealing with issues relating to Islam' (Rose 2006). In defiance of such intimidations, the cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, Flemming Rose, invited Danish cartoonists to submit

drawings of Muhammad in response to this perceived suppression, and the twelve images were subsequently published, to be later republished in *Charlie Hebdo*. The *Jyllands-Posten* imagery, however, may be further contextualized within a similar controversy surrounding the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad in Europe in the early 21st century. Two years after the publication of the *Jyllands-Posten* images, dispute had been stirred again in northern Europe following the appearance of street art in Sweden depicting Muhammad in 2007. These were subsequently reproduced in several Swedish newspapers, and were similarly intended to offset the perceived Western reticence to criticize Islam for fear of reprisals (Agius 2017). The need for ontological security enflamed by the cartoon crisis in these Nordic countries (ibid.) may be felt in contemporary French society also, as the societal struggle to maintain a stable national sense of self plays out in its media.

Besides the restrictions on the depiction of Muhammad in Islamic tradition, the disparity between readings of satire and the political cartoon appear to be due, in part, to a misinterpretation of its reception regime (Hodge and Kress 1988), as well as conflicting semiotic ideologies. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Historical Constructions of *Frenchness* in Political Cartoons, the role of satire in French press has long been significant. From Rabelaisian humour to contemporary caricaturists and cartoonists such as Plantu, satirical political cartoons have permeated French public discourse. A societal understanding of the specific logonomic system of satire, described by Hodge and Kress (1988: 4) as ‘a set of rules prescribing the conditions for production and reception of meanings’, is, however, necessary for its proper application. Further, illustrating the function and norms of satire, Irish journalist Felix Larkin emphasised the fundamental role of satire as a method to redress a power imbalance, in response to a recent political cartoon published in the London Evening Standard in July 2019. In the cartoon, then-candidates for Conservative Party leadership, Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt are depicted as leprechauns, replete with a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow signifying a backstop. As Larkin points out, satire is intended to ‘punch up’, as ‘a weapon of the powerless against dominant groups of people’ (Larkin, [irishtimes.com](https://www.irishtimes.com) [accessed: 5/7/19]). Requiring a societal command of its

scopic regime, then, the appropriate deployment and function of satire, then, is to expose through humour and parody, the shortcomings of an individual, a society or a concept.

Judging by the violent reactions of Muslim extremists in 2005 and 2015 to depictions of Muhammad published in Danish and French newspapers, the liminal space created by satire, wherein all subjects are free to be mocked, as well as its logonomic system, would appear to be unrecognised in the Islamic tradition. However, notwithstanding the taboo of depicting Muhammad, the political cartoon appears to operate in a similar way in some Islamic cultures as in those in secular Europe and the West. This is particularly evident in Muslim Yemen, where it is commonly understood and recognised that the nature of the political cartoon is to lampoon or criticise. The use of the Arabic term *karikatur* as opposed to something more ambiguous further supports this viewpoint (Corstange 2007). This is, of course, at odds with the extreme and indefensible reactions to the Muhammad cartoons by fundamentalists in Europe. Further, the internal divergence within Islam regarding the depiction of Muhammad is of note, with Shiites traditionally more lenient regarding images of Muhammad than Sunnis, for example, although for both groups its broad prohibition under *Shari'a* is observed (Keane 2008).

However, the wide variety of opinions, practices and aspirations held by Muslims, as well as the interactional complexity between satire and Islam, appears largely overlooked in much Western media, which often compresses this variation into a singular, and violent, metaphorical 'Arab world' or street. Similar to the upsurge in constructions of the French citizen and the Muslim arising from this cartoon controversy and its ensuing violent retaliation in Europe, a comparable upsurge in the metaphoric conceptualisation of America and New Yorkers, as well as Islam and Muslims, was noted, following the attacks in New York in September 11th 2001. The problematic metaphoric conceptualisation of Arab public opinion as the 'Arab street' became a recurrent motif, which conveyed Arab public opinion as 'irrational' and 'volatile' and set Arab public opinion up to be dismissed rather than included in public debate. The use of the

term 'Arab public opinion', in contrast, is without these negative connotations, and does not tend to invoke such volatile overtones (Regier and Ali Khalid 2009). Nevertheless, particularly notable in the aftermath of 9/11, a clear preference for the disparaging 'street' metaphor in Western news media was apparent (ibid.). In US media, it is predominantly Arab public opinion that is referred to using this problematic metaphor, with almost no occurrences of the 'American street', 'Israeli street', and so on (ibid.). As discussed below, however, 'the street' in French visual discourse, without Muslim association, has markedly different connotations and use. Nonetheless, the Muslim or Arab street 'have become code words that immediately invoke a reified and essentially 'abnormal' mindset, as well as a strange place filled with angry people' (Regier and Ali Khalid 2009: 13), conveyed as being of singular focus without internal variation. The often similarly narrow pictorial discourse of the political imagery here discussed likewise appears to compress and simplify Muslim public opinion, rendering it singular, volatile and above all, *Other*. It is from this conceptual universe, then, the satirical cartoons of Muhammad appeared, and within whose context they were interpreted.

6.3 *Challenges of Islamic assimilation into French national identity*

By organising our understanding of an argument, the metaphor informs 'how we will experience and *carry on* rational argument' (Fernandez, ed. 1991). More than aiding in the understanding of a complex problem, then, the metaphor, by way of entailments, offers previously unconsidered dimensions to an issue, drawn from the source domain, thereby governing reasoning (ibid.). The potential power of a metaphor lies in its ability, through its metonymic entailments, to inform our understanding of a target domain by transferring meaning from the source domain. The attacks at the Paris offices of *Charlie Hebdo* are a particularly pertinent example of metonymic reasoning. Following the republication of the aforementioned twelve provocative cartoons from *Jyllands-Posten*, itself the subject of controversy and protest from the Muslim community both in Denmark and internationally, a subsequent caricature of Muhammad featured on the cover of *Charlie Hebdo* in 2011. In a special issue

titled 'Charia Hebdo', during the time of the Tunisian revolution and the formation of the Islamist Ennahdha party (Silverstein 2018), the caricatured Muhammad received a rapid response from extremists. Following the release of this 'Charia Hebdo' edition, the publication's offices were attacked, leading to their relocation to an unmarked site in Paris (Silverstein 2018). Despite these violent retaliations, Muhammad appeared on its cover again two years later, coinciding with 'further international protests over the release of the American-produced Islamophobic film, *The Innocence of Muslims*' (Silverstein 2018: 86). In 2015, in response to these supposedly blasphemous affronts, two gunmen entered the building and opened fire in the publication's offices, killing twelve people in total and injuring a further eleven. Responsibility for the attack was later claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

More than an attack on the newspaper, of course, it was intended, and perceived globally, as an assault on wider French and Western society. In this conflation of *Charlie Hebdo* and French society, an example of metonymic reasoning may be evident. A strong proponent of the political cartoon, *Charlie Hebdo* forms part of the historical cultural tradition in France of provocation through journalism, politics, satire and art. These *Journaux irresponsables* have historically chosen as their targets a broad range of individuals and concepts, but have in recent times appeared to lampoon religious targets with increasingly frequency. Arising from this, many observers identify a 'clash of civilisations', with freedom of expression and of the press held sacrosanct, on one side, and religious beliefs similarly sacred on the other. The attacks at the *Hebdo* office by extremists as a response to the publication of cartoons depicting Muhammad appear as a challenge to hegemonic secular France and its corresponding definition of national identity. French media are thereby an assertion of French cultural control, which was metonymically opposed in the violent attacks. Conversely, the vilification of Muslim immigrants is supported in nationalist rhetoric in part by a synecdochic construction of Islam. By conflating isolated fundamentalist acts of terrorism with the entire Muslim population, and through its transmission by mass media, a reductionist argument for ethnic discrimination takes hold in public discourse. This synecdochic formulation may therefore be deemed politically explosive, as

it can 'suggest, trigger, or catalyse feelings that...together with legitimating ideologies, can change and even revolutionise or decimate the (political) economy' (Friedrich 1989: 306).

Furthermore, similar to the controversy surrounding the Danish cartoons of Muhammad, this rhetoric of a civilization clash may be interpreted as an example of 'strategic manoeuvring' of political metaphor propagated in disputes about *Charlie Hebdo* in Western media. This strategic manoeuvring is arguably accomplished by framing the debate as a 'conflict between the advocates of "free speech" and "religious sensitivity"' (Sahlane 2013). By manipulating metaphor in this way, the discussion focuses on Islamic fundamentalism, largely ignoring a growing anti-Muslim sentiment in Western Europe (Hussain 2007; Sahlane 2013). The extent to which the cartoons resonated with, were appropriated by, and perhaps were products of, an Islamophobic ethos in Europe is typically discounted in Western public discourse.

An anti-Islam ethos is further identified through the explicit 'political use of racism and xenophobia', as outlined by Doudou Diène, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Asma Jahangir. In their United Nations report, they claim that 'an insidious penetration of racist and xenophobic platforms into the political agendas of democratic parties - under the pretext of combating terrorism, defending national identity and national interest, promoting national preference and combating illegal immigration - leads to generalised social acceptance of racist and xenophobic rhetoric and its systems of values' (Jahangir and Diène 2006: art. 10). This sentiment is echoed in a subsequent report submitted to the UN Commission on Human Rights, wherein the Special Rapporteur argues that new forms of discrimination are generated from within the context of the fight against terrorism, which 'may also succeed in marginalising the fight against racism owing to the political priority given to anti-terrorism' (Diène 2006b: 5). For the Special Rapporteur, 'the increasing trend in defamation of religions cannot be dissociated from ...the ominous trends of racism, racial discrimination,

xenophobia and related intolerance which in turn fuel and promote racial and religious hatred' (Keane 2008: 871). From this vantage, then, the contemporary liberal construction and interpretation of the satirical image, as indicative of a reinstatement of an older semiotic ideology, appears particularly problematic. It could be argued that, for those such images enraged, the cartoons were more than representative, with their sociosemiotic power realised through their construction as 'indexical icons of the speaker's personal character' (Keane 2018: 66).

6.4 *Vulnerability, Threat and 'Punching Up'*

Similarly, the potential misappropriation of the subsequent 'Je Suis Charlie' counter-terrorist movement to bolster anti-Islam discourse may be deemed comparably strategic. Given the troubled historical relationship between the image creator and his target, the use of satire here becomes doubly problematic. The cartoon may call to mind for many readers the frequently xenophobic imagery of historical satirical publications in Western media. Throughout the history of the political cartoon, racial discrimination has been evident, most notably perhaps in the 19th century. In the influential *Punch* magazine, for instance, as well as in their stereotypical depictions in *Judy* magazine in the 19th century, recurring depictions of Irish facial features as simian-like abound. Likewise, derogatory images of African-Americans in *The New Yorker* cartoons were abundant prior to the civil rights movement, whilst anti-Semitic cartoons were also ubiquitous in the twentieth century, with particular instances of zoomorphic characterization (Keane 2008). Today, arguably resulting from a fear of invoking similar anachronistic ethnic stereotypes, a reservation among cartoonists regarding ethnic representation may be observed in political cartoons. However, for some, this reticence has been interpreted as suppression of freedom of expression and of the media, and, as we have seen, it was within this perceived culture of growing self-censorship that the idea for the provocative Muhammad cartoons began. Depictions of ethnicity, therefore, are hotly contested within this debate, with the satirising of vulnerable groups, such as minorities, very easily a misapplication of the trope, revealing at times a

xenophobic inclination. As discussed in Chapter 4, Historical Constructions of *Frenchness* in Political Cartoons, satire has been a valuable tool, a 'weapon of the weak', with which to redress imbalances of power in times of strict censorship as cartoonists strove to subvert oppressive government restrictions. We may see in the examples discussed here, then, that it has arguably also been utilised as a weapon in support of the dominant ideology to further discursively victimize an already marginalised minority as well as potentially contributing to a growing anti-Muslim ethos.

At issue, it seems, may be the perceived vulnerability of the target of the satire - a consideration, also, for legal definitions of hate speech, discussed below. As we have seen, in the case of the Muhammad cartoons published by *Charlie Hebdo* and *Jyllands-Posten*, the cartoons may conversely be read as a refusal to be intimidated by extremists, in this way symbolising the country's strength in the face of a looming threat of oppression. The disproportionate portrayals of Muslim targets may be indicative of nothing more than the greater perceived threat Islam is thought to pose, relative to other religions. As Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, creator of the aforementioned Muhammad in the bomb-turban image, states, 'if parts of a religion develop in a totalitarian and aggressive direction, then I think you have to protest' (Brinch 2006). His stance is shared by many of the cartoonists, who cite the threat of fundamentalism as the reason for their imagery. From this vantage point, the cartoons may, therefore, be understood as an attempt to convey resilience in the face of intimidation, and, from the perspective of the cartoonist, the incompatibility between religious traditions and secular France. Rather than an attack on a vulnerable community, the cartoons are arguably an affront to the extremists, the violent outcomes being further confirmation of their importance. The need for the cartoonist Stephane Charbonnier, known as Charb to have a police bodyguard (Franck Brinsolaro, who, along with Charb, was killed in the attack at the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters), in response to previous attempts at intimidation, supports this viewpoint, challenging the critical interpretation of *Charlie Hebdo* as a dominant oppressor satirising a vulnerable minority. Similar to the oft-parodied physical stature of Napoleon, which was depicted in James Gillray's imagery as shrinking

proportionally to the increasing threat he appeared to be posing to Britain (Coupe 1969), the greater ridicule directed at Islam may be due to a greater perceived threat. Furthermore, for many readers, the targets of the cartoon are terrorists, rather than moderate or liberal Muslims of Islam. The argument that the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons are 'punching down' may, in this way, be contested.

However, in line with the above UN reports, these imbalanced instances of Muslim targets relative to other targets in *Hebdo* may reflect a wariness of moderate Islam, too, due to a perceived threat of an encroaching Islamification of French culture, as well as of extremism, felt in secular French society. In this endeavor to mock Islam and Muhammad, an attempt to diffuse its perceived accompanying threat posed by the moderate Muslim to the 'French way of life' may be discerned. A similarly rising anti-Muslim sentiment and nativism trend has been further explored in a recent Danish study, which has highlighted the role of media 'in popularizing a neo-racist discourse that positions the Muslim identity as a direct negation of *Danishness*' (Müller and Özcan 2007: 289). This apparent exclusion of the Islamic identity from dominant concepts of *Danishness* elicits a more nuanced reading of the Danish and French Muhammad cartoons, one that possibly exposes an undercurrent of 'Islamophobia'/anti-Muslim discourse in the two countries. These cartoons also spur debate on the interplay of stereotype and insult on conceptions of national identity. Similar to the popular refrain, 'We are all Danes now', that ensued from the Danish cartoons and their violent reprisals, its French counterpart, 'Je suis Charlie', also conveys a united national identity that appears to be of the people, as opposed to one solely narrated by the state. In both of these European contexts, the 'discourses of elites that shape ontological security and identity are likewise reiterated and reproduced at the individual level' (Agius 2017: 120), embedding deeper, perhaps, an exclusionary ethos.

Through portraits of Muhammad as a ridiculous figure, then, the threat he may represent to the secular French way of life, whether in the form of moderate Islam or extremism, is arguably diminished in his transformation into a comical character. In these caricaturisations, an attempt to directly undermine the

sanctity of religious, in this case, Islamic, imagery, the crude, bodily humour evident in portrayals of Muhammad is reminiscent of Rabelaisian vulgarity. Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque (1993 [1941]), as part of the carnivalesque, is also apparent, with the inversion of depictions of the sacred and the profane, the fool or the carnal, as well as that of their respective traditional roles, here especially provocative. Following the process of carnivalisation, a frequent feature in political cartoons, the sacred, typical beatification of religious figures is thereby inverted and undermined with bodily distortion and obscenity. As previously discussed, this becomes exceptionally problematic in the case of Muhammad, of whom visual depictions of any sort, much less depictions with the vulgarity of those published in *Charlie Hebdo*, are the subject of much controversy in Muslim doctrine. The opposition between Muslim culture and secular French society has rarely been more pronounced in French media.

Of note in these fervently contested debates is an essential distinction between the ascriptive and the acquired characteristics of an individual or group when choosing one's satirical target. The cartoonist should avoid, therefore, choosing their subject based on 'what they are, as distinct from what they do...Both may give offence...but, whereas the first category involves gratuitously offensive and often hateful stereotyping, the second is aimed at making people think and question their actions and values with a view to correcting folly and injustice' (Larkin 2019). It is this latter intention that one may argue was the purpose of *Hebdo's* Muhammad cartoons. From a secular vantage, the message of the cartoons may be understood as one concerned with unveiling the perceived falsehoods and expressing the artists' misgivings about religion, and, in this case, Islam. However, whether ultimately prompting critical engagement with an ideology or further contributing to a group's exclusion, the impact of media content is notoriously difficult to assess. In a period of tension in increasingly multicultural societies, careful consideration of the potential of stereotypical depictions of a group to become part of public discourse, along with perhaps greater attention to the promotion of understanding and goodwill, is timely (Larkin 2019). Rather than the re-introduction of externally-imposed media censorship, responsibility perhaps lies with the content creators themselves to

ensure that their satire hits its intended mark, with efforts made to avoid the further alienation of an already vulnerable population. The satirist, in other words, should ensure that their art does indeed ‘punch up’.

6.5 ‘Us’ and ‘Other’

In any case, whether the cartoons are interpreted as a symbol of resilience against intimidation from extremists, or as further attacks on an already marginalised moderate Muslim community, they reveal their creators’ social distance from moderate Islam and its followers. Similar to the unseen spectator assessing European oil paintings that may be revealed at the site of the image itself, as discussed in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign, one may assume that the identity of the intended viewer of these satirical cartoons is that of a native French, secular reader. In the same way as the oil paintings of female nudes revealed its unpictured male spectator to whom they were addressed, the principal protagonist in these cartoons is neither Muhammad, the moderate Muslim nor the fundamentalist, but the absent, presumably secular, *Charlie Hebdo* reader, embodying the republican value of *laïcité* and with it an elite, archetypal concept of French nationhood.

As apparent in the images discussed below, in much political imagery and rhetoric, the formation of national identity and sentiment relies on the construction of the ‘Other’ and processes of ‘othering’ through the creation of difference. Processes of ‘othering’ are used in nationalist rhetoric as a way to ‘highlight and reinforce similarities among a national collective’s members by emphasising the Other’s distinctiveness’, contributing towards the development of an ‘us versus them’ stance (Vezovnik and Šarić 2015). Decoding the ‘Other’ signifier in public discourse is therefore of particular significance to this research. Nativism, conceivably a process of othering, defined as a prejudice against foreigners in favour of the indigenous populace of a country, carries the contemporary implication of ‘a policy that will protect and promote the interests of indigenous or established inhabitants over those of immigrants’ (Jack 2016), and as such, features strongly in debates on national identity in France today.

The metaphorical constructions of nativism or revitalisation movements can be seen to include a mixing of metaphor, the performance of which brings into being its related cultural worlds (Fernandez, ed. 1991). The technique of othering has been widely explored in nationalist and nation-building studies, particularly pertinent given that 'all social identity is constructed through ideologies of social difference' (Hodge and Kress 1988). In the context of these controversial cartoons, archetypal Danish, Swedish and French identity is constituted through those practices that differentiate itself from others. In the media discourse of each of these European countries, then, the foil against which their respective national identities are based appears to be substantively that of the Muslim 'Other'.

Further, following Turner's self-identity categorization theory, in order to engender a positive in-group self-identity, the individual must identify with the in-group category (1987). Throughout the images here described, those who constitute the in-group and those of the out-group may be clearly discerned. The inclusion of shared cultural symbols and the commemoration of significant historical events in its political imagery, in this way, contributes to the construction of a unified national identity among the French populace. Likewise, as stated, discernible from such symbolism and imagery is the outsider, detectable through their differentiation. This difference signaling further reaffirms identification of the in-group through the use of humour in these satirical cartoons, from which may be discerned exclusive concepts of nationhood. Through signs both visible and inferred, then, concepts of both Muslim and French identities are constructed and propagated, with national identity markers such as modernity and progressiveness inferred alongside the frequently cited republican values in constructions of French nationhood.

6.6 'Solidarity' Cartoons

An outpouring of solidarity from around the globe emerged in the aftermath of the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices, most notably in the form of political cartoons. Many of the images emphasised the power of the pencil, drawing it as a

weapon of warfare to match that of the enemy, a play on Bulwer-Lytton's (1839) well-known metonymic adage, 'the pen is mightier than the sword'. Resilience, too, featured numerous times throughout the solidarity imagery that arose in the wake of the attacks, with one broken pencil subsequently sharpened into two²². A number of solidarity cartoons also suggested that a further victim of the attacks is Islam itself, such as Latuff's cartoon²³ as well as Plantu's²⁴, or Muslims generally, such as the cartoon by Qatar-based Sudanese cartoonist Khalid Albaih²⁵.

Accompanying the images, solidarity is further signified through the declaration 'Je Suis Charlie'. As discussed above, this declaration has been seen to be used in support of xenophobic ideology as well as of the republican value of freedom of expression. The declaration echoes the earlier sentiment, '*Nous sommes tous Américains*' (We are all Americans) expressed in solidarity following the attacks in New York on September 11th, 2001. Alongside affirmations of solidarity and empathy, the 'Je Suis Charlie' slogan signified the central place of *laïcité* within French identity and nationhood, as well as 'identification with the courageous act of standing up for one's secular liberal principles in the face of threats, in this case for the freedom of expression and the right to offend, even blaspheme' (Silverstein 2018: 86). A clear concept of *Frenchness* is therefore indicated through this ubiquitous slogan, a perception of nationhood that has at its core the defining characteristics of secularism and defiance. Along with Plantu's below-described version of Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, he has also addressed the attacks in a subsequent image positioning himself wholly as Charlie, in an image in which a cartoonist is writing '*De tout cœur avec Charlie Hebdo*' ('wholeheartedly with *Charlie Hebdo*'). The conviction of the cartoonist's sentiment is further emphasised by the fact that the message of solidarity

²² Fig. 31. Lucille Clerc, '*Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*'. Appendix: Chapter 6.

²³ Fig. 32. Carlos Latuff, 'Charlie Hebdo attack has another victim'. Appendix: Chapter 6.

²⁴ Fig. 33. Plantu, "Turquie: Attentat lors d'un mariage a Gaziantep: 30 morts et pres de 100 blessés". Aug. 21st 2016, *Le Monde*. Appendix: Chapter 6.

²⁵ Fig. 34. Khalid Albaih, 'I'm just a Muslim'. Appendix: Chapter 6.

appears to be written in blood²⁶. From these ostensible displays of *Frenchness*, as embodied by solidarity and resilience, this right, or even the *duty*, to offend (Kiwani 2016) has arguably become a defining national characteristic. Similarly, as French sociologist Emmanuel Todd declares, 'Je suis Charlie' became a synonym for 'Je suis français', and thus being French was again declared as not only having a right but the duty to blaspheme (Todd 2015: 12).

Little space is afforded to opponents of this narrative, however. This is particularly clear, for example, from the instructions given to school officials by the Ministry of Education following the attacks not to tolerate 'any comportment contrary to the values of the Republic' (Kiwani 2016: 235), in response to reported refusals among the public to participate in gestures of solidarity such as minute silences for the victims (Silverstein 2018). In France, 'freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed, but anti-defamation laws and restrictions on hate speech place distinct limits on public speech and writing', with further laws in place to protect minorities and the relatively disempowered (2018: 84). From this entanglement of seemingly contradictory freedoms, in order to protect one of the central republican tenets, that of *laïcité*, the presence of religion symbols in public schools was prohibited, which would be seen as an offence to 'the dignity of the republic' (Silverstein 2018: 85) (although prohibitions seem to vary depending of the religion symbolised, as discussed in Chapter 7, *Countering Elite Depictions of Frenchness*). An anti-terror law in 2014 decreed that 'apology for terrorism' would be a criminal offence, one incurring up to seven years in prison (Silverstein 2018), which, according to the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), has resulted in a disproportionate focus on Muslim French (PEN America 2015). In this way, then, we may see that 'French censorship went from protecting legally vulnerable classes to protecting the Republic itself as in need of protection', further propagating the concept of the French nation as being in crisis as a result of its 'postcolonial diversity' (Silverstein 2018: 85). Throughout the nation's media, as well as being inscribed into its law and into its social and state practices, then, an explicit depiction of

²⁶ Fig. 35. Plantu, 'De tout cœur avec Charlie Hebdo', *Le Monde*. Appendix: Chapter 6.

nationhood becomes apparent, while configurations of those who are in need of protection are muddled and contested.

6.7 Discussion

The 'solidarity' cartoons of the 'Je Suis Charlie' campaign that arose in the wake of the *Hebdo* attacks are an abundant source of metaphorical and mythological constructions of national identity. Distributed on traditional as well as social media, and created by artists from around the globe as well as from France, signifiers of *Frenchness* and resistance are particularly apparent. Within the visual discourse of this solidarity imagery, I explore Plantu's configuration of French nationhood, published by *Le Monde*.

6.7.1 'Charlie Hebdo: Two years ago'



Figure 36. 'Charlie Hebdo: Il y a deux ans'. 7 Jan. 2017. ['Charlie Hebdo: Two years ago']. Originally published in *Le Monde* and in *L'Express*, January 2015.

As seen in the image above (Fig. 36), these illustrations also use the aforementioned techniques of nostalgic imagery for nation-building. In his

recreation of Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, above, Liberty (or Marianne) is seen waving the tricolour with its pencil flagpole, drawing an unambiguous comparison between freedom of speech and French values. Her vibrant red Phrygian cap, symbolising liberty, serves to further emphasise this. In her other hand, the pencil replaces a musket, metaphorically framing the medium of the cartoon as a weapon in the defence of freedom. The dove, symbol of peace, too, carries a pencil in place of an olive branch, its newspaper wings further portraying the publication as an instrument of peace, as well, perhaps, as referencing the slang term *canard* denoting newspapers in France. Of note, too, is Plantu's Mouse, here depicted brandishing the pencil in support of this new revolution, anticipating the reader's response. As has been seen in Chapter 4, Historical Constructions of *Frenchness* in Political Cartoons, the nation was frequently personified by the allegorical figure of Marianne at times of societal tension, and, here again, in the wake of the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices, Marianne embodies the nation, her allegory providing its visual narrative frame. Following the onslaughts, her statue in the Place de la République in Paris has become imbued with renewed representational significance, serving as a memorial to both the victims of the attack in January 2015 as well as the subsequent Islamic State attacks in Paris in November of the same year (Silverstein 2018).

Reiterating the actantial analysis of nationhood and the story of France following the French revolution, in the *Hebdo* solidarity imagery we may identify once again the citizen-subject, the desired freedom-object, as well as comparable motifs, themes and settings. Although the old monarchy-villain is now replaced by the new oppressor of terrorism, it may be similarly overthrown through unity, revolt and resilience, as denoted by the frequent reconstructions of Delacroix's revolutionary imagery, for example. As will be further discussed, correlating old struggles with contemporary ones by recalling an established narrative or story of France and its citizens lends its new application a historical authenticity, to which the republican values are once again central. The 'character', or 'the composition of a set of dispositions by which one can be recognized' (Floch 2000: 140), of the French in their nation's story is reflected

here through the use of various semio-narrative props. Decoding the above-mentioned depiction of 'pencil as weapon', for instance, with which to fight against terrorism - a frequent visual trope in the *Charlie Hebdo* solidarity cartoons - the binary opposition of pencil and weapon/gun may be identified. Here, the complex term is produced by deploying juxtaposition, by replacing the musket for the pencil in Plantu's recreation of Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, for example. In other similar solidarity cartoons, the pencil and the cartoonist are fused into one hybrid entity, signifying the slaying of the latter as resulting in the sharpening of the former. As explored below, through such visualisation of the relationships of opposition and contradiction, and transformation and conflation, between terms of the binary pair, 'the preconditions for the meaning' of these nationhood narratives may be identified (Armstrong 1981: 53), thereby facilitating their critique. Through the deployment of the Greimassian semiotic approach in analysing these 'solidarity' cartoons, then, the folk ontologies pertaining to nationhood, belonging and Otherness in France emerge through the logical-semantic relationships expressed in the semiotic square.

A syntagmatic sign, the illustration above (*Fig. 36*) draws meaning from a well-known depiction of France in revolt, inferring metonymically the nation's historic struggles onto its present context. However, framing a campaign for freedom of speech as a French Revolution through the expression of this narrative identity, in this context, not only metonymically depicts Islamic fundamentalism as the oppressor of the French people, it may also reaffirm its interpretation as a rejection of moderate Islamic values generally. Though often portrayed bare-breasted, Marianne is in stark contrast to the veiled bodies of Muslim women and so here may signify the exclusion of Islamic values from conceptions of French identity, whilst reaffirming Republican ideals. In this way, this cartoon, while seeking to unify and bolster the nation against terrorism, may be interpreted as being in support of an argument for the incompatibility of Islam with French nationhood. Through its attempts to reach its target audience, one comprised of the 'average' French citizen, whose sensibilities and drives are 'rooted in the "white" collective unconscious' (Lionnet 1995: 96), the symbolism

and pictorial rhetoric of the political cartoon locates and interpellates its readers in a dominant ideology. The semiotic interplay at significant historical and social formations, then, reveals conflict between factions and their respective semiotic ideologies in both historic revolutionary France - as noted in its historically vacillating censorship laws - as well as in contemporary postcolonial France.

As with the original Delacroix painting, in Plantu's cartoon, Liberty's followers include people of clearly diverse economic status. The original characters of factory worker and upper class gentleman resurface in Plantu's recreation, with the latter identified by his top hat and cravat – a marked distinction from the ordinary clothing of other surrounding characters. The revolutionary ethos extends not only across economic status and class, but also across generations. As we see in the original painting, too, in Plantu's version, the schoolboy is pictured on the right, although this time bearing pencils in place of pistols. As with other characters, as well as Marianne herself, the schoolboy's clearest signifier may be his hat, or *faluche* – a black, velvet beret commonly worn by students. Through these signifiers, then, a French populace of varying class, age and gender are called up on to unite against the common enemy that would enslave them, against which they must battle together for their liberty.

However, the revolutionary spirit, as represented in this image, appears to stop short at geographical boundaries, calling less to those citizens outside of the nation's capital. As with the original, the revolution takes place within a cityscape, that of Paris, here clearly denoted by the Parisian-style architecture in the background. The prominence of these buildings in the above cartoon reinstate an elite, urban versus rural divide, framing the fight for freedom as a concern predominantly of the former. The vast majority of these 'solidarity' images, in fact, place the struggle for *Frenchness* and the reification of its republican values within the nation's cities, mainly that of its capital. However, as we have seen in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign, this placement of the struggle for the construction of identity as an urban concern is seemingly at odds with the frequent portrayal of the ideal citizen as an inhabitant of rural France. As we have seen, this seemingly

contradictory depiction of the rural, archetypal heartlander is a commonly used rhetorical device and a central character in Italian fascism, explored here in the political discourse of right-wing populist *le Front National* (now *Rassemblement National*), which propagates an anti-Paris, anti-elite message, wherein divergent binary oppositions constructing ‘us’ and ‘other’ are conveyed. Nevertheless, for many French viewers, the deployment of this allegorical imagery not only refers to the original Delacroix painting, but also to its numerous recreations in times of political and social upheaval throughout French history since the Revolution. Most compellingly, perhaps, are its more recent recreations during the tumultuous events of 1968, which many readers would be able to recall, discussed in Chapter 4, Historical Constructions. In this way, the image is further contextualised within the revolutionary sensibilities of the French populace.

6.7.2 “All is forgiven”

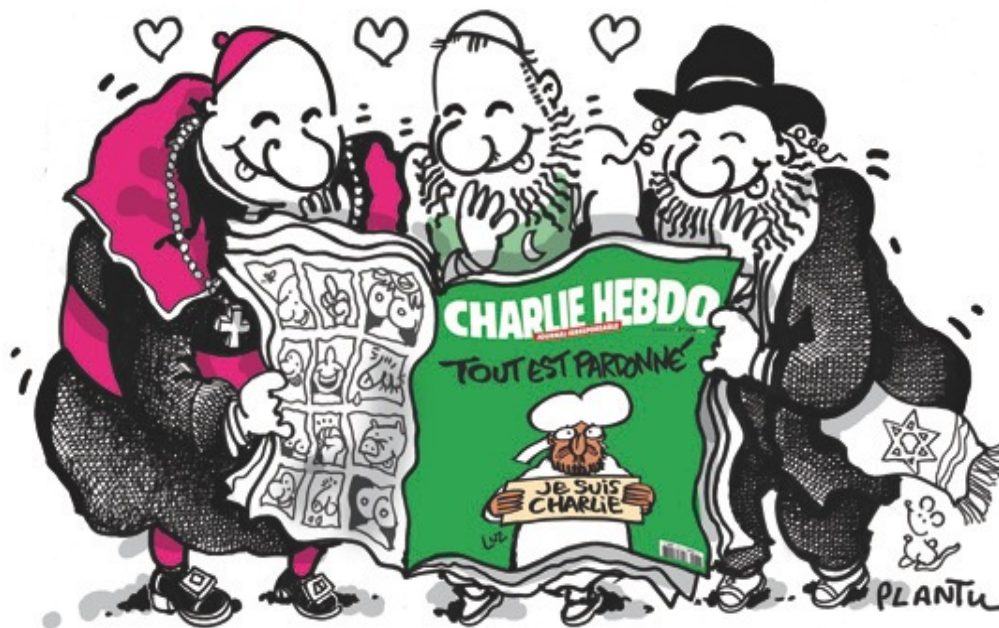


Figure 37. ‘Charlie’, January 13th, 2015, Plantu for Le Monde.

In the image above (Fig. 37), Plantu depicts Christian, Muslim and Jewish readers enjoying *Charlie Hebdo*, demonstrating that members of its target audience include those of any faith and none. Regardless of religion or belief, then, the image portrays a camaraderie and harmony across faiths, united in their

enjoyment of the satirical magazine. This supports the argument held by some cartoonists, as well as scholars, that the decision to lampoon a Muslim target is an effort to include, rather than exclude, Muslims in French culture. Here, again, Rabelais' carnival of bodily humour and prurient vulgarity, seen in political cartoons throughout French history, are depicted in the pages of the magazine, a reminder of the purpose and aesthetic form of satire, whilst further denoting the indiscriminate subject matter of *Charlie Hebdo*, specifically, and the genre of satire and caricature, more generally. A suggestion to the absurdity of satire is also denoted, as inferred by the silliness of each figure's facial expression, each taking guilty pleasure in the humour of the publication.

However, tension for the Muslim character between *idem* and *ipse* is arguably present in this portrayal. Depicting a departure from his narrative identity, the devout Muslim character, as signified by his dress, is invited to temporarily abandon his *idem*-identity, his structural *sameness* across Islam where portrayals of Mohammad are taboo. In this image, the character's individual *ipse* is instead conveyed and dominates, as he is seen partaking in the joke. The hopeful and well-meaning intention of this image, then, arguably overlooks the dissonance necessary on the part of the devout Muslim character between his *ipse*- and *idem*-identities for his full inclusion in the joke. Further, a concerted effort to demolish the binary opposition of 'us versus them', frequently denoted in political imagery, is clearly evident, as people of different faiths congregate to indulge in the subversive comic. The varying visibility of each figure's signs is of note here, also. The most vibrant signifiers are those denoting Christianity, with the character's papal *mozzetta* painted a bright fuchsia, reflecting the visibility of religious signs that also identify his Jewish counterpart, similarly adorned in head to toe cultural markers. Against these signs, those of the Muslim reader are remarkably understated. Despite his relatively muted cultural and religious signs, however, the Muslim reader's position in the centre of the cartoon, directly above that of the caricatured Prophet Muhammad, emphasizes his importance, propagating a message that would include him in the joke.

6.7.3 'Culture will be stronger'



Figure 38: 'Le Bataclan: La Culture sera la plus forte'. Nov. 12th, 2016, Le Monde.

Resilience in the face of adversity would be seen again in Plantu's political imagery following the attacks at the Bataclan theatre in Paris. In an attack later claimed by ISIL, on November 13th 2015, 130 people were killed at the theatre. In the image (Fig. 38), above, familiar symbols of peace as well as depictions of harmony, hope and community may be seen, alongside a promise of the return to normal life. With the caption '*La Culture sera la plus forte*', resilience, as well as the importance placed on its expression, may be seen again, echoing the sentiment of the cartoons that arose in response to the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks the previous January. The cartoon appears also to be a celebration of Paris, depicted with an exuberant confetti-like backdrop, as the city itself appears to be cheerfully dancing to the melody. The faces of the victims of the attack at the Bataclan appear in various states of transformation into musical notes, as they

get swept up in a message of love, peace and unity. The desire for harmony, then, is doubly denoted, as the saxophonist leads his choir through both social and musical melody. In addition, the recurring mouse figure is seen running towards the symbol-laden dove, echoing the desire of the French populace for peace, following a year bookended by terrorist attacks.

Diverging from the aforementioned metaphorical 'Arab street', with its violent and irrational connotations, 'the street' in French visual discourse, or *la rue*, frequently appears as the site on which identity concepts are disputed, as illustrated in this image. The prevalence of the street in the solidarity imagery resonates with the humanist paradigm in visual representations of French society and culture. Characteristic of this paradigm, *la rue* is deemed to be the stage on which public life unfolds, the *flâneur* wanders and dramas are played out. The theatre of the street is here signified in Figure 35 by the exuberant urban backdrop and further denoted by the couple at the nearby *bistro* – deemed 'a critical locus of community life' (Hamilton 2003: 135) - as well as the dancing buildings. Life on *la rue*, and by extension of French society, is here deemed vibrant and joyful, with cause for celebration in the face of the harrowing events that had occurred at the Bataclan. On *la rue*, resilience, hope and fortitude are conveyed.

The playing of music, additionally, comparable to other forms of play, is a recurring signifier of freedom in visual signage, denoting here a rediscovered liberation from the threats and intimidation of extremists, and a renewed emphasis on the freedoms of speech, of the press and of expression. The depiction here of a *fête*, another common symbolic device, further constructs the French populace as a united community – a solidarity additionally underscored by the prominent position of a heroic musician who is seen to be leading a chorus untied on one hymn sheet. Where once such imagery of the *fête populaire* - typically public, communal celebrations that took place on the street - was utilised to signify solidarity among the *classe populaire* defined against an upper elite, as evident in Robert Doisneau's collection of Parisian post-war photographs (Hamilton 2003), here its use in political imagery demonstrates a solidarity

against a different Other. In this contemporary political cartoon, the *fête* theme is arguably deployed to convey communality and solidarity among French citizens against a foreign 'Other', whose values appear to threaten 'authentic' French values and its supposedly singular and unified way of life. As observed in the aforementioned photography, the further 'solidaristic aspects' (Hamilton 2003) of popular entertainment are here also evident.

In this image, then, *la fantastique social* (Hamilton 2003) of *la rue*, the *bistro* and the *fête*, with its themes of play, of music and of nostalgia, is conveyed. Its implementation here signifies a commonality of culture and to unite a French populace, thereby constructing and conveying a sense of belonging and an idea of *Frenchness* that holds central certain values, traditions and behaviours. A striking juxtaposition is strategically deployed here, with the celebratory exuberance of *la fantastique social*, on the one hand, set against the brutality of the events that occurred at the Bataclan theatre on the other, whose newness likely rendered it still vivid in people's minds at the time of the cartoon's publication. The tangible warmth conveyed in this image is a surprising contrast to the violent attacks that had occurred at the site it depicts, and may be read as an attempt to reclaim the venue back into French popular culture, depicting it as a symbolic bastion of French life, and refuting its more recent mediated reconstruction as a battleground. Through this imagery, a resilient, unifying message is clear: the French people and their culture will emerge courageous and fortified, unbowed by acts of terror. In this image, once again a French identity of resilience, optimism and liberty is constructed.

6.7.4 'The struggle continues'



Figure 39: 'Nous dansons au Bataclan!!', anon. 2015



Figure 40: 'La lutte continue', anon. circa 1968

A number of images that appeared during this time borrowed from the symbolism of the visual discourse of the previously discussed Paris riots in 1968, as well as those of the French Revolution. This connection across time through political imagery lends further poignancy to the images, and reiterates in the public imagination a longstanding tradition of revolt, resistance and resilience. In the image above (*Fig. 39*), a clenched fist rises in clear defiance from an urban landscape that one would assume also includes the Bataclan, alongside the proletarian-connoted factory. A riff on an image that was originally created and disseminated during the civil unrest of the late 1960s, this more recent updated version salvages the heavily symbolic sign of the clenched fist to connote solidarity and strength, as well as that of the symbolic factory, clearly identifiable from its jagged rooftop. Here, the factory acquires mythological signification, in Barthes's terms, both capturing a revolutionary spirit and locating it in the heart of French identity. Similar to the prominence of *la rue* in Plantu's image, furthermore, the street trope is again deployed as an arena for public life and culture.

As before, the call for solidarity through collective rhetoric and inclusive, first person pronouns is again heard through the caption '*Nous dansons au Bataclan!!*'. This is followed underneath, however, by the contemptuous '*Et je t'emmerde!*' ('Fuck you!'), a notably hostile departure from the message of harmony and peace espoused in the solidarity imagery of Plantu, above. This is contrasted and further contextualised in the slogan of the original image, which states that the fight goes on (*'La lutte continue'*) (*Fig. 40*). Through the repurposing of this imagery for a contemporary audience, the narrative of a strong, solidified and liberated French populace may therefore be traced back to the French Revolution. The construction of ideas of *Frenchness* by political elites and dispersed throughout French media, then, reifies the three republican values as a matter of citizenship, its historical consistency throughout the nation's political imagery, from the French revolution to the political cartoons of French media today, affording this configuration further legitimacy.

6.8 *Cartooning for Peace*

Following the publication of the controversial Muhammad cartoons in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005, the cartoonist Plantu and then Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan organised an international network of cartoonists, which they named 'Cartooning for Peace', in 2006. The intention of this collection of cartoonists is to, 'with humour, fight for respect for cultures and freedoms' (cartooningforpeace.org [accessed: 6/3/18]). On its website, a particular commitment to preserving the right to freedom of expression is stated. A number of further values are also stated, which include: respect for the pluralism of cultures and opinions, with attention paid to diversity of cartoonists' perspectives, and fighting prejudice and intellectual conformism. The network states that it is 'respectful in disrespect', and that they 'do not seek to humiliate beliefs and opinions' (ibid.). Of interest here, too, is their acknowledgement of the potential for their cartoons to be misappropriated into anti-Islam rhetoric, as they assert that they take 'into account the risk that a cartoon published on the Web may appear out of context, within seconds, in every corner of the globe'. With this in mind, the network seeks to prevent political cartoons from exacerbating conflicts (ibid.). In an image published for Cartooning for Peace²⁷, Plantu reiterates this belief in the capacity of political imagery to propagate social harmony. Here, he articulates his message of 'press cartoons in all its states', with pencils serving as flagpoles for a number of religions and nations, all clustered around a smiling dove, hatching from the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, itself supported by the cartoonist's pencils²⁸. Inclusion, cohesion and harmony appear to feature most prominently in this image advertising the international seminar on freedom of expression, organised by Cartooning for Peace.

²⁷ 'Autour de Régis Debray: Colloque international sur la liberté d'expression organise par Cartooning for Peace et le CESE: Lundi 21 septembre 2015 <http://www.lecese.fr/content/le-dessin-de-presse-dans-tous-ses-tats-le-21-septembre>'. Aug. 16th 2015, *Le Monde*

²⁸ Figure 41: '*Le dessin de presse dans tous ses états*', Plantu for Cartooning for Peace. Appendix: Chapter 6.

Cartoons are here credited with the capacity to interpret the 'stirrings of society', and to encourage debates, while the role of Cartooning for Peace includes providing support for 'those who are unable to work freely or whose freedom is threatened', denouncing intolerance, giving young people a voice whilst raising their awareness of societal issues, acting as social critique for the public, and, lastly, being 'a tool serving freedom of expression', functioning as 'a forum and a meeting place for all those who challenge intolerance and all forms of dogmatism' (ibid.). In its opening seminar in New York, titled 'Unlearning Intolerance: Cartooning for Peace', Kofi Annan, in reference to the Danish cartoons depicting Muhammad, acknowledged the incendiary potency of the political cartoon. He asserted that 'cartoonists have a big influence on the way different groups of people look at each other', due to the ease with which a political cartoon may be consumed (www.un.org [accessed: 18/2/19]), and, since these cartoons may express and encourage intolerance, cartoonists similarly have 'a big responsibility' (ibid.). He urged cartoonists to consider the potential of their work 'to promote peace and understanding', rather than to 'reinforce stereotypes or inflame passions' (ibid.). Of note here, too, is Annan's advocacy for greater understanding among the public of the medium of the political cartoon and its role, acknowledging that 'cartoons can offend, and that is part of their point' (ibid.). Annan argued against the censorship of political cartoons, which would require the State to make 'very subjective judgments', but instead recommends that cartoonists act responsibly with regard to the content of their cartoons (ibid.).



Figure 42. Vadot for 'Tous Migrants!' in *Cartooning for Peace Portfolio 'Tous Migrants', 'Un parcours du combattant' ('An obstacle course')*. 2017.



Figure 43: Image from *Tintin in the Congo (Hergé 1931)*

The recent exhibition, *'Tous migrants!'*, curated by Cartooning for Peace in 2017, was a collection of thirteen images which sought to trace 'the complex path of migrants through press drawings from around the world' from 'departure to the process of integration into a new country to the obstacles encountered during their trip' (www.cartooningforpeace.org/projetsfr [accessed: 6/3/18]).

Following this exhibition, a collection of 60 press drawings was subsequently published depicting the theme of migration in Europe, which 'present an international point of view on this migratory phenomenon unprecedented in contemporary history' (www.cartooningforpeace.org/evenements [accessed: 6/3/18]).

Included in the collection was an image by the Franco-British, Belgium-based cartoonist Nicholas Vadot, titled *'Un parcours du combattant'* ('An obstacle course') (Fig. 42), and depicts an impoverished African family tentatively attempting to migrate to Europe, with skulls in place of stepping stones underscoring the perils of their journey ahead. Of particular interest in this image, however, was the cartoonist's unusual decision to depict the migrants with the stereotypical racial caricaturisation of oversized lips, a jarring graphic element in this collection of otherwise sensitively drawn subjects. Reminiscent more of the cartoons of a xenophobic far-right than of one belonging in a collection advocating for peace through cartooning and the repudiation of stereotypes, a striking similarity may also be noted between this image and those of the Congolese in Hergé's *Tintin in the Congo* (Hergé 1931) (Fig. 43), itself the subject of controversy in recent years. Alongside exaggerated racial characteristics, complaints about *Tintin in the Congo* also referred to the comportment and speech of the Congolese in comparison to those of its white European protagonist²⁹. Due to these negative depictions of black Africans, the publication has received a number of complaints. In 2012, a Brussels court ruled that the illustrated book is not, in fact, racist, rejecting claims made by the

²⁹It should be noted that Hergé himself described the book as 'a "youthful sin" that reflected the prejudices of the time' (www.france24.com). Furthermore, revisions were made in 1946, with elements that Hergé considered offensive to Africans retracted (en.tintin.com), although many stereotypical racial characteristics remained.

Belgian Council of Black Associations that the book contained racist stereotypes, and who were calling for the book to be banned (france24.com [accessed: 23/4/19]). An earlier complaint was made in 2007 by British human rights lawyer David Enright, who, upon discovering a copy of the book in the children's section of a bookstore, urged booksellers to consider where to display the book in their stores, and even whether to stock the book at all, due to the apparent racist undertones continued therein, suggesting that 'children learn and explore the grotesque history of slavery, racism and antisemitism...in the proper context of the school curriculum' (Enright 2011). Enright won the support of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), a UK racism watchdog, who recommended the book be removed from the shelves (www.reuters.com [accessed: 25/4/19]). Responding to the complaints, the bookshop relocated it to the adult graphic novels section (Enright 2011), a move that may be particularly significant given that the popularity of *Tintin*, outside of France and French-speaking populations as well as inside, has undoubtedly contributed to a concept of francophone *Europeanness* internationally (McKinney 2008).

Acknowledging the recurring controversy surrounding the book, the collector's edition of *Tintin in the Congo* includes a foreword which attributes the ensuing portrayal of racial prejudice to the historical context in which it first appeared, suggesting that the stereotypical depictions contained therein should be understood as reflections of the attitudes of Belgian society at the time. In light of the debate incited by this edition of *Tintin*, comparably stereotypical depictions of black migrants such as those of Vadot's 'obstacle course' cartoon appear particularly anachronistic and problematic, undermining the aforementioned progressive values and aspirations outlined by *Cartooning for Peace*, such as denunciation of intolerance, raising awareness of major societal problems and of fighting prejudice. In this light, this image is an unfortunate and ironic addition to the collection, which, with some additional stylistic finesse, could have avoided drawing comparison to a bygone era, thereby conveying its message with much greater clarity, conviction and compassion.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign, the highly visible racial signs apparent in a number of cartoons published during the recent French presidential campaigns were seen to, presumably unintentionally, symbolise the 'Otherness' of the immigrant group. Here, too, we may see this heightened visibility of racial characteristics, in the same way, potentially solidifying in the minds of the reader the concept of the immigrant as 'Other' and as 'non-French', precluding their integration even before they embark on their deadly journey. The inclusion of this image in an exhibition and subsequent collection with such progressive ambitions as those described by *Cartooning for Peace* makes it doubly problematic and discouraging. In this case, we may see presumably sincere attempts to highlight the struggles faced by migrants throughout their journey undermined by symbolism that suggests their exclusion upon arrival in their adopted homeland. The oft-described 'failed integration' of, largely Muslim, migrants into French society, then, appears declared pre-migration.

In the years that followed the first cartoon-related attacks in Europe this century and the ensuing creation of *Cartooning for Peace*, plans for a similar institution advocating for the freedom of expression through cartooning have been advanced, following the further violence witnessed in Europe in response to political cartooning. In early 2020, five years after the attacks at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, plans for a new national centre to celebrate the satirical press in France began. The concept for this centre, unprecedented in France, is attributed to former *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonist Georges Wolinski, who was killed in the attacks at the offices in January 2015. Advising the government in the development of the centre is cartoonist, Kak, president of the *Cartooning for Peace* association. The purpose of this centre is to pay homage to the political and satirical cartoon and to the spirit of satire, as well as to provide a designated space for the 'design, showcasing and promotion of editorial and satirical cartoons as well as for supporting artists' (gouvernement.fr). On the government website, the political cartoon is described as a 'reflection of our times, our freedoms and the dangers that threaten them. Drawn to amuse and inform us, often in an irreverential tone, editorial cartoons are a powerful means of

expression and creativity in our societies that enhance media independence and therefore the vitality of our democracies' (gouvernement.fr [accessed 1/2/20]).

Here, the editorial cartoon is further described as an 'artistic form of activism with mainstream appeal', and, through the development of a centre dedicated to the satirical press, is one that the French government wishes to champion (ibid.). In a statement by French Minister of Culture, Franck Reister, the importance of having a place for meetings, training and exhibitions relating to the editorial cartoon was emphasised (gouvernement.fr [accessed 1/2/20]). This space would be a 'place for free expression, for explaining and showing. A place meeting the highest scientific standards, open to the world, embracing tomorrow's challenges for editorial cartoons and shining the spotlight on cartoonists' (ibid.). It may be hoped, however, that this new centre will improve upon the oversights evident in some of the signifying practices in the similarly inspired *Cartooning for Peace*, as well as its representative issues.

6.9 'Hate Speech' Vs. Freedom of the Press

At issue in a debate that positions concepts such as freedom of speech and of the press against those of religious tolerance and incitement is the legal definition of hate speech. In order for the images to be considered 'hate speech' in much European law, the criticism of religion must include the element of incitement to violence (Keane 2008). In determining whether an act may be interpreted as 'hate speech' or not, a recommendation is made for the consideration of the vulnerability of the targeted group (ibid.). Here, we may look to the response of the United Nations to the depictions of Muhammad in political cartoons in Europe. UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène, explicitly declared the cartoons to be racist. Directly pointing to the Danish political context as one that enabled such cartoons to emerge, Diène stated that the images 'illustrated the increasing emergence of the racist and xenophobic currents in everyday life' (Keane 2008: 867). In his report, titled 'Defamation of Religions and Global Efforts to Combat Racism: Anti-Semitism, Christianophobia

and Islamophobia', published in 2005 prior to the cartoons' republication in France, Diène 'noted a manifest increase in Islamophobia, with two fundamental characteristics: the intellectual legitimisation of hostility towards Islam and its followers, and the political tolerance of such hostility in many countries' (Diène 2005: article 20), which he observed too in the media. In a subsequent report in 2006, titled 'Situations of Muslims and Arab Peoples in Various Parts of the World', Diène condemned *Jyllands-Posten* for its failure to 'balance freedom of expression and religious freedom, specifically the prohibition of incitement to religious and racial hatred', in what he terms the paper's 'intransigent defence of unlimited freedom of expression' (Diène 2005: article 28). For Diène, the causes for current escalating Islamophobia are depicted through the signifying practices of the controversial cartoons. He states, 'as symbolised by the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad', these underlying causes include 'the precedent of political and ideological considerations over religious factors; the general increase in defamation of religions, and notably the conflation of Islam with violence and terrorism; the worldwide crisis of identity reconstruction to adjust to thoroughgoing ethnic, cultural and especially religious multiculturalism; the inadequacy of international law, particularly international instruments on human rights and combating racism and discrimination, in matters of religion' (Diène 2006: article 33). In a further report submitted by Diène, political platforms which promote or incite racial discrimination are explored, which he defines as 'all political ideologies, statements, programmes or strategies that advocate racial discrimination or racial hatred and xenophobia in order to enable certain groups to gain political power and to marginalise others in any given country' (Diène 2006b: article 3).

A departure from this dichotomous debate between freedom of expression on the one hand and religious freedom on the other, however, may be observed in a more recent report for the UN produced by Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed. In this report, Shaheed proposes that freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression are not, as many commentators have suggested, mutually exclusive, but rather that 'they must be viewed as mutually reinforcing and existing within a framework of human rights that are

universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated' (Shaheed 2019: article 7). In reference to the stance outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights concerning limits on freedom of speech, Shaheed states that 'religions or beliefs *per se* are not immune from criticism, rejection or insult to the extent that those do not impair the right of the individuals to have or to adopt a belief of their choice' (Shaheed 2019: article 15).

Some, then, refute the frequent framing of the debates surrounding the controversial images as an unambiguous conflict between two clashing freedoms - that of expression and that of religion or belief. As Boyle points out, 'freedom of opinion and expression is the child of freedom of religion in the sense that it was the struggle against religious absolutism by religious dissidents in Europe that opened the space for freedom of speech on political and social matters' (Boyle 2006: 188). Nevertheless, on the opposing side of this recurrent debate, restrictions on apparent incidences of religious intolerance, such as the aforementioned controversial cartoons, represent 'attempts to shield religious dogma from criticism', and therefore 'do not represent a clash between human rights, but, rather, are indicative of the misapplication of human rights principles' (Shaheed 2019: article 16). Shaheed continues to assert that 'freedom of religion or belief does not bestow a right on believers to have their religion or belief itself protected from all adverse comment, but primarily confers on them the right to act peacefully in accordance with their beliefs' (*ibid.*). In this respect, the State is obligated to prohibit 'advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence' (*ibid.*). Neither freedom of expression nor freedom of religion, the Special Rapporteur maintains, is, then, absolute, with the exercise of either subject to limitations such as those relating to public safety, order, health and morals (Shaheed 2019: article 17).

A number of recently implemented initiatives have sought to regulate this interaction between freedoms, outlining measures to counter discrimination and violence at State level whilst simultaneously protecting the fundamental democratic right to freedom of expression. For instance, the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights, along with the Rabat Plan of Action, in a rejection of a

supposed 'sanctity' of the subject matter, calls for States to repeal anti-blasphemy or anti-apostasy laws, 'stressing that such laws stifle the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief, as well as a healthy dialogue and debate about religious issues' (Shaheed 2019: article 21). Reflecting the consensus in the human rights community that 'anti-blasphemy laws run counter to the promotion of human rights for all persons' (Shaheed 2019: art. 23 [A/HRC/22/17/Add.4]), a number of countries including Ireland, Denmark and Canada, have recently chosen to repeal their anti-blasphemy laws. However, such laws remain in almost 47% of countries and territories in the world (ibid.). In legislation regarding limitations on freedom of expression relating to religion or belief, this move away from protecting the 'sanctity' of a subject, or protecting a religion or belief from insult, criticism or rejection, towards laws addressing 'hate speech' as opposed to 'blasphemy', has become more apparent. However, when a law that is ostensibly against 'hate speech' limits 'the subject matter of free speech, rather than contextual assessments to decide whether violence is imminent or whether there is intent to incite discrimination or hostility through free speech, the effects can be similar to that of a law against blasphemy' (Shaheed 2019: art. 33). For this reason, the distinction between the two terms is critical for compliance with international human rights law.

A state's clear understanding of the definition of a number of further key terms is therefore advised, most notably those of 'hatred' and 'hostility', which may be defined as 'intense and irrational emotions of opprobrium, enmity and detestation towards the target group'; 'advocacy', which refers to 'an intention to publicly promote hatred towards a target group; and also 'incitement', referring to 'statements about national, racial or religious groups that create an imminent risk of discrimination, hostility or violence against persons belonging to those groups' (Shaheed 2019: art. 34). A further distinction between racist statements and acts of defamation of religion is urged by Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, Jahangir, who affirms that '(t)he elements that constitute a racist statement are not the same as those that constitute a statement defaming a religion, which follows that 'the legal measures, and in particular the criminal measures, adopted by national legal systems to fight racism may not necessarily

be applicable to defamation of religion' (Jahangir and Diène 2006: 49). The significance of blurring the boundaries between religion and race in public discourse, then, may be observed. Readily apparent in much nationalist rhetoric in France, this distortion arguably forms much of the basis for the exclusion of Muslim immigrants and French Muslims from concepts of nationhood, further discussed in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 Presidential Campaign. By basing the exclusion of Muslims on the grounds of their religion - perceived incompatible with a secular, or at least a Christian, France - proponents of nativism may effectively exclude non-white immigrants through a convenient conflation of race and religion. In this way, nationalist parties such as *Rassemblement National* (previously, *le Front National*) avoid allegations of racism by pointing to the purported beliefs and values of the out-group, rather than to their ascriptive characteristics, an argument considerably more acceptable and palatable in French law and society. This is also in alignment with the aforementioned suggestions that cartoonists distinguish between the acquired and ascriptive characteristics of a group or individual, or, what they do as opposed to who they are, when choosing their targets of satire, and so further necessitates a nuanced reading of representations of the 'Other' in political imagery.

With regard to the Danish cartoons in 2005, laws pertaining to the regulation of hate speech had already been brought into effect. In Denmark in 1971, as a reaction to the rise of anti-Semitism in Nazi-era Germany, hate speech was specifically regulated against in an amendment to its Penal Code (Keane 2008). Included in this amendment are racism and blasphemy clauses, which define threats, degradation and public mocking of a people as a criminal offence, although concessions regarding media liability were later made in 1992. However, no prosecutions ensued following the publication of the Danish Muhammad cartoons, which were deemed to have infringed on neither the blasphemy nor the racism clauses (2008). The larger 'culture struggle' in Danish society, which may appear critical of Islam, was blamed for the reaction to the cartoons, rather than the images themselves, and so the images weren't deemed a reasonable offence (ibid.). Similarly, in France, the sensitivity surrounding the

Muhammad cartoons may, for some, be attributed in part to their interpretation as being symptomatic of a perceived systemic anti-Muslim ethos, rather than to the content of the images themselves and the taboo of depicting Muhammad in Muslim doctrine.

The right to both freedom of religion or belief as well as that of expression are, the Special Rapporteur asserts, 'fundamental to a democratic society and individual self-fulfilment and are foundational to the enjoyment of human rights' (Shaheed 2019: art. 55). In line with International law, the Special Rapporteur states that recognition should be made of 'the rights of all persons to the freedoms of expression and manifestation of religion or belief, regardless of the critical nature of the opinion, idea, doctrine or belief or whether that expression shocks, offends or disturbs others, so long as it does not cross the threshold of advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence' (Shaheed 2019: art. 55). An earlier report on the conflict of freedoms concludes thusly: 'Member states should avoid stubbornly clinging to free speech in defiance of the sensitivities existing in a society with absolute disregard for religious feelings, not suffocating criticism of a religion by making it punishable by law (Jahangir and Diene 2006: 48), whilst finally reaffirming that 'the situation will not be remedied by preventing ideas about religion from being expressed' (ibid.).

Notwithstanding these recommendations, as well as national and international laws pertaining to freedoms of speech, of religion and from racial intolerance, certain targets of satire appear to be more publicly acceptable than others in France. The comedic art of activist Dieudonné illustrates this with an art that similarly pushes the boundaries of freedom of speech as well as definitions of incitement, intolerance and advocacy, but that has, however, been met with a notably contrasting public response than that of *Charlie Hebdo*, as will now be explored.

6.10 Dieudonné's 'Dangerous Signs'

Alongside the political art of satirical publications such as *Charlie Hebdo*, the work of French comedian and political activist Dieudonné has also garnered much public notoriety in France. Both his art, as well as the public reaction to it, have similarly been the subject of much controversy. Frequently provocative, Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala, a French citizen of Cameroonian and French heritage whose stage name is Dieudonné, has been convicted of antisemitism eight times, and has had a number of performances cancelled amid claims that their content is xenophobic and contains incitement to racial hatred (lexpress.fr [accessed: 4/3/19]). Identifying as 'Islam-Christian' (Silverstein 2018), Dieudonné responded to the *Hebdo* attacks by declaring that he felt like Charlie Coulibaly ('*Je me sens Charlie Coulibaly*') on Facebook three days after the attacks (Silverstein 2018), referring to the assailant at a kosher supermarket in Paris who was attacked two days after the incident at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices. Reminiscent of the liminal identity of the *banlieusards* depicted in Chapter 5, Presidential Campaign Analysis, Dieudonné's statement referred to his experience of being in the middle - 'half-French and half-African, half-Christian and half-Muslim, stuck existentially between those like 'Charlie' who have the racial privilege to stand in for the French Republic and its liberal secular values, and those like Amedy Coulibaly who feel excluded from it and occasionally take up arms (military or otherwise) against it' (Silverstein 2018: 92). As a result of this statement, he was charged with 'apology for terrorism', received a two-month suspended sentence and was fined €10,000 (Silverstein 2018). Additionally, alongside accusations of anti-Semitism, Dieudonné has been criticised for his apparent support of the far right, in particular Le Pen, which has stoked much controversy, with the Party of the Indigènes of the Republic (PIR) for example, being particularly critical of these associations with the far-right (Silverstein 2018).

Also using humour to critique elements of French society, Dieudonné has sought to redress the contrasting ways in which his humour has been interpreted, noting the disparity in response to his socio-political comedy and that of *Charlie Hebdo* and other satirical publications. By questioning the accusations of anti-

Semitism as well as of apology for terrorism, the comedian-activist 'questions the privilege of those who determine the bounds of liberal toleration' (Silverstein 2018: 94). Linking 'Jewish privilege to black suffering' due to the 'historic role of Jewish financiers in the slave and colonial economies', for instance, Dieudonné has been vocal on the apparent hypocrisy in the country's 'vigilance against anti-Semitism while allowing other forms of institutionalised racism to propagate, as well as the double standard of the recognition and indemnification of past suffering' (Silverstein 2018: 93).

The populist appeal of both *Hebdo* and Dieudonné speaks to a French populace feeling under threat. Similar to the response among the French public to treat irreverent humour as a right and a duty, apparent in the aftermath of the *Hebdo* attacks, Dieudonné also appears to interpret humour as social obligation. Echoing *Hebdo* still, Dieudonné has also been criticised for often targeting already marginalised members of society (Silverstein 2018). Regardless of which religious group is targeted, however, '(s)atire may provide plausible deniability for those within its arena, but it does not eliminate the sting for those who understandably feel targeted by it', and may further separate an already fragmented postcolonial population (Silverstein 2018: 95). Although purportedly symbolising an antiestablishment ethos, the *quenelle*, a gesture created by Dieudonné, has also been the subject of some controversy. As with the aforementioned 'Je Suis Charlie' slogan, the *quenelle* appears similarly unifying, with athletes and celebrities seen to be recreating the symbolic gesture in the media. Although ostensibly expressing oppression and anti-system sentiment, the gesture has been claimed to be a reinvented or inverted Nazi salute. Although this interpretation is refuted by Dieudonné, 'the *quenelle* precisely plays on the slipperiness of meaning, the polysemy of signs' (Silverstein 2018: 94). As could be asked of *Charlie Hebdo's* cartoons, Silverstein puts to us the question regarding satire, 'Who are the real racists...those who play with popular stereotypes or those who can only see race and racism in the play?' (2018: 95).

Despite the apparent similarities between the two forms of satirical comedy, the state response to religious intolerance is in stark contrast to that of French

satirical press such as *Charlie Hebdo* before the attacks, which placed satire and freedom of speech firmly within the traditions of republican France. In 2013, Former French president Francois Hollande proclaimed the need to ‘fight against the sarcasm of those who purport to be humorists but are actually professional anti-Semites’ (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, jta.org [accessed 4/3/19]). The following year, in response to the growth in the *quenelle*’s popularity, as indicated by its frequent occurrence online and by public personalities, Manuel Valls also addressed its connotations directly. In 2014, a circular was issued titled ‘*Lutte contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme: manifestations et réunions publiques -spectacles de M. Dieudonné M’Bala M’Bala*’ (Hacquemand 2014), in which the French Interior Minister explicitly framed the *quenelle* as an anti-Semitic gesture. Furthermore, he clarified that among the duties of the police is preventing events or performances that might engender ‘a disturbance to public order’ (Hacquemand 2014).

Considering that the mainstream perception of *Charlie Hebdo* appears as an ‘expression of French liberal values’ while Dieudonné is ‘prosecuted as their anathema’, the different responses engendered by the two forms suggests a tendency for Islamophobia to be more acceptable in French society than anti-Semitism (Silverstein 2018: 96). With greater integration in France’s postcolonial society, Silverstein proposes that ‘all offence will be taken equally seriously, or equally mocked and dismissed. Racializing signs will be equally dangerous, or equally impotent’ (2018: 97). However, for this equality and integration, ‘civil rights movements, localised rebellions, or broad sociopolitical revolutions’ may be required (ibid.). The discursive challenges to the dominant, elite definition of *Frenchness* as depicted in self-representation images, appear indicative of such activity, and will be explored in the following chapter. In the meantime, the unpredictability of Dieudonné’s performance, as well as that of his supporters, pose a challenge to the proponents of republican France. Signifying a burgeoning postcolonial France, ‘one which will not bend to the pre-existing liberal secular parameters, but which seeks to set its own terms for belonging, inclusion and social remaking - a postcolonial France that explodes the territorial

borders of France while still remaining culturally its own, if different', they are 'dangerous signs indeed' for the French Republic (Silverstein 2018: 97).

6.11 Conclusion

A common source of controversy, *Charlie Hebdo* has been a familiar element in French society since the 1960s, with its frequent publication of derogatory or inflammatory cartoons targeting not just religious but political and other public figures (Silverstein 2018). In line with the aforementioned role of satire in political cartoons, the work of cartoonists is often accredited with providing a critique of power (Keane 2008), and, as such, is often charged with challenging established order and power relations. Although often lampooning belief systems other than Islam, the over-emphasis on Islamic targets in *Charlie Hebdo's* imagery is suggestive of a societal, or at least the publication's, preoccupation with Islam over other parodied religions. As well as upholding the freedom of expression and of the press, the dissemination of these images has also arguably been appropriated by some into an Islamophobic ethos that had already been evident in the West. However, repressing the symptom doesn't address its cause, nor will it be in keeping, as so many critics have argued, with the democratic right of freedom of expression. In order to address infringements on the right to freedom of religion or belief (or addressing religious intolerance), due consideration at the actual site of the socio-political sources of anti-Islam sentiment in the West - which would, in turn, likely redress Islam-focused intolerance in satirical media - rather than attempting to censor its media, is required. The pertinent question is surely not 'Should media be censored to protect freedom of religion and belief?', but rather 'Why is there a tendency in Western media to target Islam?', attending to the extent to which Islam is lampooned above other religions and beliefs.

The reproduction of the controversial Muhammad cartoons in France and across Europe have, therefore, ignited rousing debates on nationhood, with the imagery acting as a discursive performance of identity. The plain message of the images is of defiance in the form of ridicule, an effort to demonstrate that nothing should

be protected from mockery and derision. As we have seen, however, the interpretation of these images varies considerably depending on the viewer's experienced vulnerability, their social location and ontological reality, and the perceived threat posed to it. In the debate surrounding the Muhammad cartoons controversy, those who would frame the images as examples of religious intolerance and hate speech, for instance, may refer to earlier reprehensible and anachronistic examples of ethnic and religious discrimination in *Punch* magazine and in pre-civil rights movement *The New Yorker*. Although ostensibly a response to perceived restrictions and a commonly-felt reticence about critiquing Islam, many of the provocative images reproduced decidedly stereotypical concepts of Islam, in which individual agency and critical reflection among Muslims appear largely discounted (Jørgensen 2012). Through their stereotypical depictions, as well as alluding to a 'Muslim agenda' of Islamizing the Western world, such images have arguably propagated anti-Muslim prejudice in France and across Europe, where already an undercurrent of Islamophobia is commonly recounted. Although the use of humour may be enacted in satirical press such as *Charlie Hebdo* as a way to strip terrorism of its menace, then, it may also be seen to signify a fear of moderate Islam in France. In this way, it may reveal a deep-seated mistrust of Islam through its attempt to neutralize the threat it ostensibly presents to a certain French way of life, posed by the influx of immigrants and French Muslims' claim to citizenship.

Signs may, therefore, 'tear people apart and bring them together. They exclude and include. They promote violence, demand retribution, and call for security states. They destroy people's lives, provide solace to others, and occasionally heal' (Silverstein 2018: 84). As we have seen, following the attacks in Paris in 2015, an increase in the use of metaphors, often exclusionary by way of entailments, depicting France as secular by definition was observed in French and international media. Greater emphasis was seen to be placed on freedom of expression as a defining national characteristic, often pitted against the rhetoric of religious freedom. In the ensuing debate, as we have seen, conflicting concepts of freedom arose. Fifteen years following the cartoon crises in France and elsewhere across Europe, identity discourse remains framed by such binaries as

tolerance/intolerance and freedom/censorship in definitions of French identity. The ubiquity of these binary oppositions shows the importance of the relationship between self and other, since 'we define ourselves against who we are not' (Agius 2017: 120). Somewhat ironically, given the often harsh censorship laws to which satirical press in France were subject historically, *Charlie Hebdo* has itself arguably become a national symbol, one which signifies the country's 'postcolonial predicament' (Silverstein 2018: 85). In a similar way, its slain cartoonists, through their transformation into martyrs in the public imagination, further entrench the freedom of speech into concepts of French identity and nationhood. The resistance and resilience displayed by the cartoonists posit them as contemporary Mariannes, national figureheads leading a unified, singular, and secular, French republic against encroaching fundamentalism.

Regular *Charlie Hebdo* readers, then, might identify religion generally as being the frequent target of the publication, as opposed to Islam specifically, since derogatory depictions of other religious leaders have often appeared on its pages, albeit with less frequency than in recent years. Notwithstanding these other religious targets, as we have seen, the satirical Muhammad cartoons may be interpreted as part of a growing undercurrent of Islamophobia in France and in the West, as another attack on an already marginalised and vilified group. Regarding the direction a cartoon may 'punch', we may note the 'significant ethical difference between satirising those sanctimonious individuals and institutions of power, and deriding those who find themselves politically voiceless and socially excluded' (Klug 2016). While identifying with *Charlie* as victims of violence, for some, supporting the publication's 'repeated public belittling of the faith of those who already felt deeply vulnerable within French society' proves difficult (Silverstein 2018: 87). In the following chapter, the response of French Muslims to the *Je Suis Charlie* slogan as well as to other mainstream, elite reactions to the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices will be explored. The escalating experience of exclusion from mainstream definitions of French citizenship felt among French Muslims is central in this discussion, alongside an apparent public relegation and dismissal of concerns for a growing,

systemic anti-Islam ethos. Construing such disputes about nationhood with the oversimplified narrative in which the French are fighting against extremism pays little regard to the prevalence of social exclusion felt across the US and Western Europe, a sociopolitical context from which the Muhammad cartoons in France and Denmark arguably arose. As explored in the following chapter, addressing these issues, 'Je suis Ahmed' would be heard in response to the resounding 'Je suis Charlie'.

Chapter 7. Countering Elite Depictions of *Frenchness*

7.1 Introduction

The social position and civic identities of Muslims in France have been considerably transformed since the 1950s. In the country today, a wide, and at times contradictory, variety of political and social opinion, as well as of religious practice, is held by Muslims, opposing the perception of a singular 'Muslim agenda' with homogenous socio-political concerns. Despite this internal divergence, however, they share the common experience of belonging to 'a particularly new and feared religious minority in a strongly secular country with a history of colonial domination over the Muslim and Arab world' (Fredette 2014: 5). In previous chapters, the ways in which Islam and Muslims are portrayed in elite, mainstream media, as well as the inferences that may be consequently drawn regarding their claim to citizenship, have been investigated. Responding to these elite depictions, this chapter explores the ways in which such groups identify and portray themselves in the media in a French Muslim counterpublic, wherein too a resultant hybridity of nationhoods may be seen to emerge. Through a figurative argument of images, I will explore the symbolism utilised *by* French Muslims *about* French Muslims and Islam - symbolism that is often at odds with that used in mainstream, secular French media.

The images selected for analysis here, published between September 2015 and June 2017, and corresponding to those analysed in Chapters 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign, and 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, were chosen due to their inclusion of the aforementioned analytical points connoting difference and belonging, and *Frenchness* and Otherness. In the series of images below, however, these are reconfigured as signifiers of active dissent, arguably contributing to a French Muslim subaltern counterpublic characterized by an attempt to reclaim their representational agency. In this discussion, then, the inclusion of signifiers of resistance, as an additional analytical point, directed my selection of images. To identify resistance, I apply a definition close to Scott's interpretation of resistance relating to class, that

includes 'any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that is or are intended either to mitigate or deny claims...made on that class by superordinate classes (for example...the state) or to advance its own claims (for example, work, land, charity, respect) vis-à-vis those superordinate classes' (1985: 290), locating those acts, as reasonably inferred, within visual discourse. In order to analyse my case study - Oumma, framed within the visual lexicon of other French contemporary counterpublic imagery - then, I aim to highlight and analyse the explicit symbolic resistance to recurring representations of French Muslims, Islam and *Frenchness*, of French public discourse. Similar, too, to Scott's study, my approach considers the perceived intentions of the image, above consequences. However, 'intention' in my interpretation of resistance isn't the explicitly stated objective of the apparently dissenting content creator, but rather one whose meaning is symbolically connoted throughout the selected imagery. Since the semiotic analysis takes place at the site of the image itself, as opposed to that of production or of reception, intention in this study may be inferred through the symbolic rejection of hegemonic signifying practices contained with the image itself. Immigration and the immigrant experience contribute to this discussion, often correlating with or informing the counterpublic created by French Muslims, with many of the latter being the children or grandchildren of immigrants. Difference, also, between the stylistic components of an elite visual discourse (e.g. that of *Le Monde's* editorial cartoons) and those of a minority self-representational visual discourse are here addressed.

The discursive and hegemonic obstacles encountered by non-elite groups in their efforts to counter their mainstream constructions are also noted here. Boosted by the sanctioning power of hegemonic media, for instance, 'a statement coming from a source endowed with authority... is likely to be more productive than one coming from a marginalized position' (Rose 2001: 158). The 'social location' (Rose 2001), then, of the image creator, in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, etc., reflecting Foucault's emphasis on locating a creator according to their social authority (1972), further creates disparity relating to reception, response and diffusion of alternative portrayals of non-elite groups. The

challenge for French Muslims and non-European immigrants to project their own public identity without the authorising power of the elite mass media, demonstrated by French content creators such as *Le Monde*, is here acknowledged. In addition, the requirement of utilizing the referent system of the dominant scopic regime in order to discursively challenge and undermine it presents further difficulties for French Muslims attempting to repudiate their public perception in mainstream media, and further contributes to an understanding of the social and political struggles faced by this sector of the population.

In attempting to represent oneself as French Muslim in a secular, Muslim-minority state such as France, then, content creators confront the exclusionary power of liberal and secular media, as hidden boundaries and restrictions are rhetorically configured. The disputes incited by certain forms of self-representation are indicative of such restrictions, and reveal the inclusionary and exclusionary practices in operation (Ismail 2008). While it may be argued that addressing inequality is achieved through legal methods and through the explicit defense of one's rights, some of the most insidious and pernicious challenges to Muslim inclusion are discursive, with the 'primary challenge to Muslim citizenship' being elite discourse, more so than the 'de jure discrimination that results in the legislative erasure of rights' (Fredette 2014: 167). Disputing dominant elite concepts of nationhood is a particular challenge in France, due in part to this predominantly discursive nature of claims to *Frenchness* and its subsequent exclusion of Muslims, as well as the centralised structure of French politics (Fredette 2014). We may see, then, that the ability to statutorily dispute or redress elite configurations of nationhood is absent. Attending to their apparent discursive marginalisation, attempts by Muslims and non-natives in France to reframe nationhood and identity through similar depictive rhetoric is evident. Probing this visual response, this chapter explores the flow of discourse and the optical interplay between the dominant secular public and a French Muslim counterpublic, regarding the identity construction and the figurative contestations of a subaltern population who wish to take control of their representation. The ways in which certain pictorial expressions

and metaphor contribute to, and challenge, perceptions of French citizenship and nationhood will, therefore, be investigated.

7.2 Public Identity Activism

A range of different approaches may be observed in the space of Muslim self-representation activism. Among *beurs* – a cohort of French citizens whose parents or grandparents immigrated from North Africa, specifically the Maghreb region – a shared preference for one particular approach emerged. The preferred form of civic engagement centred on a republican neutrality, which, in the 1980s, saw the republican-centred *beurs* mobilized for the cause of greater racial equality (Fredette 2014). During these demonstrations, one march, the *Marche pour l'Égalité et Contre le Racisme*, became known as the first instance of political mobilization and demonstration by the children of immigrants in France (Fredette 2014). Concerned more with equality on the grounds of race more so than of religion, these *beur* activists founded such associations as SOS Racisme and the NPNS (*Ni Putes Ni Soumises* – Neither Prostitutes nor Submissives), defining equality 'as a matter of being French first and part of a racial group or gender second – the traditional French Republican ideal' (Fredette 2014: 52). As will be discussed, this position differs greatly from that taken by other activists, and is a significant point of contention among many French Muslims.

Similarly, pressure to appear integrated is reported among French-Muslims and non-European immigrants in order to demonstrate their assimilation and belonging. Attempts to meet this requirement can be seen throughout immigrant discourse, frequently in relation to the successful integration, or lack thereof, of other immigrant groups. 'Nested hierarchies of belonging' are thus created amongst immigrant minority communities in France, wherein, for example, 'Senegalese Catholics perform integration through critiques of Muslims, while Senegalese Muslims denounce Islamic associations and others who are more pious in public than they' (Hawker et al 2016: 43). In order to demonstrate their belonging and assimilation as French citizens, then, immigrant populations attempt to 'distance themselves from stereotypes of foreigners who menace the

secular French nation' (ibid.). The Senegalese who successfully demonstrate their integration are subsequently rewarded by being referred to as 'French of Senegalese origins', as opposed to 'immigrants'. These 'integrated' foreign-born residents are distinguished from 'immigrants', therefore, through class, religion and education categories and through the former's capacity to depict semiotically their successful integration (Hawker et al 2016). Through similar figurative contestations, a 'secular Muslim' (Mas 2006) construct has emerged in public discourse. This secular Muslim 'is formed in opposition to the identification of "Muslim" as a violent and non-integrated Other, asserting the possibility of identifying as both Muslim and secular citizen of the Republic' (Ismail 2008: 27), a notable disrupture to its oppositional Greimassian terms. In order to connote this secularity, a divergence from the conventional, ubiquitous image of the aggressive Muslim must be signified, while simultaneously acknowledging 'the link between the current techniques of government and the violence of the colonial practices...in the assertion of the compelled subjects' (2008: 27). Furthermore, processes of 'Frenchification', such as requesting naturalisation, modifying their names and giving their children French Christian first names (Cartier et al 2016), are often posited as proof of an immigrant community's 'worthiness' and entitlement to claim French identity. Conversely, a group's apparent disinterest in integration and assimilation into French culture may be understood by the elite as cause for their exclusion from French identity. This position is exemplified in the elite response to the practice of veiling, for instance, which is frequently perceived as a rejection of the republican value of secularism.

The aforementioned difference-blind Republican concept of nationhood is at odds with an increasing demand for a plural public identity, espoused by many Muslims in France more recently. The diversity within the Muslim population, pertaining to their country of origin as well as their preferred methods of religious practice, in part accounts for this change. Wary of the Republic ideal of *laïcité*, advocates of a plural public identity point to the American model of a hyphenated identity, in which one can identify as belonging to more than one nationhood without inferring a betrayal or inadequacy of either. In this

approach, the traditional boundaries of public and private spheres are blurred and perhaps redefined with a desire to retain a public Muslim identity without having to discard their French identity (Fredette 2014). For Bhabha, between such 'designations of identity' a space exists, wherein lies 'the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (1994: 4). For French Muslims in contemporary post-colonial France, then, in these 'Third Space' interstices, 'domains of difference' (2) may be seen to overlap whereby their cultural difference becomes apparent. On the concept of hybridity born in the interstices and its potential repercussions for nationhood and cultural identities, Bhabha states, 'a willingness to descend into that alien territory...may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity' (1994: 38).

From this perspective, further, a challenge is posed to the homogenising and unifying force of the 'historical identity of culture...authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People' (107), whilst also pointing to the reciprocal (albeit oppositional) construction of identities and subjectivities for both coloniser and colonised. Such variations in self-conception may be conceived through an application of the semiotic square. The dual identity of the multicultural, American-style model, alongside the concept of cultural hybridity more generally, may be thus conveyed as an articulation of the complex term, that is, $S1 + S2$, or being both French *and* Other, illustrating the hybridity of French Muslims and of the hybrid culture concept. For a growing minority, as outlined above, a decidedly visible non-Republican *Frenchness* may be observed, whereby citizens of immigrant origin are unwilling to forego their heritage and its visible signifiers, or to contain them in the private sphere, in order to integrate.

Similarly, perhaps, in recognising the hybridity of culture and 'multiplicity of human identity', French Muslims of this mind-set 'don't categorise their affiliations hierarchically, instead they negotiate their coexistence day by day' (Fredette 2014: 53). Although a popular method of self-identification in America,

the concept of a hyphenated identity is a new one in France, and stands in stark opposition to the neutral, difference-blind Republican concept. For many in France, the propagation of hyphenated identities brings with it fears that it may destroy 'the very fabric of French citizenship' (ibid.). Further, among French-Muslim youth, findings from the state surveys, INSEE and INED (2010), found connections between their experiences of disenfranchisement and a greater degree of religiosity and transnationality they exhibited to their 'first-generation parents and to non-Muslim descendants of other religious backgrounds' (Evers 2018: 443). These findings, supported more fervently in the wake of the terrorist attacks in France, have been cast as a contemporary 'reverse secularisation trend among French-Muslim youth' (ibid.), rejecting the neutral, republican approach to identity and nationhood espoused in elite discourse. An analysis of the interpretation and reconfiguring by French-Muslim youth of the measures undertaken by the state to integrate them revealed a rejection of the top-down attempts at altering their identities and personhood through this difference-blind republican approach (Evers 2018), thereby effecting a preference for recognition.

For many residents in France, the experience of belonging neither to France nor their country of origin or ancestry is evident, by being neither French nor Other, or Senegalese and not Senegalese, for example, or, in Greimas's terms, neutral and termed negative schema, respectively, seemingly occupying a poststructuralist position regarding national identity. The apparent liminal identities of those individuals and groups living in the margins, being neither eligible for 'full' Frenchness in elite, mainstream conceptions, nor as fully 'Other', due, for instance, by their white, secular *Europeanness* or, alternatively, their linguistic fluency and signified cultural integration, are here made visible in the semiotic square. As the 'logical articulation of a given opposition' (Hébert 2020:40), the square's terms \bar{S}_1 and \bar{S}_2 , thereby demonstrate the complexity of French nationhood concepts, and the problematic nature of elite definitions, in today's multicultural France. Conversely, by being both categorically French and non-Other, the privileged social locus of content creators such as Plantu, whose

work is here analysed, is emphasised, occupying the positive deixis, in Greimas's terms.

Notably, the possibility that public and private identities can remain separate and distinct is questionable, with one invariably informing the other, and therefore even regarded by some as 'secularism's greatest conceit' (Fredette 2014: 53). Furthermore, a stark contradiction regarding the tolerance in French society for religion in the public sphere is notable. Although ostensibly disapproving of visible religious signs, a notable Christian exception to the rule is often plain, with some French politicians describing France as being a Christian nation (Fredette 2014). In response, some younger French Muslims 'interpret this inconsistency as a rejection of all things Muslim as 'un-French' (54). In this light, then, the Republican ideal of *laïcité* may be decoded not to mean neutrality but instead as 'a code for "Islam is not French"' (54). Advocacy for a plural public identity, therefore, encounters a number of challenges in French society.

Whether an individual views 'equality' to mean neutrality or recognition, then, informs their preferred choice of activism and representation. While 'recognition activists' demand that their Muslim, or other, identity be recognized publicly and that difference be respected, neutrality-minded activists are concerned with minimizing the signifiers of difference, believing that equality may be best achieved through maintaining religion to the private sphere (Fredette 2014). There appears to be further variation relating to the kind of 'difference' on which each approach focuses, with the neutrality model concerned with ascriptive differences such as race, gender, and immigration, while 'recognition activism' focuses on an equality that relates to what could be considered one's personal choice, such as those pertaining to religion. Neutrality, therefore, tends not to consider religion a social category, arguing that it should remain in the private sphere where it won't be subject to social discrimination (Fredette 2014).

An example of recognition activism is the Muslim Party of France (PMF), whose aims include increasing Muslim representation and advocacy for 'Muslim political interests' in government. With a number of controversial views, such as

'opposition to abortion, support of "traditional marriage" (and) condemnation of homosexuality', the difficulty of being able to adequately represent all Muslims, as well as the concept of unified 'Muslim political interests', quickly becomes apparent (Fredette 2014: 57). With such diverging approaches, it is perhaps not surprising that the recognition politics method is often criticized by those who follow a difference-blind Republican model. French Muslims 'engaged in neutrality politics, often from the *beur* generation that came into adulthood in the 1980s, critique these younger generations (and their older allies) engaged in various shades of recognition politics for their "failure" to integrate into French values' (60). Countering this, proponents of the recognition politics approach argue that discrimination and social conflict remain an ongoing issue, with elite discourse persistently framing the citizenship of Muslim French as a 'failed' citizenship (2014).

Due to a disillusionment and lack of confidence in the state's apparent regard for the discrimination and inequality experienced by its citizens, many French Muslims are engaging in a liberal entrepreneurialism to challenge elite conceptions of French Muslims and of nationhood. Alongside this liberal entrepreneurship, five further approaches for political and social change are proffered, including altering the French Muslim 'public identity'; waiting it out; using mediation; petitioning the state; and going to court, some of which align with the politics of neutrality, while others better suit recognition politics (Fredette 2014: 60). Given these varied approaches and agendas, challenging the tendency for elite discourse to portray Muslims as a unified and homogenous group whose sole concern is that of their religious identity is also of interest here. Acknowledging the diverse interests and concerns of Muslims in France, therefore, is necessary, as this lack of cohesion creates challenges to disputing elite discourse. As observed by Fredette (2014), 'some Muslims in France are adamantly opposed to the concept of "Muslim" as an identity and to the mere presence of religion in the public sphere and politics' (165-166). The subsequent lack of organization as a cohesive group may result in the difficulties that 'centralized and elite political cultures have in engaging with diverse populations that refuse to be defined in one way' (165). In this chapter, I will examine the

ways in which attempts are made to alter the public identity of French Muslims, to counteract the identity and concepts of citizenship espoused throughout elite discourse. In the imagery below, imagery created by French Muslims is seen to deploy either a recognition politics approach or a neutral, Republican model of citizenship.

7.3 *Oumma* and *Respect Mag*

The case study at the centre of this analysis is that of *Oumma*. Providing a 'Muslim perspective on current events', *Oumma*, a news website pertaining to Islam and Muslims in France, operates as a 'media actor' in these nationhood disputes, through efforts to reclaim agency over their public identity. Of particular urgency for minority groups, such representational agency attempts to disrupt anti-Muslim prejudice and its subsequent negative stereotyping. The dearth of images in elite media of Muslim women without either the hijab or the niqab, for instance, is remarkable, misrepresenting the practices of Muslim women in France, many of whom do not wear traditional dress and only a small minority wearing the niqab (Fredette 2014). This diversity within the French Muslim population is not adequately represented in French media. Adopting the politics of recognition, albeit an attempted normalized one, *Oumma* addresses representational inequality, thereby offering alternative constructions to the mainstream portrayals of Muslim public identity. Although the subject of religion is present in its articles, it does not often take central stage and is instead woven into the fabric of its content. Further, rather than presenting French Muslims as an insular unit, *Oumma's* stories place them within a national and international community.

Challenging the highly visible, intentionally differentiating cultural signs often seen in the secular press, *Oumma* provides a platform for the *Jeunes Musulmans de France* (JMF), or the Young Muslims of France, whose sporting events 'held in public spaces, aim to do more than entertain neighbourhood kids: they show young Muslims playing, having fun, and acting not much differently from their non-Muslim neighbours' (Fredette 2014: 62). *Oumma*, therefore, serves as a

platform to provide an alternative to the Muslim identity shaped by French elites and proliferated in mainstream media. This is achieved through a number of different methods, namely through a diversification of events covered, wherein 'Muslims are discussed in a variety of ways, never just as terrorists, criminals, or mosque attendees', in order to present 'what it sees as a more complete picture of the French Muslim experience' (Fredette 2014: 58). The organisation's approach appears as a deliberate attempt to counterbalance 'what the contributors see as the mainstream media's stereotypes about Muslims' (ibid.). While taking a recognition approach, *Oumma* and JMF seek to naturalise and 'normalise' Islam and Muslims, and, rather than to obscure difference, an attempt to 'make diversity seem so normal that it becomes unremarkable' is apparent (Fredette 2014: 59).

Similarly demonstrating a recognition politics stance, *Respect Mag*, a publication dedicated to the representation of French societal diversity, often appears critical of the nationhood question. In one image published by the magazine, the purpose of debating identity and *Frenchness* was explicitly questioned. Depicting a stereotypical Frenchman, the cartoon suggests that 'trying to identify what "makes" a person French is a fool's errand, as the reality will always be much more complex, given the diverse nature of an entire citizenry' (Fredette 2014: 163). The magazine, 'with several Muslims on its editorial board, seeks to show the less sensational side of minorities (including Muslims) through a public celebration of diversity', and 'does more than recognise difference. It seeks to put a positive value on difference - even religious difference' (Fredette 2014: 58). This celebration of highly visible cultural and ethnic signs contrasts considerably with attempts to render difference unremarkable, reflecting the varied and contrasting viewpoints on the place of multiculturalism in French identity within the recognition approach. Both of these differing approaches, in the manner of recognition politics, 'seek to claim their religion as important to them, as something that should not be hidden, and as something that does not exist in isolation from their identity as French citizens' (Fredette 2014: 59). Contrasting to a perceived divergence from their parents or grandparents, younger French Muslims feel 'no need to apologise for who they are' (ibid.). An adequate

response to the wish for difference to be acknowledged in the public sphere, however, appears largely absent, with much of the liberal left in French politics and media, too, conveying strong, if not sole, preference for difference-blind equality.

7.4 (Self) Representational Signifying Practices: Les Nègres Jaunes



Figure 44. Alagbé, Y. 2012. *Les Nègres Jaunes* et autres creatures imaginaires³⁰

The deployment of graphic art to portray complex social and political issues is widespread throughout Western media and popular culture. Utilising the medium to depict the immigrant experience, the graphic novel *Persepolis: The story of a Childhood* (Satrapi 2001/2004), brought graphic representation to a

³⁰*Les Nègres Jaunes*'s protagonist, Alain, visiting Claire at home, where he appears in contrast to his girlfriend's family.

mainstream audience. The novel tells of the experience of the Iranian-born French author in Iran during the Islamic Revolution, which, together with its sequel, *Persepolis 2: The story of a Return* (Satrapi 2005), documents the author's experience of immigration, with such fraught issues as assimilation, xenophobia and identity coming to the fore. Similarly illustrating the experience of immigrants, whilst disputing their portrayals in French hegemonic discourse, in his book, *Yellow Negroes and Other Imaginary Creatures (Les Nègres jaunes et autres créatures imaginaires)*, French-Beninese author Yvan Alagbé conveys the lives of undocumented migrant workers in Paris, as told through a series of short comics (2012). Collected between 1994 and 2011, these stories illustrate the often-acute racial tensions over a period of almost twenty years in France, and are images that hold renewed significance and urgency today. Through these depictions, the reader encounters the frequently problematic racial dynamics of contemporary France, and the long-lasting legacy of its colonialist past. Recounting the challenges faced by migrants on their journey into Europe, the collection's eponymous story tells of a tense socio-political climate, where colonialism and the French economy meet. The often-romanticized immigrant experience, as embraced in American culture, for instance, contrasts starkly to the experience described here, with the former being 'focused on distant past immigrants, i.e. white ones, ignoring other experiences' (Schindel 2018). In *Les Nègres Jaunes*, however, different forms of alienation and questions pertaining to identity are explored by its various characters (Schindel 2018).

The use and appeal of graphic art, such as *Les Nègres Jaunes*, to address complex socio-political issues such as immigration, identity and inequality may be in part due to the engaging, cartoonish features of the characters illustrated within. Comparing the use of illustrated figures to that of photographs or more lifelike depictions, McCloud points out, 'When you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face, you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon, you see yourself' (1993: 36). The broader depiction of a character, in this way then, through a relative absence of exclusionary signs, may be seen to incite greater identification with the character by the reader. As noted by Boatright (2010) regarding the use of simple lines and an absence of over-

attention to detail, apparent in Kiyama's *The Four Immigrants Manga*, 'the sparse use of lines and circles invites readers to enter the world of the graphic novel and join in the meaning-making of the characters' experiences' (472). In the image above (*Fig. 44*), the invitation to the viewer to 'fill in the gaps' left absent may be seen - a commonly used technique among other visual content creators too, most notably, perhaps, in advertising. Through this implication of visual absences, an attempt is made to pull the spectator into the signifying practices of the image, and in this way the viewer may co-create its meaning (Williamson 1978).

A 'tragic tale' telling of French institutional racism and a deeply flawed immigration system, *Les Nègres Jaunes* is also 'an analysis of an oppressive social world determined by colonial history - to be combated, sure, but primarily to be reckoned with' (Wivel 2014). In the image above, a clear juxtaposition of black African racial signs with a white, native French social context is evident, similar to findings previously discussed regarding the imagery of Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign, most notably in *Figure 27*, by *Le Monde's* Plantu. In Alagbé's image above, we recognize non-native French by their prominent racial and cultural symbols, in part due to the shorthand technique of condensation, made necessary by the limitations of cartooning. However, as noted in Chapter 5, the white native French may be identified by their lack of racial signs, where whiteness is normalized to the point that it appears invisible, and may not be so easily explained by the process of condensation. In this imagery, a 'blank' skin tone is used to denote whiteness or native and secular French. However, in *Les Nègres Jaunes*, these highly visible racial signs appear to be used deliberately, rather than out of necessity, to illustrate the sense of alienation and marginalization experienced by the cartoon's protagonist, and to contrast heavily with the character's social milieu. The inclusion of racial signs to signify a (black) character's divergence from their (white) social context is here purposefully deployed by Alagbé, who puts emphasis on black African characteristics in order to juxtapose them with the absence of respective signifiers for whiteness. We may see, then, that the same highly visible, although ostensibly neutral, visual signs used by mainstream

French media to dispassionately denote non-native French or black African immigrants are deployed by such groups to emphatically convey their marginalization and perceived 'Otherness'. *Les Nègres Jaunes*, with its shifting emphasis on racial signifiers may be seen, then, as a challenge to these visual representations.

Throughout Alagbé's graphic style, his various characters are frequently depicted as being at times lighter or darker, regardless of their skin colour. This stands in opposition to the depictions of black African migrants in Vadot's image included in UN's *Cartooning for Peace (Fig. 42)*, discussed in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, whose racial signs are highly visible and correspond to more stereotypical portrayals of non-European migrants. A lack of signifiers for deeper skin tones, noted elsewhere in the series, may reject and subvert the implication that neutral 'blankness' solely denotes whiteness, but instead normalises and naturalises blackness by rendering it invisible. As Alagbé argues, ' (i)n a graphic world consisting uniquely of black marks on white paper,' then, 'everybody is black' (Wivel 2014). Referring to this series, Alagbé states that his interest lies in 'work that renders visible what has previously been invisible', adding that "you need to look long and hard before that can happen" (Grey 2018). In challenging the semiotic structure frequently seen in mainstream French media, then, an attempt to humanize migrants is evident in Alagbé's imagery. By 'making the invisible visible', he translates the migrant experience for a native, non-immigrant population.

Further framing the contemporary struggles of non-white immigrants in their colonial context, in Alagbé's *Qui a connu le feu (Who Has Known Fire)* (2004), two historical figures meet across time and space, comparable to Fernandez's war of images, fought between Soumaro and Sundiata in ancient Mali (1991), itself building on Gruzinski's Amerindian context (1990). In Alagbé's similarly metaphoric debate, the conversation occurs between two historical figures, separated by three centuries but united by the fact of their disappearance, whose return is still awaited by some (fremok.org). This time, the figurative war takes place between colonizer and anti-colonialist, with the colonial figure here

personified as the 16th century King of Portugal, Sebastian I (1554 – 1578), who was defeated in his expedition to Morocco. The character of the anti-colonialist is embodied by the figure of Béhanzin, one of the last African sovereigns to be defeated by the French in the 19th century, who fiercely resisted the French colonisers. Through these images, concepts such as Christianity and enlightenment, and constructions of the colonised and the colonisers, are argued. In this imaginary debate, the political speeches of Béhanzin, the King of Dahomey, are mixed with the poetry of Portuguese poets Luis Vaz de Camões and Fernando Pessoa, ‘to form a symbolic mediation on colonialism and its legacy visualized as a portentous suite of black faces and bodies interspersed with symbols of imperialism’ (Wivel 2014).

A similar centrality of imagery is evident in the war of images as fought in Central and South America during Spanish colonisation, whereby the conquest of the imaginary during the violent clashes of civilizations and cultures played a decisive role in the battle’s outcome (Gruzinski 1990). Acknowledging the strategic and cultural weight of the image, the thorough supplanting of the iconography of the indigenous people with the icons of Christianity ‘contributed mightily to the dismantling or paralysis of the adversary’s cultural defenses’ (1990: 72). Separating the signified from the signifier, too, was imperative to prevent an ‘idolatrous drift’ (75), which threatened the confusion and subsequent worship of the image for that which it represents. Recalling, too, the figurative war in ancient Mali described by Fernandez (1991), where Sebastian and Béhanzin’s rhetorical battle of images takes place, cultural and colonial symbolism clash, stoking an interplay of such binary oppositions as white/black, good/evil, us/other and coloniser/colonised, depicting an ancient battle seemingly still raging in contemporary, postcolonial contexts.

7.5 Ma Fille, Mon Enfant



Figure 45. Ma Fille, Mon Enfant. 2020. David Ratte

In his book, *Ma fille, mon enfant* (My daughter, my child), the contentious issue of everyday racism is tackled through David Ratte's portrayal of biracial and cross-cultural relationships (2020). In this recent volume, unlike other images whose semiotic structure appears at times to undermine its professed message, a semiotic analysis of the imagery in *Ma fille* reveals a scopic regime that appears to corroborate its ostensible message. The image above serves as a point of comparison between depictions of various ethnicities in contemporary French media. This divergence in portrayals of race and culture in French mediated

imagery cannot easily be explained by the different requirements, styles and limitations of the cartoon. Here, the semiotic structure of an image and the visibility of signs appear in deep contrast to those of the images that appeared in French mainstream, liberal media, discussed previously.

In the image above (*Fig. 45*), we see Chloé introducing her boyfriend Abdelaziz to her mother, whose disapproval is readily evident. The story tells of Chloé's mother attempting to dissuade her daughter from going out, while Abdelaziz explains that he has borrowed his brother's car, and that they will be meeting with their friends later. The semiotic structure evident in this image makes it particularly noteworthy for this study. We may see that, in contrast to the heightened visibility of racial and cultural signs of certain groups apparent in much visual rhetoric, discussed previously, the image above depicts all characters according to the same semiotic system. Notwithstanding the differing stylistic requirements and practical limitations of editorial cartoons versus *bande dessinée*, this image serves as an example of a more neutral approach to graphic depictions of race, culture and ethnicity. Although Muslim and of North African heritage, related cultural and racial signs don't appear to overwhelm the figure of Abdelaziz, as they have in other imagery discussed in this study.

It is important to reiterate here that the representational images discussed in this chapter are not intended to be fully representative of the immigrant or minority experience, but rather are some stories among many, and whose value, for this purpose of this study, is in their demonstration of the signifying processes of identity and marginalisation. The semiotic analyses offered here, then, investigate the ways in which the visual hegemony, hitherto discussed, is opposed and alternative representations are constructed, and provide visual context for the forthcoming investigation into my case study.

Similarly, Christophe Dabitch's collaborative comic album, titled 'Immigrants' (2010), documents the individual experiences of thirteen immigrants seeking asylum in France through a collection of testimonies. These illustrated interviews tell stories of everyday racism and exclusion, and their signifying

practices, in their tellers' journeys towards integration. Rather than attempting to be representative of the immigrant experience in France, this album tends to the specific anecdotal experience of these immigrants, unveiling recurrent themes of marginalization and racial prejudice, as well as to the contentious issues of universalist integration on the one hand and particularism on the other. In this collection, the republican model of universalism is deconstructed, as Dabitch offers 'an alternative French history of immigration and invites readers to question founding mythologies which have erected France as the country of human rights' (Howell 2015: 1).

In English-speaking Western popular culture, the imagery and visual discourse pertaining to the immigrant experience is apparent in such graphic novels as Tan's *The Arrival* (2007), for instance, whose imagery was fashioned around archived photographs of Ellis Island at the turn of the 20th century (Boatright 2010). Contesting the commonly perceived identity of the immigrant as uniformly non-white, Tan's *The Arrival* tells the story of a white, male immigrant protagonist, contributing to discourse of a multi-ethnic and varied immigrant experience (Boatright 2010). His character's assimilation into his host country, however, is one of far less complexity that is typically recounted by non-white, non-male immigrants. Other notable illustrated novels include *Undocumented: A Worker's Fight* by Duncan Tonatiuh (2018), *American Born Chinese* (Yang 2008), and Kiyama's *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco* (1999).

7.6 Kismet, Man of Fate



Figure 46: Kismet, Man of Fate. A. David Lewis et al. 2018

Charlie Hebdo's Muhammad cartoons, for many moderate Muslims, were, as we have seen, often deemed to connote their systemic expulsion from French culture and society. One counter-strategy in representational practices to this depictive discourse, however, is that of trans-coding, a re-appropriation of stereotypical Muslim signifiers, as illustrated in the depiction of the Muslim superhero, Kismet, in graphic novels, and more recently, the Marvel superhero, Kamala Khan.

Positive Muslim representation has often been either scant or problematic in the visual discourse of France's mainstream mass media, then. Although this is largely true, too, among the pantheon of Western comic book heroes, a notable exception appears to be enjoying renewed attention and popularity, one perhaps mirroring the efforts and concerns of the cartoonists and public activists mentioned above. In recent years, the comic book superhero, Kismet, Man of Fate, has seen a resurrection in popular culture, having been generally acknowledged as the first Muslim superhero in Western popular culture. Emerging into the world of comic books in 1944, at a time where, up until then, Arab and Muslim characters were largely depicted as villains, Kismet initially

appeared in four issues of Bomber Comics. Here, he was a 'bare-chested, caped, fez-wearing Algerian' fighting for France in World War II (Seven 2019). Although clearly intended as a Muslim character, neither Islam nor Algerian socio-political concerns featured in his storylines or played a significant role in his political or social agenda, in what might currently be considered a difference-blind republican model of representation. Despite a suggestion of superficiality regarding his Muslim identity, Kismet was drawn with a perhaps unexpected sensitivity, free from many of the narrow cultural signs apparent in contemporary depictions of Muslims. A notable absence of Islamophobia in Kismet's depiction, or a fetishisation of his cultural identity, may be seen. The hero was intelligent, spoke English fluently and without an exoticised accent, appearing strikingly free from a patronizing 'Orientalism' (Seven 2019). Due to an (in)visibility of Kismet's cultural, religious and racial signifiers relative to those of other non-Muslims characters, the character appears to avoid being overwhelmed by, and subsequently reduced to, such signifying characteristics. Kismet's *Muslimness*, then, does not appear to be connotative of *Otherness*.

Since this first appearance, however, Kismet seemed to have disappeared from view. While researching Muslim representation in comic books and in popular culture, comics writer A. David Lewis discovered Kismet and subsequently began working on his restoration, with the subject being of personal as well as academic interest to Lewis since his conversion to Islam in 2006 (Seven 2019). This update included further development of the character's cultural identity, with plotlines that acknowledged the growing undercurrent of Islamophobia throughout Western societies at present, as well as other pertinent issues relating to justice, law and patriotism (ibid.) (*Fig. 46*). This time fighting Islamophobia instead of Nazism, Kismet's reincarnation has also involved a transformation from superhero to political activist, acknowledging the fiction of the former. Kismet as activist, then, appears as an attempt to inspire and provide instruction to readers regarding their own agency. Kismet is now joined by Kamala Khan, a Muslim-American girl of Pakistani heritage and recent addition to the Marvel Universe. Debuting in August 2013, Khan has arguably further contributed to positive Muslim representation in popular culture in Western

societies. Ultimately, Kismet's return to popular culture after a seventy-year absence appears to be in line with an increasing attempt to challenge the negative, patronizing, or absence of, representations of Muslims and Islam in Western media.

7.7 Kamala Khan

Set to play a central role in Marvel's Avengers series, Kamala Khan, as 'Ms. Marvel', reclaims and adapts popular representations of the Muslim and of Islam. The inclusion of characters such as Kamala Khan and Kismet in popular culture, albeit as yet constituting a considerably disproportionate presence, indicates seminal attempts in the trans-coding counter-strategy to move the non-white, or non-Christian, figure from the margins and into the mainstream. Of note, however, in the design of the character of Kamala Khan, is a somewhat conspicuous absence of the hijab. This could equally be read as more representative of the Pakistani-American girl's commonly preferred attire, or as indicative of a conditional element of Muslim access to mainstream culture. In order to gain entry to, and be deemed acceptable by, the mainstream, perhaps, the Muslim must assimilate and adhere to non-Muslim cultural conventions of dress. Kamala Khan's Muslim heritage and culture may be signified, then, but within the confines of a non-Muslim conceptual world. The interpretation a reader may take may, therefore, vary considerably, illustrating the characteristic ambiguity of the sign. A heightened visibility of cultural signs in the portrayal of a Muslim respective to those of a non-Muslim in a political cartoon may, however, be due to the typically greater visibility of the former's signs in the public sphere. Here, again, the reader is encouraged to determine the degree to which non-Muslim signs or their absence is depicted as 'natural' or ordinary.

7.8 The (Meta) Enemy Image



Figure 47. 'Le sort des démons durant Ramadan', June 6th, 2016, Oumma

LES DESSINS DE LA RÉDACTION

RADICALISATIONS DE PLUS EN PLUS SOUDAINES



PAR PASCAL GROS


Larevueessinee.fr

Figure 48. 'Radicalisation'. July 18th 2016, Pascal Gros for Oumma

Contrasting with these positive representations, much imagery addresses the public perception and portrayal of the Muslim, not just as 'other', but as 'enemy', in public pictorial discourse. As explored in previous chapters, the 'enemy image' is a recurring motif in political cartoons. Comparable to the previously described metaphorical constructions of 'Le Pen is Hitler', or '*Rassemblement National* (RN) are Nazis', in the image above, a direct challenge to the frequently Othering, or vilifying, discourse pertaining to Muslims and integration is made (*Fig. 47*). Here, we see the metaphoric configuration of 'Muslim is demon', and of Islamic practices and beliefs as being more than simply unlawful, but are correspondingly diabolic. Diverging from the more straightforward domestication technique evident in the aforementioned RN imagery by Plantu, this metaphorical construction of Muslims is of course ironic, intended to be read as a parody of the perceived prejudice and demonization felt by many Muslims in France. Lamprooning the often-negative depictions of Muslims and the frequent vilification of Islam in mainstream media, the image above denotes the Muslim as a demon, and Islam, as denoted by 'Ramadan', as a crime.

Similarly, in the equally self-referential *Figure 48*, the cartoonist parodies the pervasive fear of radicalisation, apparent in public discourse. Throughout French politics, this perceived growing 'Islamization', is supposedly supported, for example, by the provision of halal meat, and the visibility of religious clothing and minarets around the country. In the cartoon above, this apparent widespread concern in French society about radicalisation is mocked, with the additional comment running next to the image: watch out for dazzling or ultra mega fast radicalisation ('*Attention à la radicalisation express ou fulgurante ou ultra mega rapide*'). Under the heading that warns us of increasingly sudden radicalisation, a presumably secular French man is shocked to see his wife suddenly dressed in a burka beside him. His wife had previously been secular, or at least non-Muslim, as denoted by her traditional French name Marie-Charlotte, but now appears totally subsumed by the striking Muslim signifier of the burka. Alongside the denotation of Islam in mainstream, secular media, as a uniformly fundamentalist religion, to which most readers would unreservedly object, moderate and liberal Muslims appear also disparaged. As part of this elite

rhetoric, this 'Islamization' thereby serves as a discursive questioning of Muslim inclusion and belonging in French national identity. In this self-referential image, the perception that moderate Islam is frequently conflated with more fundamental forms in public discourse and opinion is addressed and derided. The projection of Muslim subjectivities is played with in order to challenge and refute mainstream elite representations. In these images, then, attempts to reclaim agency over Muslim subjectivities in the social imaginary are made. The typically marginalising enemy image is here inverted in self-referential parody. Further, this fear of specifically Muslim conspicuous religious symbolism as opposed to that denoting other religions is conveyed, as discussed below.

7.8.1 Ostentatious religious signs



Figure 49. 'L'hypocrisie à la plage.' Aug. 26th 2016, Oumma

Further acknowledgement of Muslim public perception as unlawful enemy and of their 'otherness' is apparent in the image above, which pointedly addresses the hypocrisy they perceive relating to the greater tolerance afforded to other religions in French public life (Fig. 49). Since 2004, conspicuous religious symbols in public schools have been prohibited (Jahangir 2005: 47). Up to then,

wearing religious symbols was deemed in line with the right to freedom of expression and to publicly manifest one's religion or beliefs, and wasn't considered contradictory to the principle of the separation of Church and State (Jahangir 2005: 48). It would be deemed illegal should the symbol be accompanied 'by proof of proselytising behaviour or provocation', and 'distinguished between an "ostentatious religious symbol" and the "ostentatious wearing of a religious symbol"' (ibid.). The change in the law in 2004 resulted from the difficulty with which school administrations found the implementation of this policy, and subsequently expressed a need for legal clarification. A law banning conspicuous religious symbols, which included large Christian crosses, the Jewish *kippah* and Islamic veil, in public institutions such as state schools and government buildings, was therefore adopted. This law acquired renewed interest in late 2019, when an amendment was passed that extended the prohibition of conspicuous religious symbols in other public contexts. The debate as to whether this eradication of conspicuous religious symbols, as deemed a protection of freedom of conscience, unfairly targets Muslims is frequently addressed in Muslim representational activism. Whilst ostensibly treating all faiths equally, its tangible outcome arguably discriminates against Muslims and Arabs disproportionately. Christians may wear small crucifixes unnoticed, while Jewish students who would like to wear the yarmulke may avail of private religious education, which are more plentiful than options available for Muslims. Arguing that the turban is cultural as opposed to religious saw the allowance of the 'under turban' to be worn. This abstract difference-blind republicanism may, then, 'in its defense of freedom of conscience, hamper certain articulations of that freedom' (Fredette 2014).

Accusations of hypocrisy regarding the enactment of this law are frequently made throughout *Oumma's* imagery. Arguing that not all religious symbolism is treated equally, they allude to the apparently more permissible symbols of non-Muslim faiths in the public sphere, comparing the acceptance of the Catholic religious habit with the intolerance for the Islamic veil in the public sphere. This hypocrisy is depicted numerous times throughout *Oumma's* visual discourse. Circulated by *Oumma* on August 26th 2016, we see in the image above two police

officers stating that they are looking for ostentatious religious signs, and asking a nun in obvious Christian garb if she has seen a *burkini* or a veiled Muslim (*Fig. 49*). Underneath the dialogue, to further emphasise the message, is written '*L'hypocrisie à la plage*' (hypocrisy at the beach). The two police officers appear blind to the obvious Christian cross and religious clothing that cover their bearer from head to foot, reiterating the perceived naturalness of Christian symbolism in dominant discourse. Placing this Christian figure alongside the Muslim immigrants depicted in Plantu's cartoon in Chapter 5 (*Fig. 27*), whose religious symbolism reduced them to only their symbolism, the cultural signs here, despite their blatancy, are rendered invisible, or perceived as neutral, natural or normalised by the presumably secular police officers.

As with the above-depicted 'demon Muslim', this image further alludes to the perceived legality or lawfulness of their religious practices, and by extension their religion, in relation to that of secular or Christian French citizens. In the scopical regime of this meta-enemy image, a reader might, in fact, interpret the incarcerated demon-Muslims as a resultant image, following their discovery at the beach by a patrolling police unit. A similar image, wherein the Pope and a nun are momentarily mistaken for 'uncivilised Muslims' due to their obviously religious attire, carries a similar message³¹. Here, a bystander angrily points to two figures dressed head to toe in religious signifiers, and reproaches them for living in the 'Dark Ages'. When the characters turn around, however, their Christian affiliation is revealed, followed by a swift apology by the clearly relieved bystander. In both cartoons, the symbolism of the Christian characters is emphasized in order to clearly identify their religion. The exaggerated visibility of religious signs serves, too, to deepen the hypocrisy of the unequal enforcement of a law concerning visibility of religious symbols.

Alongside these examples of resistance to elite representational rhetoric, many other, often less explicit, forms of discursive resistance may be observed. As stated by Scott in his ethnography, *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), resistance may

³¹ *Figure 50. Oct. 2nd and 11th, 2015. Oumma. Appendix: Chapter 7.*

take more furtive articulations than those of the enemy image, such as gossip occurring in the private sphere while an ostensible conformity and acquiescence in public life may concurrently be observed. These clandestine attempts at reputational damage aimed at the powerful elite demonstrate the complexity and range of forms of resistance deployed by subaltern or subordinate groups, as well as the extensive middle ground in the field of resistance that exists between abject conformity and violent outrage (Scott 1985). Much opposition to negative projections of Muslim subjectivities and of Islam, for instance, may be expressed in the private sphere or in the assimilative counterpublic enclaves, described by Squires (2002), and further explored by Michael Warner (2005), with an outward compliance often concealing an internal rejection of elite visual discourse.

7.8.2 "Don't panic, organise!"



Figure 51. 'Ne paniquez pas, organisez vous!' Jan. 14th 2016, Oumma

Nevertheless, a more classic configuration of the enemy image is apparent above. Here, in *Figure 51*, alongside the immediately recognisable enemy, issues of threat, oppression and perceived vulnerability may be identified. The dominant force is unequivocally evil, with menacing red eyes and sharp teeth, seemingly poised to consume the small, fleeing and dispersed population. This image is further noteworthy for its explicitly revolutionary tone. In this image, under the heading '*Ne paniquez pas, Organisez vous!*', we may perceive a direct call to French Muslims for revolution or for resistance against a menacing dominant power. Although nowhere explicitly naming Muslims in their petition, their intended audience may be reasonably inferred from the discursive framing of the image in a decidedly Muslim-oriented publication whose content frequently espouses the struggles experienced by Muslims in France. In this image, being a disempowered but significant minority is recognised, as is a strength that lies in their capacity to act together in solidarity.

The call to unite in the spirit of revolution in French visual discourse is, of course, reminiscent of the ubiquitous revolutionary imagery of the Delacroix painting, that has been deployed in various ways, both intentionally and seemingly unintentionally, to negate the possible integration of Muslims into French culture. However, as we see, a similar ethos of resistance, solidarity and revolt are felt in both camps. Furthermore, in both the *Organisez vous* cartoon and the *Liberty Leading the People* imagery, an uprising against an oppressive enemy is conveyed, along with an ostracised population whose strength is in their number. Arguably, then, in an image to correspond to the revolutionary imagery of mainstream France, albeit one without its supposedly validating historical context, similar importance is placed on solidarity and resistance, whilst simultaneously articulating similar experiences of oppression and marginalisation. Reactions and amalgamations of more traditional revolutionary imagery are discussed in the following section.

7.9 Images of the Republic

An acknowledgement of the imagery of the revolution and its corresponding republican rhetoric are evident in the visual discourse of French Muslims, at times by way of its negation and at other times, perhaps surprisingly, through its appropriation. As previously seen, the imagery of the French revolution recurs throughout French history at times of particularly fraught social or political tensions. The ubiquitous *Liberty Leading the People*, typically deployed to represent a secular republic, has also been adopted to connote resistance and revolt in Muslim-dominant countries. The Arab Spring, for instance, in which a series of anti-government protests took place across the Middle East and North African countries beginning in late 2010, has provided a rich source of coded imagery and of Muslim representation, and has resulted in a proliferation of semiotic constructions of Muslims and of Islam.



Figure 52. 'Dégage! Tunisie, Egypte, Libye, Syrie'. 15 Sept. 2011. Patrick Chappatte

In the image above (Fig. 52), we see yet another version of Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, with the portrayal of Liberty/Marianne decidedly altered

from the original, as well as from Plantu's version, discussed in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?* Published during the Tunisian, or Jasmine, Revolution, Liberty here is a Muslim woman calling forth a population under the flag of Tunisia rather than of France. The people lead by a Tunisian Marianne are armed with weaponry reminiscent of the original painting by Delacroix, such as guns and swords, but are also notably equipped with the more modern weapons of social media platforms and communications technology, placing this revolution firmly within a contemporary technological age. The combination of both traditional and violent weapons of warfare with contemporary technological tools seems to denote a sense of determination and resolve, as well as one of modernity, with protesters willing to use all weapons at their disposal.

Markedly divergent from the bare-breasted, secular French woman of Plantu's cartoon, the image above contains a number of signs denoting Islam, such as the hijab, the fez and the symbolic flag of Tunisia itself. Here, the typically negative symbolism of the veil in French political discourse is challenged, refuting the frequently stated incompatibility between liberty and Islam. Frequently connoted as a symbol of oppression in Western media, the veiled Marianne here may be seen as a contestation of the popular perception of Muslim women and the place of liberty, and of women, in Islam, whilst simultaneously posing a challenge for Marianne as a first-order signifier in a republican France myth. A focus for much feminist discourse, the symbolic meaning of the hijab raises pertinent questions regarding gender equality. Whether it's understood as a symbol of submission or not, the voices of those who decide to wear it are not often heard or afforded the opportunity to relate in public discourse its meaning. Moreover, it may be argued that the laws against the hijab have their roots in neocolonialism rather than in feminism. The recent petition, 'We, Feminists', was distributed with the aim of emphasizing the ways in which 'women's rights' may be used to 'divide (and conquer) women of different backgrounds' (Fredette 2014: 158).

Described as graphic journalism, or reportage, the figures in the image are also united under the slogan '*Dégage!*', or 'Get out!', the title of the collection of

images. Depicting the Tunisian Revolution using the visual rhetoric of the French Revolution attends to the colonial history between France and the Maghreb region, as well as framing it as a momentous turning point in the country's history. In a comparable way, the solidarity imagery evoking Marianne may be interpreted as a passage from an old regime, one of repression, to one of strength, unity and liberty. Depictions of Marianne, as denoted by the familiar signs of her clothing and chromatic design, have also been posted by *Oumma*. In one such image, the figure of Marianne (or Liberty) is likely to be immediately recognisable to a French readership, due to the referent system common in mainstream, liberal media. Through the use of this familiar visual encoding of resistance and revolution, attempts to claim Muslim inclusion into dominant and elite concepts of *Frenchness* by demonstrating an alignment of values with secular, revolutionary France, may be discerned.

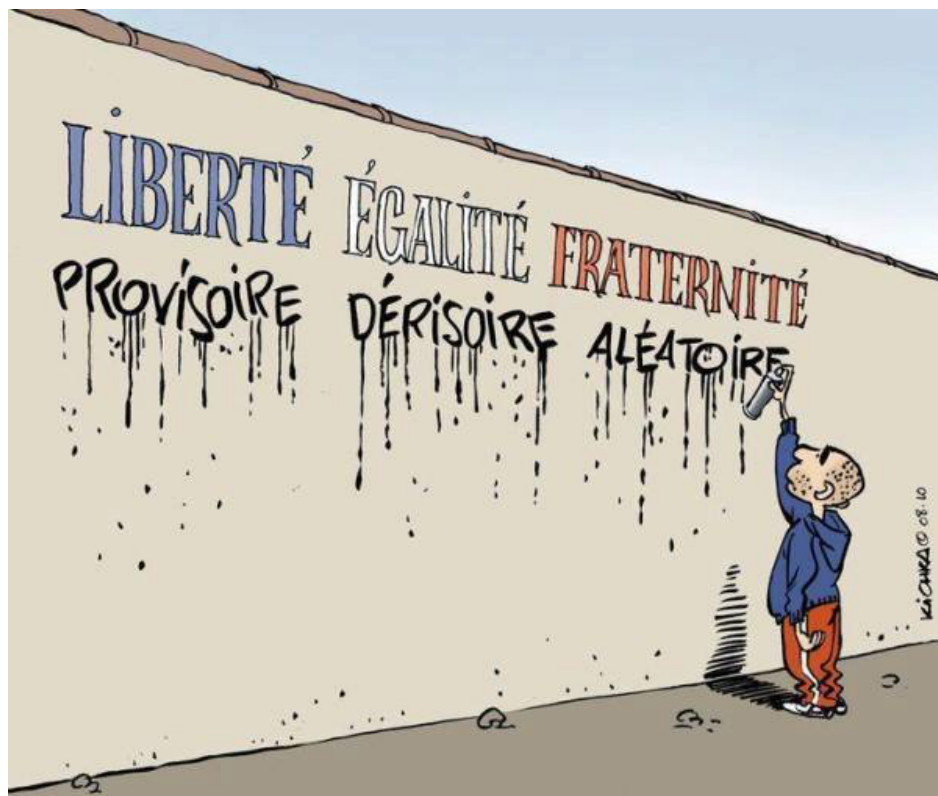


Figure 53. 'Provisoire, dérisoire, aléatoire'. Dec. 25 2015, Oumma

The republican values espoused by the French political elite are addressed again in the image above (Fig. 53). Here, however, an explicit negation of the republican values and rhetoric by French Muslims may be seen in this image,

wherein an urban youth is depicted solemnly correcting the three core tenets of the republic. In his amended slogan, liberty is provisional, equality is derisory, and fraternity is arbitrary. In a similar way to the image above, these central pillars of the republic are deemed equally desirable to Muslim citizens, with many disputing not the progressive values but a failure of their full, successful implementation. This also signifies the aforementioned diversity among the Muslim population as well as the vast distance of many from the fundamentalist conceptions often evident in the depictive rhetoric of mainstream media. The caption posted beside the image above reads: 'Eric Fassin, political science lecturer at the University of Paris VIII writes in his blog Mediapart: "a French born person who holds another nationality can be stripped of French nationality when convicted of a serious attack on the life of the Nation". To constitutionalise such as measure is not only a crime; it's also a fault', (*Eric Fassin, professeur de science politique à université Paris VIII écrit son blog Mediapart: "Une personne née française qui détient une autre nationalité peut être déchue de la nationalité française lorsqu'elle est condamnée pour un crime constituant une atteinte grave à la vie de la Nation." Constitutionnaliser pareille mesure n'est pas seulement un crime; c'est aussi une faute*) (2015). Alongside much imagery discussed here, this alternative construction of the French Muslim to that apparent in the elite conceptual world contributes to the discursively framed debates on nationhood and citizenship in the frequently denoted figurative war of images.

7.10 “Je suis Ahmed”, “Je suis Habitué”



Figure 54. 'Je suis habitué', July 6th, 2016, Oumma

In further contestations to the hegemonic visual rhetoric, repudiations to the aforementioned “Je Suis Charlie” slogan have been coined and propagated in this discursive struggle. In the aftermath of the attacks at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in early 2015, the freedom to offend was arguably becoming a *civic duty* to offend, in public conceptions of French nationhood (Kiwani 2016). Efforts to stem ‘radicalisation’ and promote *laïcité* were enacted across many areas of French life, including, for instance, an increase in charges citing ‘apology for terrorism’. In response to this, an open letter was penned by a number of academics, borrowing from W.E.B. du Bois the title ‘How does it feel to be a problem’ (Kiwani 2016). In the letter, they disparaged the elite and exclusive national media-maintained narrative of ‘a nation standing up to Islamic “fanaticism”, “extremism,” and “intolerance”’, a narrative that side-lined the ongoing and pervasive undercurrent of Islamophobia, racism and social exclusion (Kiwani 2016: 236-237).

Challenging the “Je Suis Charlie” slogan that arose during this time, the corresponding nominal metaphor “Je suis Ahmed” could be heard, referring to the French Muslim police officer, Ahmed Merabet, who was killed by the Kouachi brothers during their attack at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices. The professed purpose of this parallel “Je suis Ahmed” meme was to serve as a reminder that the staff at *Charlie Hebdo* were not the sole victims, and that all those who died in the attacks should be remembered, mourned and identified (Silverstein 2018). The meme also alluded, however, to the heterogeneity of the French populace, one that could not so easily be encapsulated by principles such as ‘freedom of expression’ and ‘the right to offend’ (Silverstein 2018). In this syntactic inversion of the solidarity cartoons, the new affirmation, “Je suis Ahmed”, voiced the concerns that many French Muslim citizens felt about their publicly-perceived citizenship, that had been brought about by this new upsurge in nationalism and patriotism (ibid.). Challenging the narrative of secular French victimhood evident in the previous solidarity cartoons, “Ahmed” now assumes the role of Sender, in a semantic swap recalling the visual parodies of the aforementioned *Manner Posters* that surfaced largely among expat communities in Tokyo (Padoan 2014).

Similarly, such an inversion of narrative positions demonstrably challenges and erases, or at least seeks to negotiate, the negative values hitherto associated with the Muslim subject, effecting a counterstrategy to the political enunciation arguably present in both Plantu’s imagery as well as that of the solidarity movement. We may see, then, how, for many French Muslims, their own dilemmas in relation to belonging came to the fore. Although vehemently opposing the violence perpetrated in the name of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, supporting the secular narrative to the point of identification with ‘Charlie’ was, for many, unimaginable. They ‘could never resolve “to be Charlie” quite simply because Charlie never tried to be them’ (Muhammad 2017: 117). This existential rupture in identity has also previously been noted in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, as articulated by Dieudonné in his controversial statement *‘Je me sens Charlie Coulibaly’*.

In the propagation of the “Je suis Ahmed” meme, demonstrators attested to the inclusion of Muslims into the definition of *Frenchness*, who had seemed to be marginalized and excluded in the “Je suis Charlie” narrative. As Silverstein states, “Je suis Ahmed” was a plea for human recognition and an act of identification, or at least solidarity, across the de facto color line’ (2018: 88). Ahmed may also be seen to represent the numerous French Muslims who work in public service, most notably as police officers, as well as the ‘men and women of color who gave their lives and livelihoods fighting France’s wars, building its economy, and defending its values’ (Silverstein 2018: 89). In this way, then, opposing the “Je suis Charlie” formulation of French nationhood, proponents of the alternative affirmation “Je suis Ahmed” affirm the heterogeneity of the nation, one that includes French Muslims.

As we have seen in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, the solidarity imagery that emerged following the attacks in Paris in 2015, emphatically stressed the concept of freedom of speech and the right (or, for some, the duty) to offend, positing these as defining characteristics of French nationhood, inferring that a ‘good’ French citizen was a secular, or at least a Christian, one. The related depictive rhetoric, in effect, restricted the kinds of counterpublic that could be constructed in a Muslim-minority public sphere. From this exclusive narrative, responses such as the “Je suis Ahmed” meme arose, contributing to the formation of a dissenting French Muslim counterpublic. The “Je suis Charlie” slogan is again provocatively recalled in the image above, posted by *Oumma* (Fig. 54). Similar to the rhetorical contestation of the “Je suis Charlie” meme, the deceased speaker asserts that the death of innocent civilians during the Bagdad attacks goes unnoticed, unmourned and are indifferently dismissed as being ‘habitual’. Eighteen months after the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices, this image protests the general indifference with which news of the deaths of over 200 people in Bagdad was met. By reference to the familiar *Hebdo* meme, this reaction, or lack thereof, was contrasted with the public outcry heard across the world in response to the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris, as also illustrated by the “Je suis Ahmed” slogan above.

7.11 Benevolent, Wise and Virtuous

The construction of the French Muslim, and of Islam more generally, may be inferred from a number of various images published by *Oumma*. In stark contrast to the frequently negative or ambiguous connotations of Islam observable in dominant scopic regimes, much of the depictive rhetoric created by Muslims in France construct the Muslim as a benevolent parent, a serene individual in peaceful prayer, or a wise and cultured elder. The pervasiveness of the parental figure, for example, further challenges the mainstream depictions and negative stereotyping experienced by Muslims in France. This visual rhetoric often alludes to the primacy of the parental figure, who is frequently portrayed as benevolent and tender, self-sacrificing and devoted. Considerable significance is afforded to the concepts of motherhood and parenting, as denoted by the frequency of images that appear referencing an archetypal mother or father figure³². In this recurring leitmotif, the status of the parent, as well as a moral obligation on Muslims to respect and take care of their parents, is clear.

Similarly, the learned scholar archetype, educated and erudite, is regularly deployed in constructions of the Muslim. In one such image, the protagonist declares that the only nights he has never read a book was his wedding night and the night his father died. This clearly attempts to position the values of literacy and of education as central in Muslim cultures, constructing the (French) Muslim as refined, educated and cerebral (*'De toute ma vie, il n'y a que 2 nuits durant lesquelles je n'ai pas lu de livres. La nuit de mon mariage, et celle où mon père est mort.' Ibn Rushd (Avéroès)'*) (November 19th 2016 and January 2nd 2017, *Oumma*). Virtue is similarly signified in related imagery³³, with a caption next to one representative image published on November 17th 2016 by *Oumma* telling a story of two men, one rich and the other poor, whose moral message is one of virtuousness, generosity and forgiveness³⁴.

³² Fig. 55, Appendix: Chapter 7.

³³ Figures 56 and 57, Appendix: Chapter 7.

³⁴ The story tells of a wealthy man who has given to the poorer one a basket filled with rubbish, which the latter accepts with a smile. The poor man empties and cleans it, and subsequently fills it with flowers. To the wealthy man's



Figure 58. 'Coin de paix et sagesse d'Islam'. Oumma, Nov. 28th 2015, April 17th 2016 and August 5th 2017; 'L'islam, une religion anti-violente qui prêche la paix, le pardon et la fraternité entre tous les hommes'.

A similar construction of the enlightened Muslim may be seen in the image above, where a comparably calm, contemplative, prayerful figure sits quietly (Fig. 58). We are told that he is praying for the strength to apologise in the event that he hurts someone, and for the strength also to forgive if he, in turn, is hurt by someone else. Beneath this prayer, Islam is described as being a religion of peace and wisdom. Accompanying this image is a caption that further

astonishment, he returns to give him the basket filled with flowers. The rich man asked why he has given him a basket filled with beautiful flowers when he had only given him rubbish. The poor man replies that 'each person gives what he has in his heart' (*'Un jour un homme riche donne un panier rempli d'ordure a un homme pauvre. L'homme pauvre lui sourit et parti avec le panier. Il le vida et le nettoya et puis le remplit de fleurs magnifiques. Il retourna chez l'homme riche s'étonna et lui dit pourquoi tu m'a donner ce panier rempli de belles fleurs alors qui je t'ai donner des ordures?? Et l'homme pauvre lui dit: "chaque personne donne ce qu'il a dans le coeur"*).

underscores this message of peace and wisdom, which describes Islam as an anti-violent religion, one that preaches peace, forgiveness and brotherhood amongst all men. The wording of this caption calls to mind the three-word motto of the French Republic - *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – but has included peace and forgiveness in place of freedom and equality. This image was disseminated by *Oumma* on November 28th 2015, reappearing again in April 2016, and once more in August 2017. Following the series of terrorist attacks that took place in Paris on November 13th 2015, the appearance of this image later in November 2015 may be read as a responding attempt to challenge the dominant visual discourse that had prevailed that year. These discursive challenges to perceptions of the Muslim in the public gaze in 2015 are, perhaps, unsurprising, given the global upsurge in derogatory depictions of Muslims and Islam in the public sphere, arguably resultant from the terrorist attacks claimed by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that bookended that year.

The signs deployed in this image to signify Islam markedly diverge from those that had become even more prevalent in 2015 throughout French media. The message that Islam is a religion of peace is stressed in several captions within and surrounding the image, as well as through the sign system of the image itself. This stands in stark relief to the usual images in the dominant visual discourse of French media, as well as those images published by *Oumma* itself, which depict a Muslim protagonist with those seemingly more typical racial and cultural characteristics. However, in this image, the only cultural marker is the figure's prayer cap, with the figure, humble and serene, seen to be wearing the typical Western clothing for men, including trousers, a belt and a shirt. In a similar image³⁵, French citizens of faith are depicted as harmonious and serene, whether they are Muslim or Christian. This image is also useful as a point of comparison regarding visibility of cultural or religious signs. Here, both Christian and Muslim heritage are similarly construed through a comparable visibility of cultural signs. Under this image, *Oumma* identifies the artwork of 'Oummanaute' Alexis Larachiche as a source of comfort in fraught times (2015).

³⁵ *Figure 59. Dec. 10 2015, Oumma. Appendix: Chapter 7.*

Diverging remarkably from the overtly visible and highly emphasised cultural symbols of many illustrations of Muslims in French and Western visual discourse, this imagery appears to seek to position the French Muslim as one close in character and values to the secular French citizen, through the deployment of signs of similarity rather than of difference. Furthermore, by depicting a devout Muslim in this way, the racial lines between secular French and Muslim French are blurred, and a clear distinction between cultures may not so easily be observed. In this way, too, the ethnicity identifier as a key component of *Frenchness* in the exclusionary and xenophobic politics of proponents of nativism, such as that of *Rassemblement National*, as discussed in Chapter 5, is undermined. Arguments such as theirs for the exclusion of Muslims from concepts of French nationhood and claims to citizenship based on ascriptive qualities, amongst others, become even more difficult to defend. By depicting a Muslim using the visual signs that might usually signify a secular, or Christian, French citizen, the predominant visual representations of Muslims and Islam are contested in this image through the process of domestication (Morris 1993; Gombrich 1971). Recognising the potentially alienating effects of the dominant visual rhetoric of French Muslims and of Islam, *Oumma* may be seen here to repudiate this portrayal, by deliberately depicting Islam in the context of a more familiar area of experience for a secular readership, via its related signifying world.

Here, then, the figure's 'whiteness' appears deliberate, as distinct from the normalising invisibility of whiteness in much mainstream media imagery (as discussed in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign, e.g. *Fig. 27*), inverting a French Muslim stereotype. The principal protagonist is arguably not the French Muslim conveyed in the cartoon at all, but rather a secular, or non-Muslim, French viewer observing the image, to whom the diegesis appears to address. If, following Berger's 'ways of seeing' concept, 'we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (1972: 9), we may see in this image an attempt made by *Oumma* to redress the increasing alienation conveyed in dominant discourse and for secular France to reassess the construction of Muslims in its social imaginary. The image, in this

way, appears to break the discourse context between Islam and its traditional signifiers, thereby challenging some readers to perhaps examine or reflect upon their conceptions of French Muslim identity.

7.11.1 *The Muslim as Native American*



Figure 60. 'Chez moi, il y a 300 millions de migrants...mais personne n'en parle'. Oumma, Oct. 3rd 2015, March 28th, May 13th, Oct. 21st 2016, March 6th and Jan. 25th 2017

Reiterating the theme of wisdom and peacefulness, an extraordinary, recurring motif in the imagery of *Oumma* is that of the Native American. In one such image (*Fig. 60*, above), the depiction of the Native American is anchored with the message, 'At home, there are 300 million migrants... But nobody talks about it' ('*Chez moi, il y a 300 million de migrants.. Mais personne n'en parle...*') (*Oumma*, Oct. 3rd 2015, March 28th, May 13th, Oct. 21st 2016, March 6th and Jan. 25th 2017).

It was followed with the comment, ‘A little message for Trump. Trump rails against migrants. He needs to study his history lessons. He would learn who the real migrants are’ (*Petit message au président Trump. Trump se déchaîne contre les migrants. Il devrait réviser se cours d’histoire. Il apprendrait qui sont les véritables migrants.*). In another similar image³⁶, on March 14th 2017, the depiction of a Native American is identified in its accompanying caption as Sitting Bull (*Oumma*). In this caption, the message is framed as ‘(t)he magnificent wisdom of Sitting Bull, Indian chief of the Sioux tribe’. Here, *Oumma* relates the values and philosophies of the Sioux tribe to those of Islam, stating that they offer ‘(a)nother definition of the warrior, another philosophy of life that is very close to that of Islam, and which is totally different from the consumerist society which puts us in permanent rivalry against each other’ (*La sagesse magnifique de Siting Bull [sic], chef indien de la tribu des Sioux. Une autre définition du guerrier, une autre philosophie de la vie qui se rapproche énormément de celle de l’islam, et qui est totalement différent de la société marchande qui nous met en rivalité permanente les uns contre les autre*). By borrowing from the signifying world of Native Americans, of Sitting Bull and the Sioux tribe, the sign system is appropriated to convey Islam. Alongside the striking imagery of Sitting Bull, the accompanying text asserts the preferred meaning of the image – that is, that the reader would draw a parallel between Native Americans and French Muslims.

However, a rhetorical problem with a narrative that frames a population whose origins are predominantly non-native and immigrant in France, alongside the indigenous population of America, who suffered egregiously at the hands of immigrants, becomes immediately apparent. Nevertheless, the imagery is undoubtedly striking, and is presumably deployed to connect the two disparate populations through their experience of marginalisation and social exclusion, overlooking their opposing respective immigrant/native identities. The Native American in these images is deployed as a metaphorical construction of the French Muslim, whose metonymic entailments of wisdom, dignity and harmony are clearly intended to form part of the popular construction of Islam. By crafting the French Muslim in this way, an appeal is made to associate the widely

³⁶ Figure 61, Appendix: Chapter 7.

accepted injustices experienced by Native Americans with the experience of being Muslim in France, who frequently recount occurrences of marginalisation. By reframing the on-going and contentious debate on French citizenship and the place of Muslims within it as a struggle comparable to that of the Native Americans, an appeal to the reader to view the former with the same compassion and understanding that is perhaps more commonly afforded the latter is evident.

7.12 Obstacles to Contesting Hegemonic Portrayals: An Uneven Terrain

A difficult convergence, then, is discerned between the visual discourse of French Muslims in Muslim-minority France, and the latter's liberal secular media. The ways in which representation is countered in secular, mainstream public discourse, further, are subject to the rules of secular, mainstream public discourse. A difficulty for non-French, immigrant, or Muslim artist-activist in challenging and supplanting their elite representations in French mainstream media, therefore, is the necessity of following the conventions of its hegemonic scopical regime. The question of how to disrupt a representational practice within its own confines is raised, since, in order for meaning to be interpreted, the familiar codes and conventions of the dominant conceptual processes must be deployed for the operation of its counter-strategy. In re-presenting themselves, the problems encountered by minorities illustrate the 'unspoken, implicit borders and the stigmatizing exclusionary power structure of the secular public sphere' (Ismail 2008: 25). Alongside the necessary utilisation of processes of the dominant representational regime, a more tangible obstacle to counter-representation strategies is the frequent disparity regarding the accessibility of media technologies. Further, the centralized political culture of France poses problems for the Muslim population, which can 'limit the responsiveness of elites to claims by those outside circles of power, and it can make access into those circles difficult to achieve' (Fredette 2014: 161). An author's capacity to portray the Self and Other and their accessibility to necessary technologies, as well as the 'ability of the elite to make a suspicion politically salient and widespread' (Fredette 2014: 6), further demonstrates the power imbalance between elite and non-elite content creators. It is on this uneven terrain, then, that French Muslims

attempt to repudiate their representation in public discourse, and to create and convey their own narratives and public identity.

As Lionnet similarly contends, in order to reach the 'average' French citizen 'whose drives and perceptions are rooted in the "white" collective unconscious', the iconography of the political imagery must 'speak a language that can be immediately recognized, interpellating the viewer with its elements of a dominant ideology that it nonetheless tries to destabilize' (1995: 96). Although the value of difference is proclaimed, and prejudice and racism are supposedly challenged, in these 'official', mainstream discourses, 'many of the images actually serve to contain difference within parameters that are safe and familiar for the "average" citizen' (ibid.). These official images created by various social and political organisations may be seen to have fallen into the trap of disseminating an overly simplistic 'celebratory message full of good intentions, but naively blind to the ideological underpinnings of representation' (ibid.). The importance of investigating imagery created by authors whose drives and perceptions may not be so rooted in the so-called white collective unconscious was therefore deemed critical in this study.

Further, a paradox may be observed in the mediated constructions of non-secular French and immigrants in hegemonic visual discourse. Although ostensibly challenging the overtly racist and exclusionary rhetoric of right-wing parties and ideologies such as that of Le Pen and *Rassemblement National*, the signifying worlds of Plantu's political cartoons in *Le Monde* and the imagery of the UN's Cartooning for Peace collection, for instance, at times appear to undermine the supposed challenge for which they were intended, as discussed in Chapter 5, Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign. In this way, the images may be seen to endorse the elite and exclusive concepts of nationhood they were meant to reject.

7.13 Conclusion

In the images above, a signage through absence and varying degrees of visibility has been observed. Here, identity is constructed and denoted in terms of what it is not as well as what it apparently is, relative to other identities. In an example of signs working in relation to each other, we see the visual representation of French Muslims *by* French Muslims, contrasted with those depictions created by French media elites in this contemporary, figurative 'war of images'. In this struggle for representation, a counterpublic emerges. Following Fraser, through these 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs' (1992: 123), the actively dissenting, resistant counterpublic, in line with an activism of both recognition and neutrality, is here observed. In the above imagery, from Alagbé's *Nègres Jaunes* to Chapette's veiled Marianne and *Oumma's* Native American, dissent and an opposition to dominant scopic regimes may be observed, through the metonymic entailments of metaphoric constructions, thereby conveying a resistance made by a subaltern population that rejects the dominant signifying world.

The variety of metaphoric and symbolic constructions of the Muslim in France reflects the diversity within the country's Muslim population. Frequently overlooked in mainstream elite media is this heterogeneity relating to cultural identity and opinion among the Muslim population. Often falling into the trap of the *othering* and reductive concept of a unified and homogenous 'Arab World', the above-described imagery conveys the corresponding variety of political goals and strategies that exist therein. The identification of a citizen as Muslim, furthermore, is often problematic, due to this diversity among Muslim citizens, with varying practices and opinions, not least those of the 'secular Muslim' and the atheist who professes a 'cultural or affective relationship towards Islam' (Fredette 2014: 8). The only thing the French Muslim population arguably has in common with one another, then, is a 'disdain for the elite depiction of Muslims in France' (2014: 48). This diversity among the Muslim population creates some difficulty for the creation of unified oppositional claims, however.

As we have seen, the discursive nature of elite opposition to Muslim citizenship appears to require a similarly discursive response. The tendency of elites to question the authenticity of French Muslim identity through discursive means diminishes opportunities for negation, as '(n)ot all attacks on citizenship are made in the same way, and the way in which citizenship is undercut affects how activists can challenge denials of membership' (Fredette 2014: 166). Careful attention must, therefore, be afforded to the symbolic processes of exclusion, disseminated with far-reaching effect, by and through French media. Even outside of the rhetoric of right-wing politics and *Rassemblement National*, misrepresentation of French Muslims and of Islam permeates French and Western media. The construction of a 'bad' Muslim, whose exclusion from *Frenchness* is purportedly validated on the pretext of the visibility of their religious beliefs in the public sphere, is here contested. Likewise, Muslim women are 'to be pitied and protected but evidently not listened to' (Fredette 2014: 156). A conflation between immigrants and Muslims and between Muslims and terrorists is also often evident in public discourse, with substantial consequence for the configuration of Muslim subjectivities in the social imaginary, arguably contributing to their reported social exclusion from French nationhood.

Resistance to elite scopical regimes can take many different forms, from 'polite parody to outright defacement, from the clandestine inversion of existing rules of viewing to the invention of wholly new sets of rules, from subtle violations of propriety to blank refusal to play the game' (Rose 2001: 96). In the imagery discussed above, Muslim and minority image-creators confront their public perception, as well as narrow concepts of French nationhood, in elite visual discourse, and, through these efforts, attempts to reclaim representational agency, in its variety of configurations, are made. As Fredette notes, if the problem is misrepresentations, then the solution is 'better representations' (2014: 65).

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 *Entangled 'lines of allegiance and fracture'*

Fertile ground for archetypal representation and narrative, as well as its disruption, the political cartoon is 'an ideal medium for suggesting what cannot be said by the printed word' (Kemnitz 1973: 81). Attending to constructions of national identity, such imagery arguably contributes 'to the master myths of collective memory of a body politic' (Edwards 1997: 8), serving also as a cultural artefact, from which may be discerned its originating social milieu and cultural climate. The immediacy with which such imagery may be produced and disseminated, furthermore, proffers insight into the fears, anxieties and aspirations of the French populace, as images are created and read almost in real time, keeping pace with an event as it unfolds.

From this investigation, a number of findings and insights into elite configurations have surfaced, as discussed below. Firstly, the significance of the public and private spheres, particularly the visibility of cultural signifiers in the former, has been underscored throughout this study. Across these two domains, the management of one's semiotic practices appears of primary import for many Muslims in France. An outward performance in the public sphere of one's assimilation into French culture and society is at times evident, often including signifiers of difference to differentiate oneself from other non-native groups, and thereby indicating one's integration. The narrative of progressive transformation is also evident in such semiotic practices, wherein an individual moves from primitive and barbarous to civilised and enlightened - a transformation, in the case of traditional Muslim women, accomplished by their symbolic 'unveiling' in the public sphere. The corporeal preoccupation, here discerned, is further emphasised in the utilisation of the body as a site on which concepts of nationhood are enacted, with the embodiment of the nation a frequent trope, as discussed below. This pervasive signifying practice of the nation personified has surfaced as a recurrent key visual theme conveying nationhood in political art, deployed across the political spectrum. In this conceptual system, through

nostalgic portrayals of a shared historicity, a particular view of nationhood is endorsed and validated, with difficulties such as historic internal contestations pertaining to censorship seemingly erased.

Furthermore, within this conceptual universe, comparable to broader political discourse, a number of metaphorical configurations of the Muslim emerge, arguably contributing to their discursive exclusion. These include their pervasive construction as unified and homogenous, the configuration of the 'good', or deserving, Muslim, against the 'bad', frequently Muslim *banlieusard* as terrorist. These constructions of Muslim public identities, however, serve as a foil against which 'true' or supposedly authentic French nationhood may be discerned. Alongside this exploration of the apparent incongruence of Islam and French republican ideals, and the ways in which such difference is signified in public discourse, an objective of this research was to decode the ways in which the genre supports, whether intentionally or otherwise, an exclusive national narrative, or effects a misapplication through the further vilification of an already ostracised community. Although generally regarded as iconoclastic, political cartoons can endorse an authority as well as seek to subvert it, arguably evident in the creation and propagation of the *Hebdo* imagery. French political imagery, such as those of Muhammad published by *Charlie Hebdo*, arguably forms part of the nation's collection of revolutionary imagery, a visual lexicon from which insight into the worldview of a particular time and place may be gleaned.

However, in this instance, unlike the earlier imagery of resistance that appeared during historic points in the nation's history where an elite was challenged, the *Hebdo* imagery appears aligned with an elite social location and scopic regime, signifying, too, a disrupture in semiotic ideologies. In nationhood debates, the deployment of satirical political imagery appears doubly potent, as the device itself often signifies French nationhood and citizenship, alongside the specific signified configurations of *Frenchness* contained therein. The medium, then, as a 'double strength' signifier, appears especially active in the discursive exclusion of Muslims in France. Due to its considerable potency, the meaningful operation of

satire requires nuanced societal comprehension of its scopic regime, as well as of its function in society. As powerfully illustrated by the mixed reception to which the Muhammad imagery was received, the significance of the specific visualities and scopic regimes that an observer brings to their interpretation of an image is an on-going debate in visual culture research, particularly timely in the context of a multicultural, postcolonial France. The glaring divergence in the reception of these controversial images of Muhammad reflects the relevance of the social context in which the image is viewed as well as its viewers' particular visualities (Rose 2001).

The stylistic limitations of its conventional practices arguably render it further susceptible to allegations of racism or xenophobia, amplifying, perhaps, the importance of a more responsible approach. Additionally, central in determining its proper application, the perception of both the target and the satirist's vulnerability is frequently contested. Recommended, then, is an amendment of the self-described *journaux irresponsibles* of satirical press towards ensuring some responsibility is taken by cartoonists in their assessment of the proposed target's vulnerability in relation to their own, thereby ensuring the proper application of the device. Such responsibility was purportedly acknowledged by *Hebdo's* cartoonists during the initial controversy surrounding the publication of its Muhammad imagery, and again at their republication at the time of the trial of the attackers in 2020. In the case of *Hebdo's* Muhammad imagery, specifically, its deployment in response to threats, intimidation and attempts to suppress democratic rights, arguably conveys a fitting 'punching up'. Embedded in this defiant imagery, however, a depictive rhetoric that appears to portray and uphold an exclusive, elite concept of French nationhood and citizenship emerges. Further, despite the repeated centrality of freedom of speech, as well as secularism, in elite concepts of national identity, both appear at times deployed to varying degrees, dependent on the social locations, identity and cultural affiliations of the individual or group involved. This is alluded to in the ostensibly divergent elite reactions to the satire of *Charlie Hebdo* in contrast to that of Dieudonné. Additionally, within France, censorship has historically been a hotly

contested subject, undermining the persistent myth of nationhood that posits freedom of speech and of the press as historically, authentically, French.

As Bell outlines, an investigation into the concept of belonging involves considering 'the ways in which technologies, discursive deployments and power/knowledge networks produce the lines of allegiance and fracture in the various orders of things within which people and objects move' (1999: 1). This investigation has similarly explored the construction of a French Muslim counterpublic that confronts the dominant depictions of Muslims and of Islam and negates the exclusive, resolutely secular, definition of *Frenchness* it espouses. A semiotic investigation into the pictorial devices of political cartoons in a multifaceted nation has required acknowledgement of the nuanced, discursive nature of the marginalisation felt by many of the country's Muslims, whilst simultaneously avoiding a cultural relativistic accommodation of democratic and human rights violations. Furthermore, awareness of my own cultural, ethnic and ideological background, and the acknowledgement and attempted correction of the potential for bias or preconceptions it may engender, was also imperative for this analysis. From this position of reflexivity, I conducted this investigation into the connotations of signifiers of *Frenchness*, Otherness, belonging, difference, and, frequently, of resistance, evident throughout the visual discourse of the selected case studies. From this evaluation of the use and misuse of satire, further findings and recommendations are presented below.

8.2 *The Semiotic Management of Nationhood in the Public Sphere*

Central to this investigation, French republicanism frames integration as a civic duty, built upon the Enlightenment principles of universal inclusion and symbolised in the social contract to be fulfilled by immigrants. Since the state supposedly provides the necessary tools to achieve integration (language and citizenship education classes, careers counselling, etc.), failure to assimilate is deemed to be the failing of the individual, who is seen to display a reluctance to adopt fully French values. Framing belonging in this way 'places the onus of integration on the individual and obscures the significance of class, race, and

religion in shaping immigrants' capacity to integrate' (Hawker et al 2016: 48). These French values are typically those central tenets of the republican ideal – liberty, equality and fraternity. The 'civic duty' of successful integration into French society, then, typically calls for the assumption (and display) of these pillars of the French republic. Within this concept of nationhood, secularism, or *laïcité*, too, is often cited as an essential requirement for integration and assimilation, or, at the very least, the restriction of religious practice to the private sphere. Although the majority of people in France cite a link to Roman Catholicism, no official figures exist regarding religious affiliation 'since there is no obligation to register one's religion' (Jahangir 2005: 20). Within this majority, only a small proportion actively practice. As indicated in the report titled 'Civil and Political Rights, Including the Question of Religious Intolerance', submitted by the Special Rapporteur, the second-largest religious group are those of a Muslim background, accounting for between four and five million of the population, mainly of Algerian and Moroccan origin, but also including Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey (Jahangir 2005).

An inconsistency with which the term 'secularism' functions in public discourse, however, has been apparent from this investigation. Frequently operating as a 'strategically deployable shifter' (Urciuoli 1996; Jakobson 1971 [1956]), the term is alternatively utilised to connote uniform irreligiosity or, elsewhere, simply a 'non-Muslim' ethos, with certain signifiers of Christianity often seemingly deemed more permissible than those of Islam. Nevertheless, the preference for (slanted) secularism is clear in mainstream discourse, as illustrated through numerous state-sponsored events in France in recent years. Support for removing a porkless substitution on school menus, for example, was proffered by Le Pen and RN (then FN) who stated an aversion to 'religious demands on school menus' (Laurent 2014). Similarly, the *burkini* on French beaches stoked considerable controversy, with many interpreting such accommodations of religion in the public sphere as a breach of the secular republican ideal.

Beyond public discourse, furthermore, the relegation of religion to the realm of the private for the maintenance of a secular society is authorised at state-level, as observed in the residency permit process at the French Office of Immigration and Integration (*Office Français d'immigration et d'intégration*, OFII). During this process, individuals were asked 'to limit religious expression to the private sphere and that it is forbidden to wear 'conspicuous religious symbols' in French public schools and state institutions' (Hawker et al 2016: 51). Minority groups were also encouraged to 'detach themselves from their ethnic and religious backgrounds, avoiding speaking, dressing or eating in ways that are associated with Islam in order to be treated as integrated, secular citizens' (2016: 52). Comparable to the power relations it supported in France's colonial past, with boundaries between the two spheres of public and private set by colonial regimes of discipline (Cooper 1992), the deployment and visibility of signs such as the veil in the public sphere, then, similarly demonstrate their 'powers of forming and disciplining subjects' (Ismail 2008: 28). The terrorist attacks that took place in Paris in January and November 2015 resulted in further scrutiny of Muslims in France, reinforcing a preference for secularism at government level. This has resulted in a growing pressure on French Muslims to be consistently reiterating their *Frenchness* and successful integration into French society.

An alleged disparity between French and Muslim values, typified in these conditions for citizenship, is frequently heard in debates over French nationhood, and is often attributed to the heightened visibility of the latter's cultural and religious signs relative to those of other groups. The distinct spheres of public and private are central in these disputes, with an elite insistence on the maintenance of religious custom and practice to the latter. This preoccupation with public and private, and the visibility of cultural or religious signifiers in the former, has led some commentators to relate the issue of Muslim integration into French culture to a previous Jewish assimilation (Fredette 2014). In this earlier situation, the presence of an 'other within', replete with their own separate customs, values and behaviours, prompted comparable national concern for their integration into French culture and the preservation of French identity. A solution was found in a compromise regarding the visibility of Jewish cultural

signs by consigning religious practice to the private sphere and displaying a public of secular neutrality (Fredette 2014). The endowment of full citizenship rights in return for the 'sacrifice of a degree of public religious exercise to earn that privilege was seen as the key to integration and equality' (Fredette 2014: 19). This split between public and private, therefore, has been central in debates on nationhood in France, and has re-emerged as the framework on which to base the response to the current question of Muslim integration. This possible resolution has drawn criticism, however, as such an ideological split between public and private, critics argue, does not necessarily facilitate true social equality. Further, despite ostensibly a uniform ban on religious symbols, the heightened visibility of Muslim signs relative to those of other religions arguably engenders unfair discrimination. Social and political equality, they would therefore argue, is not achieved in this difference-blind model of citizenship, proposing instead a plural public identity that recognises the nation's multicultural inhabitants, with hyphenated identities similar to the American model. The historical methods deployed for integrating a Jewish population, then, although more successful for the former, appear insufficient for the assimilation of a Muslim cohort, many of whom (although certainly not all) insist on recognition over neutrality.

Notwithstanding the diverging visibility of religious signs, this supposed 'failed integration' of Muslims and immigrants into French culture has arguably propelled the proposition of the nation's departure from the European Union, proffered by Le Pen and RN, and echoed too at various times by other more centrist political parties, as we have seen above, during the presidential election campaigns in 2017. This *Frexit* – that is, the departure from the bloc of a 'founder member of the EU, its second-biggest economy and half of the vital Franco-German engine that has powered it since its creation' (Henley, J. and J. Rankin 2022) - it was suggested, would enable the nation's fuller control and self-determination thereby engendering its more complete Frenchification. This delineation between France and the EU in the configuration of *Frenchness* is itself a departure, albeit a discursive one, from the place frequently held by Europe in concepts of French nationhood. As championed, most notably, by Macron and *En*

Marche! in concurrent nationhood debates, the prominent position of France in Europe and in the Union is construed as a source of national pride and status, with Macron signalling his European leadership to denote a progressive national strength and standing across the continent. More recently, however, Le Pen's advocacy for a Frexit has seemingly been abandoned, with an intention to remain in the EU explicit in the party's discourse in 2022. While plainly discarding RN's earlier polarising anti-EU stance, Le Pen's vision now appears akin to an impossible *à la carte* version of EU membership, whereby certain rules would be ignored and obligations dismissed, with those pertaining to immigration and the primacy of French over European law particularly problematic, and whose realisation therefore would, in effect, undermine the foundations of the Union whose inclusion she proclaims to want.

Exemplified in discourse such as that of Le Pen and RN, this study has explored the position that belonging is acquired - achieved through discursive practices, performances and semiotic management. In the view that national affiliation is acquired through such performative means, the significance of public neutrality is underscored, with identity deemed the effect of performance, rather than its creation (Bell 1999). Through performing the culture and traditions of their country of origin, immigrants, it may be argued, produce and reinforce their identification with their émigré communities, as their 'common histories, experiences and places are created, imagined and sustained' (Bell 1999: 3). Nationhood, then, like gender, is arguably 'an effect performatively produced' (Bell 1999). Comparable to Judith Butler's description of gender, nationhood and national belonging or identity may be similarly understood as 'a construction that conceals its genesis, the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce and sustain' identities (1990:140). In conducting this research into the ways in which nationhood is performed and signified, then, the requirement of such a performance in order to belong has been underscored. An individual's Frenchification, therefore, necessitates a corresponding, highly visible referent system through which one's identity may be conveyed. The repetition of such standardised signs portrays, and arguably engenders, the individual's national identity and cultural affiliations. Problematic for a difference-blind citizenship

concept of neutrality, then, the performance of a traditional practice in the public sphere appears more than a ritualised custom, but rather constitutes a diasporic event, one which further fashions and solidifies identity and belonging in the social imaginary.

Among proponents of hyphenated identities and multiple national affiliations, a concept of recognition-based citizenship and the ways in which it may be practiced may vary considerably. However, an interest is often conveyed in the heightened visibility of signs of multiple affiliation, politicising the visual in a similar way to queer politics (Bell 1999). Rejecting the request for retaining religious and cultural signs to the private sphere, a decisive intention to perform their affiliations in the public sphere is apparent in the argument for a politics of recognition. French reticence towards, or outright rejection of, this recognition model of citizenship whereby an individual may retain and perform multiple affiliations, appears, from an anthropological perspective, in line with an ostensible cultural need for unambiguous and clearly bounded classification. Demonstrating Durkheim's symbolic ordering of people and things in a culture (Durkheim and Mauss 1963), the often-binary organisation of groups into discrete categories based on an understanding of their racial, ethnic or cultural affiliations permeates the the political imagery and rhetoric here discussed. The performance of multiple national identities and a hyphenated citizenship, then, creates difficulty for the establishment of an Other's sharply defined identification and in turn, therefore, for one's own clearly identifiable group membership. No longer the foil of 'difference' that the Other once was, their own perceived national identity may be felt to come into question with the adoption of a recognition approach and its apparent transgression of social boundaries. Social groups of mixed affiliations, in this view, 'float ambiguously in some unstable, dangerous, hybrid zone of indeterminacy' (Hall 2003: 236) - an anthropological insight on a cultural universality that provides some illumination, perhaps, on the societal reservations and anxieties with which a recognition model of citizenship is often met in France.

However, the strict cultural boundedness portrayed in nativist rhetoric has been described as a 'cultural fundamentalism'. The true roots of nationality and citizenship, symbolically conveyed through RN's aforementioned blue rose, are seemingly located in a shared 'cultural heritage that is bounded, compact, and distinct' (Stolcke 1995: 12). In place of exclusion on the grounds of race, 'cultural fundamentalism as the contemporary rhetoric of exclusion thematizes, instead, relations between cultures by reifying cultural boundaries and difference' (Stolcke 1995: 12). "Culture", therefore, as nationalist ideology, serves to 'sever consciousness of the unequal social roots of the new order of bourgeois political-economic domination by projecting it as an expression of universal ideal principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity' (Terence Turner in Stolcke 1995: 18). The mobilisation of "culture" by certain political factions keep buried the true roots of cultural fundamentalism, thereby obfuscating the real cause of social malaise and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Countering this cultural fundamentalism of the political right in contemporary French discourse, however, Turner points to an 'often equally fundamentalist multiculturalism' that is 'becoming the preferred idiom in which minority ethnic and racial groups are asserting their right to a full and equal role in the same societies' (Terence Turner in Stolcke 1995: 17 [Comments]). For these groups, cultural, national or ethnic identities are put forth to legitimise their claims for inclusion, positing, in Turner's view, an ironic symmetry between 'rightist exclusionist cultural nationalism and left-oriented inclusionist multiculturalism' (Stolcke 1995: 17), with allusion to a 'timeless heritage' (Perry 1992) evident on both sides of the divide. Following Turner, then, it would be useful to distinguish between a *critical multiculturalism* and a *difference multiculturalism* (1993). Whereas the former arguably seeks to 'use cultural diversity as a basis for challenging, revising, and revitalising basic notions and principles common to dominant and minority cultures alike, so as to construct a more vital, open, and democratic common culture', in the 'ghettoizing discourse' (Stam and Shohat n.d.) and ideology of *difference multiculturalism*, on the other hand, a fetishization of cultures and of difference may be apparent, placing them out of reach of critique (Turner 1993: 413-414). As Turner alludes, 'Cultural identity

and national cultural identity as its most fundamental, socially shared aspect thus become the most politically fraught idiom of solidarity and protest alike in contemporary capitalist societies' (Terence Turner, in Stolcke 1995: 18), a critique I hope has been demonstrated throughout this study. Of critical import, then, are 'the circumstances under which culture ceases to be something we need for being human to become something that impedes us from communicating as human beings' (Stolcke 1995: 12).

8.3 Discursive Exclusion: 'Tiny Doses of Arsenic'

As has been observed throughout this study, the ostracism felt by many Muslims in France today is powerfully effected through discursively-framed debates, and are beyond the reach of legal restitution. The granting of full citizenship rights, for instance, has not eliminated the marginalisation felt by many of the country's Muslim population who resist consigning their religious and cultural practices to the private sphere. As French law is ostensibly impartial, obstacles to citizenship for French Muslims appear mostly discursive, then, interwoven into the fabric of everyday life in a secular, Muslim-minority, France.

When contrasted to more explicit instances of racism and xenophobia, essentialising pictorial metaphors in political cartoons may appear trivial. However, the ubiquity and insidiousness of such reductionist portrayals often enables them to fly below the radar, avoiding allegations of explicit racism, marginalisation or elitism. Such signifiers speak to a systemic, deeply held and society-wide Islamophobic undercurrent in the West, and are frequently overlooked in the face of seemingly more urgent and violent instances of ethnicity-based ostracism. Besides being a legal reality, then, 'citizenship is also a nationally defined normative ideal, and an individual who does not fit that norm may find his or her standing as a citizen undercut in informal ways that are not easily remedied by formal rights protections' (Fredette 2014: 12). For those Muslims in France who choose not to take part in representation activism, formal rights procedures do not adequately tackle the 'informal, social stigmatization' they encounter in the struggle for inclusion (Fredette 2014: 13).

In attending only to the legal description of citizenship, and by discounting the exclusion signified through metaphoric and symbolic depictions of 'us' and 'other', the everyday experience of a cohort who regularly report feelings of vulnerability and exclusion is downplayed.

As Victor Klemperer ominously remarked of the potent functionality of words, the ubiquity of images and stereotypical metaphor may similarly operate as 'tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all' (2000: 15). In a comparable way, it may be argued that chronic exposure to the 'barbaric Muslim' in public visual discourse may affect its society's social standpoint and further the exclusion experienced by its Muslim population. As Regier and Ali Khalid similarly observe, 'the very subtlety of the metaphor might make it all the more effective in influencing attitudes. Unlike more blatant negative portrayals...the metaphor is less likely to be blocked out and dismissed as unfairly disparaging by sophisticated consumers of news...precisely because it is relatively subtle' (2009: 27). The use of pictorial metaphor and other semiotic devices to depict and differentiate between 'self' and 'other' is commonplace in an ordinary conceptual system (El Refaie 2003), which, alongside their discursive potency, makes the role of the political cartoon in national identity discourse particularly pertinent.

Throughout this study, political imagery has been seen to deploy various metaphorical and visual devices, which have operated in the semiotic production of meaning. By attending to this mediated, widely propagated metaphor and imagery in French public discourse, preferred social norms, attitudes and mores are revealed. From the nation's contemporary political cartoons, a coherent image of *Frenchness* emerges³⁷. In these images, French culture and national identity are conveyed, often imbued with an authenticity and apparent authority

³⁷ A comparable portrayal of French nationhood and identity is evident in the humanist photographs taken in the years following World War II. In this series, a configuration of *Frenchness* materialises from the photography of humanists such as Robert Doisneau and Willy Ronis, as they capture *quotidienality* among the *classe populaire* in a number of widely-known images (Hamilton 2003).

stemming from the revolution, as well as from art and mythology from the antiquities. In the portrayals of the non-native French citizen or the immigrant in stereotypical terms, a misconceived knowledge of their subject is asserted, with the Muslim perceived as uniformly barbaric, backwards and violent, while the French citizen is conversely revealed to be erudite, modern and civilised. The cumulative effect of such conventional portrayals of an ideal French citizen along with an excluded Other, through their mainstream dissemination, strengthens their potency, arguably further ingraining stereotypical attitudes into the social imaginary. Through the interpretation of the performative moment of the political cartoon as simultaneously a moment of 'condensed historicity' (Butler 1997), the implications for concepts of national identity, belonging and subject-positions unfold.

8.4 *'Muslims are Unified and Homogenous'*

From this research, a number of recurrent myths pertaining to Muslim subjectivities, propagated throughout French political imagery, have emerged. Within their stereotypical constructions, a professed unified cohesion, for instance, is often at the heart of the conceptual Muslim. Much liberal, elite discourse about the place and integration of Muslims in France centres on religion, frequently overlooking the myriad - and often diverging - opinions, agendas and requests made by the country's Muslim population. The consideration of the Muslim as more than solely a religiously motivated subject is rare in mainstream imagery, with little attention paid to the diversity regarding individual political alignments, habits of religious practice and whether their affiliation to Islam is, in fact, more 'cultural' than religious. This oversight, instead, typically produces a portrayal of the Muslim as a homogenous, unified cohort, one that is often depicted as singularly at odds with the conventional French way of life. A similar conception of Muslims as a homogenised unit is also often utilised in arguments endorsing a racialised view of citizenship, with a focus on a uniformity pertaining to ethnicity and race, more so than to culture. Alongside the cultural diversity of Muslims, the nuance of racial identity is also overlooked in this discourse. Besides other immediate

difficulties with this racial rhetoric, Muslims of such diverse locales as Egypt, Bosnia, Malaysia and Kazakhstan are problematically categorised into one homogenous ethnicity and racial group. Furthermore, the ways in which French Muslims respond to social and political pressures vary considerably, 'underscoring multiple understandings about French citizenship, the nature of equality, and the place of religion in one's life' (Fredette 2014: 6). In light of such diversity within the French Muslim population, the singular Muslim public identity commonly portrayed in elite media is clearly illusory. However, its persistence in visual rhetoric underscores the perceived quality of Muslim citizenship and their categorisation as being either 'good' or 'bad', negating more nuanced conversations about Muslim integration.

Through this recurrent construction of this singular, united Muslim subjectivity, furthermore, the perceived threat of a unified 'Muslim agenda' and of the Islamophication of France may be heightened. Combined with this solidified, imaginary construction, the value judgements, with which the unified Muslim construct is often imbued, further underscore the argument for their exclusion in mainstream media. Within elite political discourse, the 'good' or 'bad' identities that may be bestowed on Muslims, deeming them respectively 'deserving or undeserving of citizenship' (Fredette 2014: 5), then, arguably acquire greater potency in the construct of this fictitious Muslim identity. Strengthened by a perception of cohesiveness and a singularity of agenda, then, the Muslim is deemed assimilable or otherwise in elite discourse based on their alignment with French republican values, a judgment that appears to be largely made according to the visibility and performativity of non-native French cultural signs. The capacity to refute the construction of the 'good' versus 'bad' Muslim citizen, then, first requires amendment of this homogenous preconception.

8.5 *The Banlieusard as Terrorist*

An additional recurring configuration regarding the Muslim in French visual discourse is that of the (commonly Muslim) *banlieusard* as terrorist. The ghettoization in the country's *banlieues* of French citizens born of non-white

immigrant parents contributes to a further societal divide along racial and religious lines, with the relatively high rates of criminality in these areas frequently reinforcing the belief in a cultural incompatibility in the public imagination. This perceived separation between the country's *banlieues* and the rest of French society is due, in part, to a perceived inability or unwillingness of their largely immigrant residents to integrate - a presumption based in large part on the visibility of their cultural and religious signs. In these periurban residential sites, an increasing marginalisation from mainstream society is felt, giving rise to, and further underscoring, greater instances of criminality and poverty, as well as a perceived vulnerability to the radicalisation of its youth. With recurrent reports citing violence and radicalisation in these areas, *banlieues* are seen as hotbeds for terrorism and criminality. In both visual and verbal public discourse, rhetorical connections are frequently made between the terrorist groups in the Middle East and the violence involving French-Muslim youth from the *banlieues* surrounding the country's cities, often that of Paris and Marseille. In political speeches and in the country's media, *banlieue*-based violent crime was equated with 'wars against terrorism in Middle Eastern countries and in so doing drew ties between French-Muslim youth from these housing projects and Middle Easterners' (Evers 2018: 445). The ubiquity of this 'insecurity talk' further strengthens the depiction of French-Muslim youth as a threat to the social order as well as to the French way of life. This recurrent Muslim configuration extends beyond French public discourse and is evident too in wider Western mass media, most notably perhaps in the projection of Muslim subjectivities in U.S. media following the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11th 2001.

8.6 *The 'Good' Muslim*

Much of the debate about Muslim identity in France, then, in which difference signifiers are emphatically deployed, centres on the question of whether the Muslim can be a 'good' French citizen, based on their perceived assimilation. From the above-described vilification and associations with extremism, the opposing portrait of a 'good' Muslim is simultaneously construed. As previously

described, whether an individual is deemed good or bad, then, often comes down to their ability 'to manage their semiotic practices according to French expectations' (Hawker et al 2016: 44). In so doing, an individual who would otherwise be deemed an 'immigrant' is 'integrated', both discursively and legally, by being a foreign-born resident who has attained naturalisation due to their access to and semiotic performance of religion, class and education (2016). Conversely, an immigrant who fails to effectively portray his or her assimilation, colloquially referred to as a *blédard*, typically display cultural signifiers denoting their country of origin and thereby their subsequent lack of integration (Hawker et al 2016). Such value-laden rhetoric further negates Muslim inclusion through binary constructions such as Us/Other respectively corresponding to concepts of good and bad. In the construction of these polarised and reductionist binary opposites of 'Us' and 'Other', 'French' and 'Muslim', or the 'good' and 'bad' citizen, then, with an obvious dominance and societal preference for one category over the other, division among the country's varied residents is underscored and politicised. In the 'violent hierarchy' of such divisive, binary oppositions (Derrida 1982), the stereotypical portrayal of the French citizen, as well as of the Muslim, is further underscored, asserting its power through offering an ostensible knowledge on its othered subject.

The problematic *publicness* of Islam, and the often-perceived threat of Islamization it carries, is evident in its assertion 'through dress, modes of conduct in public, self-education in religion and disciplining and representing oneself according to proffered modes of the ideal or good Muslim' (Ismail 2008: 26), as defined by Muslim, rather than secular French, conventions. The 'good' social character in Muslim custom, as connoted by such signifiers, conversely constitutes a 'bad' Muslim in elite French discourse. We may see, then, that the socio-political implications of these highly visible cultural signifiers vary considerably depending on the social context in which they are played out (Ismail 2008). The symbolic unveiling of Muslim women serves here as further illustration, whereby the implications of performance and visibility of signs for national identity and belonging may also be observed. Through this unveiling, 'a corporeal inscription of modern citizenship' is signified, marking the woman's

progression from 'uncivilised' to 'civilised' (Ismail 2008: 69). In this way, the public sphere acts as a 'space of identity formation through performances of subjectivities and visual displays as well as through validation and authorisation' (Ismail 2008: 26). The visibility of such cultural and religious signifiers and their performance in the public sphere, then, are frequently perceived as indicative of an inability to assimilate, and a Muslim incompatibility with French culture, values and norms.

Attending to the importance of such signifiers of integration, the Muslim, the non-native or transnational migrant is often compelled to signify their distance from supposedly unintegrated immigrants, whose semiotic expression of culture and religion is more overtly displayed, in their endeavours to achieve integration. Recognising this significance of the visibility of signs denoting religious practices and customs, those, typically French-educated, individuals wishing to demonstrate their integration frequently render their religion invisible through a 'discretion' of religious practices (Evers 2018). A key process of assimilation, (French) education has been praised by the OFII as 'an index of integration, a transformative process that both makes integration possible and provides evidence of belonging' (Hawker et al 2016: 52). Perceptions of non-French nationals with French education contrasts heavily to those without such instruction, with the latter obliged to undergo citizenship education sessions as well as signing a Reception and Integration Contract. Employment is similarly perceived as essential to the immigrant's contract with the state. In fulfilling their duties, then, their desire to integrate, instilled with the 'good' marker, may be realised (2016). Those transnational migrants arguably, therefore, 'reinforce hierarchies of education, class and religion among minorities in France' in their efforts to distance themselves from negative stereotypes of 'inassimilable' migrants and foreigners (Hawker et al 2016: 43).

Somewhat ironically, the use of cartoons and imagery in the classroom have been acknowledged by a growing number of educators, as well as several informants at my field site, with some teachers of literacy using this pictorial medium as a way to better represent the immigrant experience (Boatright 2010) –

justification, furthermore, for the broadening of the concept of 'literacy' in school curricula (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 34), reflecting the increasing prominence of the visual across societies as well as its potency. A belief in the ability to challenge and change the dominant visual discourse in this way is seen also in the increasing deployment of graphic novels for educational purposes. Used to these educational ends, questions may be raised regarding labels such as 'good' or 'bad' with respect to immigrants and their experience of life in their host country (Boatright 2010). However, such methods appear problematic in light of the aforementioned, necessarily transformative, power of the French education system for the assimilation of transnational migrants into a singular concept of *Frenchness*, which requires a muting of signs denoting non-French cultures of origin, in the public sphere at least, for one's *Frenchification*. It is clear, then, the deployment of education, employment and religious practices as signifiers operate on an ambivalent discursive terrain.

8.7 *Nationhood Embodied*

Alongside this role of performativity and visibility in order to effect identity, affiliations and belonging, a bodily preoccupation is also underscored in related contemporary political imagery. Although its contemporary application is seemingly due, to varying degrees, to the stylistic limitations of the medium, rather than a deliberate essentialising of an ethnicity, conveying nationhood through the body at times appears aligned with an anachronistic scopical regime through which the racialised body is depicted. With a historical basis in 19th century lithographs, this pictorial device is perhaps most notably illustrated in Daumier's *Gargantua*, in which the indulgence and injustice of the ruling classes, alongside strict adherence to hierarchical social categories, are embodied in the corpulent figure of Louis Philippe. In contemporary French public discourse, as we have seen, immigrants are frequently depicted as an invading violation of the nation as a 'body' (El Refaie 2003), most often that of the semi-clad Marianne. Throughout this investigation, as the personification of France, Marianne may be seen to signify embodied practice, further attesting to the significance of corporal enactments of nationhood and citizenship. Additionally, the veiled bodies of

traditional Muslim women, as we have seen, act as sites on which national belonging and cultural affiliations play out. This is also supported at government level, as religious symbols such as the Christian cross and the Muslim hijab have been banned in public institutions. In this context, the aforementioned interpretation of the unveiling of the Muslim woman as being symbolically connotative of her liberation, progressiveness and *Europeanness*, arises.

Within the pervasive corporeal embodiment of nationhood in French mainstream political discourse, the narrative of a shared cultural heritage and identity is often signified. Nostalgia and reference to a golden age or a shared history is a recurrent theme in this nation-building imagery and rhetoric. In such imagery, an idealised nation and its corresponding archetypal French citizen, embodied by the rural 'heartlander' in RN rhetoric, and frequently personified as Marianne by Plantu, may be discerned. The centrality of republican values in the construction of an 'authentic' concept of citizenship is emphasised in this fictional nation, personified by both the heartlander and by Marianne in the imagery analysed in this study. Despite ostensibly embodying similarly republican values, however, RN's heartlander produces differing binary oppositions than those of Plantu's Marianne, with the lines of division between 'us' and 'other' drawn elsewhere. In RN's personification, the depiction of an urban, elite Parisian versus an 'authentic', rural heartlander conveys this internal contestation about national identity and what it means to be French, that would separate not just France from the Maghreb, but Paris from *la province*, as well as France from the EU. The originally negative connotations carried by the term *la province* are rejected and reimagined in RN rhetoric and political imagery to convey the rural inhabitant as the archetypal French citizen, embodying the country's traditional values, further authorised and bolstered by their European ancestry. Both the heartlander and Marianne claim authenticity by calling upon old, established traditions, lending their particular conception of *Frenchness* an appearance of validity and truth.

Further problematic in this rhetoric, a faulty definition of 'culture' appears in such nativist discourse, wherein culture appears to be envisaged as static,

uniform and isolated from other social systems. In this depiction, as noted in the party rhetoric of RN and its frequent extolling of a traditional French culture, 'true' French identity is narrowly defined, with membership based on a connection to an imagined, romanticised past. Through the commonly evoked 'heartlander' character, historical traditions contribute to the construction of this illusory French culture of times past, built upon a 'pure' and unchanging way of life and value system. The potential loss of a traditional way of life, of course, necessitates certain protections. Not discounting the additional strains placed on the state and its social systems in recent years by the arrival of a sizable influx of immigrants in the country, the treatment of a culture as stagnant and to be entirely shielded from external cultural influences risks a poisoning with xenophobia of that culture one might seek to protect. As Agius observes, 'the return to reifying a continuous and uncomplicated collective identity obscures the possibilities that can emerge from the crisis, such as considering how to use freedom of speech to create a new "we"...It is in these moments of contestation that other potential selves emerge or become subjugated' (2017: 120). The potential for the creation of a new 'we' in these moments of contention, through freedom of speech, then, appears overlooked by those who espouse the continuation of a continuous collective identity aligned with its historical narrative (Agius 2017). The focus on the inert 'oneness' of culture, in this way, disregards the 'vector of futurity' it concurrently follows (Urban 2001).

A narrow inwardness is antithesis to this dynamism of culture, whose success, somewhat paradoxically, arguably depends on its evolution and growth and not, as nativist rhetoric seems to suggest, on its isolated preservation. Without accommodating undemocratic or unjust societal practices, a revised outlook on the definition of culture as inert, closed and unwavering is, perhaps, timely on all factions, with a more fluid concept advisable for both existent and incoming populations. Running parallel to these disputes over the place of Islam in a secular France and the construction of a native 'us' and a foreign, Muslim 'other', then, additional internal divisions and discord, seemingly regarding the culture concept, abound.

8.8 A 'War of Images'

An essential component of identity rhetoric, regardless of the basis on which one's concept of affiliation may be built, signifiers of difference are omnipresent. As evident in Chapter 4, Historical Constructions of *Frenchness* in Political Cartoons, the signifying practices of representation of difference appear to have undergone little change in French historical political imagery pertaining to national identity. The visual processes through which Otherness is conveyed, as well as its role in community and identity construction, have remained remarkably consistent, and are evident throughout the country's mass media. Through the mobilisation of fears and anxieties of a populace, the poetics of difference in engendering a unified concept of national identity are evidently potent and profuse, a historically reliable means to promote a specific national image-world, whilst simultaneously (whether intentionally or otherwise) relegating deviating groups to the margins. As has been observed throughout this study, the figure of Marianne/Liberty as an allegorical device to signify a particular concept of *Frenchness* has been extensively deployed throughout French history, and arguably contributes to the broader myth of nationhood identity that has been espoused in elite public discourse. With this visual trope, the positioning of certain freedoms above others (in spite of those freedoms being historically inconsistent in France) is framed as part of a historical, and therefore authentic, national narrative. A similarly connoted myth of *Frenchness* frequently emerges from mainstream as well as satirical, 'irresponsible', French media. However, contradictions to this embodied nationhood myth have arisen also, in both Muslim-created images and mainstream, secular French media, as discussed below.

The 'otherness' of the supposed out-group is self-consciously addressed and contested in the imagery discussed throughout Chapter 7, Countering Elite Depictions of *Frenchness*. Such counter-images by non-native and French Muslims attend to the relations of power playing out between those who portray and those who are portrayed, in their efforts to reclaim control over their own depictions in the media. The signifying potency of difference and representation,

to this end, is acknowledged in this self-portrait artwork, as artists and activists attempt to rewrite their place in French nationhood and redress their often-stereotypical portrayals. Through the depictions of various Muslim and immigrant experiences, as told by those individuals themselves, such minorities challenge their aforementioned elite configurations and assert control over their own storytelling, thereby managing their own representation in the social imaginary. Cognisant of their discursive exclusion from such conceptions of identity in the public imagination as those embodied by 'Marianne', for instance, this countering response by minority image creators is similarly discursive. The relations of power depicted in previous chapters are, in this way, subverted as control over one's own representation is taken. Within this counterpublic, attempts to 'intervene in the field of representation, to contest "negative" images and transform representational practices around "race" in a more "positive" direction' may be seen (Hall 2003: 225). Such contradictory imagery signals an attempt to disrupt the 'complex dialectics of power and subordination' (Mercer and Julien 1994: 137) through which the Muslim or immigrant Other has been constructed. These minority voices attend to their pervasive, elite constructions, conveying not only an attempt to reclaim representational agency, but also tell of the wide-ranging diversity relating to priorities and agendas, to concepts of citizenship and self-identity, and to preferred activism approaches among Muslims in France.

A divergence regarding the interpretation and understanding of signifiers has been noted in this investigation, whereby the prevailing myth of *Frenchness* may be disputed. In one notable cartoon, such conceptions were addressed, in which two women are depicted at a beach, one of whom – presumably a French, or Western, secular woman – wears a bikini, while the other is veiled. Despite their contrasting attire, both women read the other's apparel as connotative of their oppression. The same signified oppression, then, is conveyed by starkly divergent signifiers, demonstrating the aforementioned moveable and unfixed interplay between signifier and signified – an intrinsic element of the signifying process that forms the butt of this satirical joke. The two women appear to belong to contrasting and conflictual conceptual worlds, challenging the common

conception of the oppression of women as being a predominantly Muslim or religious concern. Views and myths about freedoms, gender equality and progressiveness, as well as their perceived respective relation to Muslim and secular French culture, are thereby confronted and questioned in this provocative image. The visibility of signifiers connoting difference, then, has been an essential component in this oppositional interplay in the construction of the 'other', serving as foil against which a sharper image of an opposing 'us' may be observed. Of critical import in debates on nationhood, difference is *marked* (Hall 2003). Conveying and interpreting difference, then, 'is a constant and recurring preoccupation in the representation of people who are racially and ethnically different from the majority population' (Hall 2003: 230). In this figurative war of images, then, 'difference signifies'.

8.9 'Meaning floats'³⁸

The significance of the context in which the image appears, as well as the interaction between various signifiers within the image itself, therefore, is considerable. Due to the spatial limitations characteristic of the political cartoon, a necessity for condensation of social groups into one signifier may be read as a reproduction of stereotypes. As well as the compositional elements of the social group signifier itself, the extent to which the signifier essentialises a group, then, depends on its relationship to the ways in which other social groups are depicted in the image. Meaning, in this way, may be gleaned through this relational interplay, whose interpretation may thus be deemed essentialising or not. In an image by Plantu, for instance, in which various ethnicities, cultures and nationalities are depicted (*Fig. 27*, Chapter 5), differing degrees of visibility are afforded to these assorted affiliations. The varying prominence of group membership signs suggests the operation of essentialising processes more so than being a result of a constraint of the medium. *Charlie Hebdo's* irreverent images of Muhammad, on the other hand, do not typically contain signifiers of

³⁸ Hall, S. 2003. 'The Spectacle of the Other'. In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall. London: Sage Publications, p. 228.

other ethnicities or cultures, and so do not involve this relational interchange for meaning to be derived³⁹. Intertextuality between the Muhammad images and others in public discourse, however, is a relevant aspect in disputes as to whether such images contain racist or xenophobic ideologies. The customary cartooning device of condensation, then, may be seen to effect a similar essentialised depiction of the social group it portrays, by denoting an individual or group by their simplified physical characteristics. Comparable to much political imagery, in *Figure 27* (Plantu, Chapter 5), a largely non-white immigrant population may be recognised as such by these characteristics. Here, again, the importance of the interplay between other signifiers, and their respective visibility, in the image is critical for the interpretation of its meaning as being that of 'satire' or of 'stereotype'.

Similarly, through a dialogic interplay in disputes pertaining to national identity, belonging and world-view, concepts of nationhood may be further constructed and refined. The many pictorial incidences of France as 'Liberty Leading the People', or in her various other, more quotidian, activities as 'Marianne', in French political imagery, for instance, evocatively connotes nationhood at the level of the myth. Imbuing these images with additional resonance and meaning is the context in which they appear – an intertextual reading that considers varied sources such as the satirical cartoons of *Charlie Hebdo*, the political imagery published in national mainstream press such as *Le Monde*, and the largely independently published self-representation imagery. The ways in which events and ideologies, such as the violence of the attacks in Paris as well as an oft-perceived undercurrent of anti-Muslim ethos in the West, are interpreted and relayed in public discourse affect a figurative 'war of images', in which various

³⁹ Outside of the political cartoon, a similar importance is attached to the relational interchange of signifiers within an image in advertising. In June 2019, a ban ratified by the UK's Advertising Standards Authority on advertisements that propagated 'harmful gender stereotypes' came into effect. An advert that depicted a woman doing domestic work, for instance, was thereby deemed harmful if she was portrayed alongside a man who was not comparably employed. An advert conveying the woman on her own whilst similarly occupied, however, was not considered to signify gender stereotypes, underscoring the relevance and application of relational signs for meaning-making in public visual discourse.

concepts of identity and belonging vie for supremacy. Following Bakhtin (1982), through an ensuing dialogic interplay, meaning is created, construed and negotiated, an interchange in which difference is an essential component.

The perception of France and of *Frenchness* by non-French 'outsiders', also, is of relevance to research into the construction and representation of the country's national identity. Meaning is thereby created in the on-going dialogue between proponents of various concepts and from diverse perspectives, as identity and belonging are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. In this way, the dialogue between elite cultures and their 'others', and their interpretation and understanding of each other, is critical for the formation and representation of national identity (Hall 2003). We may see, in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, a concept of *Frenchness* in the solidarity cartoons created by both French and international artists that mirrors that often espoused in French elite discourse. The same values, traditions and historicity are put forth to exemplify a progressive, liberal France, thereby further buttressing an elite national self-image. Detractors of this narrative, however, have frequently pointed to the disproportionate instances of racism and xenophobia recounted by Muslim groups, thereby painting a more nuanced portrait of France, whilst also undermining the authority of one group to control a sign's meaning and further demonstrating the dialogic interplay required for such meaning-making.

This dialogic interplay in identity disputes is particularly evident in the rhetorical exchange between 'Charlies' and 'Ahmeds', following the attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* office in Paris. Supporting minority counterpublic imagery, a corresponding verbal discourse that directly opposes that of mainstream media, is apparent in the alternative slogan answered in response to the ubiquitous 'Je suis Charlie'. 'Je suis Ahmed' may here, also, be deemed to signify a postcolonial, global France, whose boundaries extend far beyond those of its territorial borders (Silverstein 2018). Within this global France, entangled by 'ongoing conflicts over territory and resources between various neo-imperial formations in which thousands have been killed and displaced' (2018: 91), heated, and often violent, disputes over identity and citizenship ignite. In response to the rallying

cry of 'Je suis Charlie' that was heard around the globe, activist-comedian Dieudonné voiced the difficulty felt by many non-secular or non-Christian French citizens, or individuals with hybrid identities, to relate to 'Charlie', due to the publication's history of apparent disproportionate lampooning of Muslims and Islam. In his retort, an alternative French citizen, with his own implications for elite concepts of *Frenchness*, is constructed, negotiating what it means to be French today. A polysemy of *Frenchness* may be here conceived, whereby one accepts 'the experiential reality of...people's identity as an avenue to creative living – but only so long as it does not deny others their own living-space' (Benthall and Knight 1993: 2). However, the use of incendiary gestures such as Dieudonné's *quenelle*, as Silverstein suggests, may further extend the rift between France's inhabitants, rather than contributing to a nuanced debate on national identity and belonging. Through the comedian's insistence on a 'reckoning with the colonial past, on the long-term effects of colonial violence and slavery, and on the inclusion of a broader population in national narratives of suffering, belonging and protection', greater incidence and experience of marginalisation and exclusion may be the outcome (2018: 96).

As has been vividly apparent, most notably in the violent reprisals, on the one hand, and the opposing 'Je Suis Charlie' campaign on the other, in the aftermath of the publication of the Muhammad cartoons, the meanings of an image interpreted by different viewers and audiences may vary considerably from each other and from that which was originally intended by the author. In this instance, the inherent arbitrariness of the sign is further compounded by the frequent misconception of the satirical device. The ensuing dialogic interplay about the 'truth' of an image or its 'real' meaning, however, may be beneficial in debates pertaining to conceptions of nationhood and citizenship, arguably contributing to an evolution of the views on national identity, and a societal adjustment for a post-colonial, multifaceted nation. Recognising political imagery as 'world-making rather than world-mirroring' (Nielson 2016: 105), in this way, underscores the potency of such sites for national identity formation.

8.10 *Satire and Its Malcontents*

The (mis)construal of satire in contemporary French public discourse has long been the subject of controversy, illustrating considerable discord between semiotic ideologies of certain subsets of its population, and highlighting, too, the centrality of the historical and sociopolitical context in which satirical content is created and consumed. Throughout France's history, the reception received by the genre has vacillated between strict censorship to its veneration as a symbol of *Frenchness*, while, more recently, alongside other Western democracies, indicated a fear that it is being ousted from public discourse in France entirely. Here, the vulnerability of the sign to 'distinctively political forms of contestation' (Keane 2018: 79), characteristic of the sign, is clearly evident, with the construal of a mediated jab either as healthy satirical social critique or as incitement to hatred depending, seemingly, on its author and target.

From findings unearthed in this investigation, both a misapplication and a misapprehension of satire are apparent. A ubiquitous and potent subset of visual culture in France, satire and the political cartoon are created, disseminated and to be interpreted according to its own distinctive set of rules and conventions. These conventions and their incumbent signifying practices guide the interpretation of such imagery, informing the intended ways of seeing. The proper application of satire, then, is in its function to question and reject authority, to subvert power relations and to offer social critique. By subverting signifiers of authority in this way, a new image-world may be envisioned. Through this degradation of scopical regimes, space is made for regeneration and, comparable to Bakhtin's carnivalesque, a spirit of renewal and societal reinvention may be fostered. The signifying practices of the political cartoon and of satire, as previously described, ostensibly aim to effect a 'punching up' from below, a levelling of power structures between a dominant elite and a non-hegemonic group or class. There is considerable ethical difference, then, 'between satirizing those sanctimonious individuals and institutions of power, and deriding those who find themselves politically voiceless and socially excluded' (Silverstein 2018: 87). The misapplication of this trope by deploying it

to 'punch down' in this way has been evident in this analysis, whereby an already vilified and marginalised group is arguably further targeted in public discourse.

French satirical imagery, then, where once used to challenge the power structures of a monarchy and to oppose the inherited power of a social elite, is ironically now felt by some to be further targeting an already ostracised population, thereby undermining and misusing the social role of satire, with parallels drawn between the imagery of the Muslim in *Charlie Hebdo* and that of the Irish in the UK's late 19th century *Punch*, *Judy* and *Harper's Weekly*. Although often choosing as their targets other major religions, a heightened focus on Islam in French satirical media underscores a supposed moral panic emerging in many Western countries at present. Indicative of such an anxiety, Muslims and Islam appear to signify a threat to social order, and consequently are the targets of 'exaggerated or misdirected public concern, anxiety, fear, or anger' (Krinsky 2013: 1). For the nation's Muslim population, this perceived 'punching down' of satire onto already marginalised groups serves to further underscore a pervasive Islamophobic sentiment in the West.

Concurrently, with the publication of images of the Prophet Muhammad, generally considered taboo in Muslim doctrine, in the French satirical newspaper, a decisive rejection of the satire device and its particular ways of seeing was enacted among certain audiences in Western societies. While unequivocally separating themselves from the ensuing violence in the terrorist attacks in Paris, many Muslims in France experienced these satirical images as further instance of their vilification and marginalisation across Western Europe. Within the 'war of images' analysed in this study, then, further disputes pertaining to the misapplication of satire, on the one hand, and its misapprehension on the other, have emerged. Rather than a misunderstanding of the codes of satire, for instance, these groups pointed to the images as a misappropriation of the genre. For some, the charge was perhaps not at satirical artwork but rather was levelled at their misuse in an apparent 'punching down', rather than a 'punching up'. Among its contemporary challenges, then, a fear of offence and of accusations of propagating *Islamophobia*, with its resulting

relegation of their standing as progressive, liberal, inclusive and egalitarian, is felt across the public discourse of Western societies. With pressures to yield to such societal demands, alongside those of explicitly violent threats and intimidation, the current socio-political landscape in these advanced Western democracies appears increasingly inhospitable for satire, as self-censorship attempts to strangle it at its roots. For the successful cultivation of satire as healthy socio-political commentary, then, context is critical.

Besides a pervasive misapplication and misapprehension, other threats to satire are surfacing, arising from its current socio-political context. First, contemporary political discourse has, often, appeared *beyond* satire, as irony fails, exaggeration is impossible and satire is subsequently declared dead (Von Drehle 2020), illustrated most colourfully in the (nearly⁴⁰) unsatirisable character of former US president Donald Trump, himself a self-parody and caricature without cartoonist intervention. Here, a blurring between information and entertainment in political discourse leaves little room for satire. Beyond this 'death' of satire brought about by seemingly satire-resistant subjects such as Trump, and the conflicting and diverging semiotic ideologies and scopic regimes of differing sections of the population resulting in its misapplications and misunderstandings, a third challenge for satire in contemporary discourse is materialising. Similar to concepts of 'post-truth', whereby the lines between 'factual truth' and 'opinion' are blurred (Arendt 2005 [1967]), espoused throughout contemporary political discourse, a 'post-satire' reality is steadily growing more distinct.

Attending to this challenge, the profoundly different and, at times, conflicting ways in which members of a society – particularly that of postcolonial, multicultural France - may interpret an image are here of note. Ostensibly intended to counter attempts at intimidation, for some readers, as well as the cartoonists themselves, the imagery constitutes the proper use of satire; for

⁴⁰ In the 2020 reincarnation of the UK satirical TV series from 1984, 'Spitting Image' - a 'public service satire', according to its creator Roger Law (Addley 2019) - Trump is a frequent character, while writer and comedian Sarah Cooper's impressions use as a script Trump's own words to biting, ironic effect.

others, it signifies further assault on an already vilified and vulnerable group. Depending on the cultural charge of the message, further, as well as the efficacy with which it is conveyed, societal relations of power and the socio-political climate in which it is disseminated, the device may, conversely, operate as a site on which to safely express and expunge social tensions⁴¹, in order to subsequently resume and maintain social harmony. This controlled 'letting off steam', in this way, arguably enables a society to air dissent without upsetting existing social states or effecting any real change to the hegemonic order – a healthy and appropriate use of the medium or not, depending on the nature of the societal order and its conditions. Reminiscent of Bahktin's carnivalesque (1993), through these upended signifiers, and in line with the sanctioned revelry and chaos of the medieval Carnival, it is argued that societal tensions are released, permitting the continuation of the status quo. Regardless of whether its ultimate outcome is the stimulation of societal change or the maintenance of social conditions, however, the proper application of satire, as discussed above, necessarily requires its message to be interpreted as a 'punching up' at those in power, intended to undermine the visual sign system of authority, and thereby challenge its hegemony.

In the exceptionally violent events ensuing from the publication of the Muhammad cartoons, as well as the distaste and offence reported by moderate Muslims, we may see that not all audiences will 'be able or willing to respond to the way of seeing invited by a particular image and its particular practices of display' (Rose 2001: 15), for a combination of complex factors, not least the specific social context in which the image appears. The ways in which a viewer may interpret an image, beyond the intention of its artist, therefore, are varied and often unpredictable. As we have seen, an image, for one reader, may embody the values of liberty and democracy, whilst to another viewer denotes systemic

⁴¹ This operation of satire was noted by Chinese cartoonist Wang Bo (aka Pi San), regarding the occasional easing of state censorship of his provocative Little Rabbit cartoons, although is a function ultimately disregarded by both cartoonist and censors in recognition of the medium's considerable potency (Larmer, B. 2011. 'Where an Internet Joke is Not Just a Joke'. In *New York Times Magazine*. Oct. 26th 2011.)

marginalisation. Imagery espousing tolerance and equality may, therefore, contain ambivalence and contradictions that undermine its progressive message. Responding to the various and changing societal concerns, agendas, fears and hopes of a particular time and place, such representations and their contestations are, furthermore, continually changing, with meanings similarly shifting as they interact with and dislodge each other. From a psychoanalytical perspective, following Freud, the 'joke' of the satirical image arguably requires the viewer to deploy their imagination to 'complete' the image, thereby invoking unconscious process developed through their specific childhood experiences in order to interpret its meaning (Boime 1992), whilst also underscoring the necessity of understanding its signifying practices. For myriad reasons, then, rather than conveying a static meaning, the relation between the signifier and the signified is susceptible to change. Addressing this fluidity of meaning and polysemy of signs, arguments for the preferred meaning of an image are made, and rely on acknowledgment of such diverse considerations as those of the viewer's specific visualities, the agency of the individual as well as that of the artwork, the signifying conventions of the medium, the interplay of signifiers within the image and the context in which it is created and circulated.

The dialogic nature of this interaction, then, depends on a shared understanding of the visual codes and conventions of the medium. In today's France, contemporary disputes over national identity and supposedly authentic nationhood, as portrayed in such satirical imagery as the controversial Muhammad cartoons and their international reception, may indicate a disparity regarding the function and application of such cultural codes, whether due to diverging cultural ideologies or something altogether more contemporary. Notwithstanding the requirement for at least partially shared codes and conceptual maps for the transmission of meaning to occur, the suggestion to interpret meaning as an exchange, or as a process of translation, is posed. Such a conception may arguably facilitate 'cultural communication while always recognising the persistence of difference and power between different "speakers" within the same cultural circuit' (Hall 2003: 11). Alongside an understanding of the codes and signifying conventions of satire, a reading of the

image necessarily involves the interplay of signifiers within the image for meaning to be made.

In light of recent political events and discourse, the prospect that satire may not affect any meaning at all must, too, be considered, whereby its codes and signifying conventions are beyond the reach of its would-be readership. The use, interpretation, outcome and value of satire, then, appear to depend considerably on the socio-historical climate in which it is created and disseminated, a context whose conditions may, in fact, quell its creation and dissemination, and subsequently render the genre obsolete. Beyond the fear of reprisals, subjects past satire and a misapprehension and misappropriation of its artistic form, comparable to Arendt's 'impotent truth' (2005 [1967]: 296), an 'impotent satire' may here be seen to take hold throughout the mediated discourse of advanced Western democracies. Recalling the societal reception of the truth-teller in Plato's cave allegory, Arendt states, 'If they could lay hands on [such a] man, they would kill him' (2005 [1967]: 296) - a conviction true, too, it would seem, of satirists in contemporary Western societies such as France, wherein to 'say what is', is increasingly contested. Instead, with freedom of expression and of the media constrained, a populace would think one thing and say another (2005 [1967]). As with Plato's truth-teller, the life of the satirist in contemporary France appears likewise in danger, positioning satire on ever more tenuous terrain. With factual truth and reality mingling with and substituted for falsehoods, as one is mistaken for the other, throughout political discourse in contemporary Western societies 'the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world - and the category of truth vs. falsehood is among the mental means to this end - is being destroyed' (2005 [1967]: 308). It is in this disorientating post-truth context, then, that satire is enfeebled, as its meaning is muted and its potency undercut, and a concept of a 'post-satire' society grows more plausible. With truth and lies appearing indistinguishable or interchangeable, freedoms of the media and of expression are not just muzzled but muddled, with the specific signifying practices of satire similarly obscured. Conversely, in a society or political formation wherein factual truth is of critical import, satire would surely thrive.

8.11 *Responsible Journalism*

Arising from this investigation, agency, in various contexts, has also appeared as a recurring issue. The importance of minority groups and Muslims in France to assert their own self-portrayal in public discourse, thereby reclaiming agency over their representation, has appeared imperative for their assimilation and belonging into a culture whose identity often appears imbedded in Greco-Roman history, ancestry, art and sensibilities. Agency has also been central in the narrative that frames the *Hebdo* attackers and the radicalised youth of the country's *banlieue* as products of France's post-colonial past. Although offering a contextualisation of the violence and radicalisation evident in France in recent years as being part of the country's 'longer history of colonial racialised violence' (Silverstein 2018: 90), this argument appears to negate the agency of the individuals who choose to carry out acts of violence. In this dialogic interaction, too, individual agency in semiotic meaning-making is a further variable, with the extent to which a reader accepts or rejects its authority and its concept of nationhood varying considerably. Likewise, the material agency of the political cartoon, with its persuasive transformative power, for instance, is a further aspect of this investigation. Additionally, contesting an often-assumed passivity on the part of the consumer, both artist and consumer of the image are active and interactive participants in the cartoon's processes of meaning-making, with the latter equally involved in its signifying practices. As well as sites of symbolic meaning-making, then, the political cartoon is an active social agent, effecting its own agency through which action is compelled.

Acknowledging this interactive meaning-making, a duty of responsibility of satirists is here of note. Seemingly incongruous with the self-proclaimed irresponsibility of the *journaux irresponsibles*, in recognition of the potency of their depictive rhetoric, a responsibility on the part of the cartoonist seems appropriate. This reflexive approach in satirical content, further, requires an honest appraisal of the personal motives of the cartoonist, in order to avoid the use and propagation of racist or xenophobic stereotypes, with targets meaningfully chosen for their capacity to redress a power imbalance or expose

human vice or folly. In addition, acknowledgement of the experience of marginalisation and exclusion felt by many of France's Muslims, alongside the violence and injustices of the nation's colonial past, appears to be an essential consideration for media content creators in order to facilitate true satire. However, as we have seen, the apparent insistence of social activist comedians such as Dieudonné for retribution, may prolong division and exclusion, rather than redress injustice.

As with any medium, a message of racism, xenophobia and nativism may be expressed through satire. Evident in the dehumanising, xenophobic depictions of the Irish people as simian 'wild beasts' in satirical publications such as *Punch* in the 19th century, the satire device may be used, like any other, to transmit racist or prejudiced opinions or ideologies. The condemnation of satirical portrayals as inherently discriminatory, however, and the reading of a caricatured image as intolerance, is a misinterpretation of the purpose and function of the medium. For effective satire, an important distinction, then, lies in the choice of target and the message it purports to convey, with the figure lampooned on the basis of their ideological or political position, as opposed to on any ascriptive characteristics such as race, ethnicity or gender. This distinction was highlighted in various UN reports, which, attending to the seeming clash of rights and freedoms incited by *Charlie Hebdo's* Muhammad cartoons - with the freedom of expression and of the press on the one hand, and of religious tolerance on the other - distinguished between ascriptive qualities such as race, ethnicity and gender, and acquired characteristics such as beliefs, ideology and religion in the choice and depiction of a satirical target. In such deliberations of the ascriptive or acquired characteristics of a satirical subject, an image could thereby be deemed a violation, or not, of a freedom or right. In this way, through such considerations, a responsibility to engage in meaningful discussion regarding the message of the image and its purpose, as well as the context in which it will be predominantly viewed, is emphasised. Satire is, however, especially susceptible to accusations of racism or xenophobia by its frequent exaggerations of elements and individual characteristics. Alongside a recognition of the responsibility reflective of the potency of their platform and medium, then, a responsibility, too,

rests with the media consumer, to acknowledge the specific codes and conventions of the device. A sophisticated understanding of satire and the political cartoon, and its subsequent responsible application, is therefore essential.

The trial of fourteen suspects accused of involvement in the attacks at the Paris offices of *Charlie Hebdo* began in September 2020. In acknowledgement of the commencement of the trial, five years after the attacks, *Charlie Hebdo* republished the twelve controversial Muhammad cartoons, with the caption '*Tout ça pour ça*' ('All that for this'). Alongside their re-publication, the edition's accompanying editorial stated that, despite frequent requests to publish caricatures of Muhammad over the past five years, the magazine has refused, citing a lack of sufficient reason to do so. Reproducing the original imagery in the current social context, however, was deemed 'essential' by the publication. The image of French satirical press as '*journaux irresponsibles*', then, is perhaps not so complete a picture, as it appears not to be as thoroughly devoid of responsibility as they themselves have contended, with the often-quoted French right to offend as a *duty* to offend somewhat contested.

8.12 *Censorship*

Across the globe, the censorship that political cartoonists have encountered throughout the medium's colourful history speaks to the power with which their art is imbued. The historic censorship restrictions of satire in France are comparable to contemporary sanctions in other parts of the world. Today, in China, Russia and Turkey, for instance, cartoonists and satirists encounter constraints on their attempts to mock those in power, with noncompliance having at times resulted in loss of funding, fines or imprisonment (Woodhouse and Liu 2019; France 24 2017; Moscow Times 2020). By imposing strict sanctions on satirical imagery, governments around the world and throughout history have clearly recognised the incendiary potential of satirical imagery and the dangers they may pose to civil harmony. As dissident Chinese, Australian-based, political cartoonist Badiucao remarks, 'As a political artist, I have a power

that is out of their control and they know how dangerous it could be to them' (Woodhouse and Liu 2019). By publicly mocking those in power or authoritarian regimes, the fear they would otherwise inspire - a powerful weapon in an autocratic leader's arsenal - is undermined. Portraying someone in a derogatory way, be it as *une poire* (a simpleton), grotesque or incompetent, the perceived threat of the figure or concept is challenged and negated, as it is shown to be not above criticism. Further, across time and place, the response of cartoonists and satirists to censorship and the imposition of restrictions has been remarkably consistent, with the defiance that provoked its attempted suppression frequently resulting in its renewal and amplification.

Where such responsibility is deemed absent, a call for censorship – whether self-imposed or externally sanctioned– may be heard through public and official disapproval. Alongside varying degrees of access to the signifying conventions of satire, the degree to which it is perceived to require censorship also appears to fluctuate. In elite public discourse, the alternating interpretation of satire as an enactment of the freedom of speech, on the one hand, or as incitement to hatred on the other, appears at times to depend, unsurprisingly, on the target's ideological affiliations to the elite. In the fraught current climate, therefore, censorship in French media appears particularly politicised and symbolic. Throughout public debate pertaining to national identity, infringement on expression and restrictions on who may be targeted is predominantly denounced as press censorship and violations of the freedom of speech, and is consequently deemed undemocratic and inherently *unFrench*. Whether the satirical cartoon promotes division and exclusion by contributing to an Islamophobic discourse, or if it serves as a societal tension release valve, the imposition of legal restrictions based on subjective morality or on a fear of causing offense is incongruous with democratic society.

Emphasising the centrality of the freedom of speech as a core French value, the framing of censorship as *unFrench*, ignoring the country's varying degrees of its historical implementation, is also often evident in the rhetoric of the far-right, wherein 'Charlie' and the solidarity imagery is incorporated and utilised to

bolster its nativist narrative. In this skewed deployment, the imagery is co-opted and its meaning distorted by nativist groups, with correlations made between Islam and terrorism and Muslims portrayed as a unified cohort, whose values, opinions and agendas are at odds with those of the French Republic. In such misappropriations, the blurring of the solidarity cartoons with far-right themes in a 'strategic manoeuvring' of political metaphor in French and Western media (Sahlane 2013), muddies its ostensibly liberal message of freedom of speech. Some proponents of satirical publications such as *Charlie Hebdo* have argued that, not only is satirical expression a civil right, but that humour and satire may in fact be used to transgress social boundaries, a standpoint that has been further advocated at state level by political leaders. This 'profane burlesque' has been noted too in the depictive rhetoric of the French revolutionaries, with the language of revolution comparable to that of caricature, and laughter deemed 'the response of a collectivity of equals' (Boime 1992: 264). In academia, too, the country's apparent tradition of 'laughing over boundaries' has been explored, as illustrated by the 18th century irreverent *Livre de Culs* (Jones 2011), lending further authority to the historical role and position of uncensored humour in French society, a device that extends far beyond the pages of *Charlie Hebdo*.

However, as discussed in Chapter 6, *Êtes-Vous Charlie?*, this central, defining characteristic of satire in French culture appears to preclude the work of comedian-activist Dieudonné, to which a markedly divergent state response to that of *Charlie Hebdo* is evident. The point at which the joke is thought to have 'gone too far' is, therefore, a key point of contention in the apparent contradiction between the state response to the satire of *Charlie Hebdo* and that of Dieudonné, reminiscent of the distinction between a joke and treason disputed in 19th century France. For some, then, violating the taboo of depicting Muhammad crossed the line between a joke and an attack; for others, Dieudonné's similar comedic devices of taboo and irony, evident in his provocative identification with the supermarket attacker Coulibaly (a repudiation of the more popular 'Je suis Charlie'), was, for many, tantamount to hate speech and incitement to violence. Notwithstanding the ostensible privileged position of satire in French society and nationhood, it appears that

breaking taboo for comedic purposes is met with varying degrees of approval and restrictions by elites in public discourse, seemingly depending on whether it is a taboo held by themselves or not. Further, similar to the publication of the provocative Muhammad cartoons, discrepancy regarding the perception of the target's vulnerability may offer some justification for this divergence. This inconsistency, therefore, appears to demonstrate an apparent hypocrisy regarding the application and approval of satire, as well as deviation on the perceived vulnerability and threat of an 'Other' group.

8.13 Conclusion

Through the deployment of semiotic analyses to decipher and deconstruct hegemonic configurations of *Frenchness*, marginalising discursive processes have here been revealed. Although ostensibly egalitarian and indiscriminatory, exclusive semiotic processes nonetheless permeate elite French visual culture. On this unequal terrain, performance and the semiotic management of identity and belonging in the public sphere become, more than solely expressions of identity and belonging, a requirement of belonging and inclusion. Here, too, inconsistent, and at times contradictory, appraisals and admonitions of satire in public discourse convey narrow conceptions of 'authentic' *Frenchness*. Through the close semiotic analysis of selected political illustrations, the logic of such conceptions has here been exposed and contested, with the problems it poses in its contemporary postcolonial context highlighted.

Alongside the current cultural and economic tensions, the arrival of visibly signified immigrants with ostensibly conflicting values has propelled the need for a reconsideration of what it means to be French. A new diminished, postcolonial world standing, furthermore, has also added fuel to the debate over nationhood, posing new challenge to the predominant image of *Frenchness*. For some French elites, its definition may be 'the mirror opposite of Muslim citizens', (Fredette 2014: 174). However, the picture of France and its citizens that emerges from elite political imagery is perhaps just one image of what it means to be French today. The 'authentic' French citizen, furthermore, as conveyed

through this elite conceptual world, is as incomplete as its corresponding construction of the Muslim or non-native Other. Throughout the country's history, the political cartoon in France has served as a site on which such national narratives are played out, and conversely solidified or disputed. In recent years, old debates about censorship have re-emerged, further attending to representations of identity and affiliation. The signifying processes of satire have appeared to inform and contribute to a wider conceptual universe wherein a priority is afforded to the freedom of speech and of the press, on top of which is ultimately built an identity narrative myth. Today, then, the ideological reconstitution of the satire genre as itself a component of a national narrative myth is evident in public discourse pertaining to citizenship and belonging.

It would appear, however, that the space for satire is waning, indicated even in countries with a long tradition of socio-political activism and revolt, as misconceptions and misuses of the genre abound. However, whether to momentarily assuage social tensions in order to maintain the status quo, or to stir a society into revolt, satire is irrefutably a powerful tool. Attempts to quash satirical imagery arguably demonstrate its efficacy as well as the necessity of cartoonists to continue to lampoon political leaders, concepts and actions in the face of intimidation, threats and violence. Palpable from this analysis, then, a figurative war of images is being waged, one whose visual discourse increasingly appears to inform and inflame the wider configured, global 'war on terror'. On this figurative and literal battleground, the rebel device of satire, whose intended purpose is as a 'weapon of the weak', appears remarkably potent. In light of its increasingly prominent position in contested nationhood debates, the explosive power of the political cartoon necessitates particularly close consideration. Through its coded portrayals of characters, events and concepts, a clear depiction of French national identity in the early decades of the 21st century emerges, one which has considerable political implications for a growing cohort who don't share the nation's historicity but who are increasingly calling for discursive, as well as legal, inclusion in the national identity narrative.

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Appendix: Chapter 4. Historical Constructions of Frenchness in Political
Cartoons

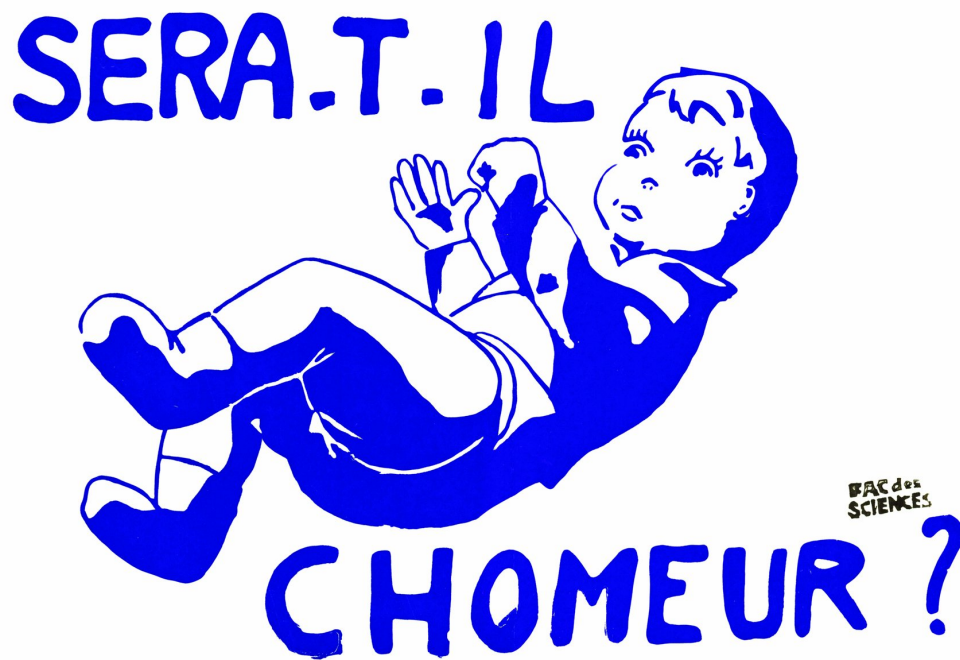


Figure 11. 'Sera-t-il chomeur?' (circa 1968, anon.)



Figure 12. 'Quand les parent votent, les enfants trinquent' (circa 1968, anon.).



Figure 14. 'Ne soyez pas des moutons' (circa 1968, anon.).



Figure 16. 'Une jeunesse que l'avenir inquiète trop souvent' (circa 1968, anon.).

Appendix: Chapter 5. Images of Nationhood during the 2017 French Presidential Campaign

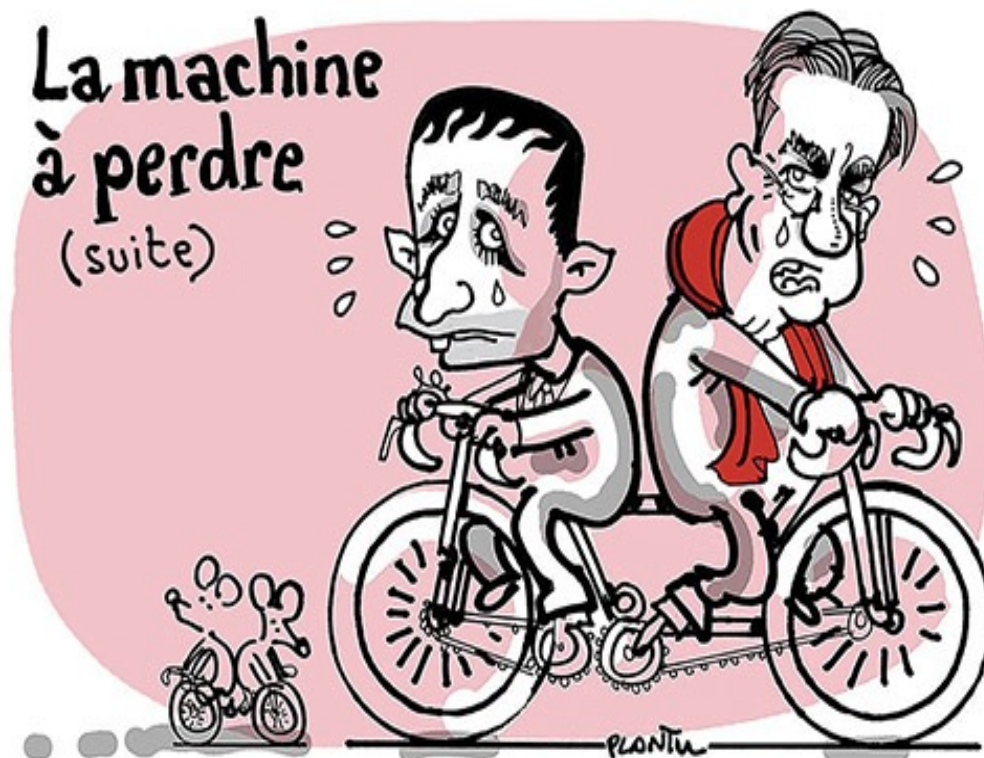


Figure 19. 'La machine à perdre'. 20 February 2017, and 24 April 2017: Plantu for Le Monde



Figure 25. 'Mondialisme', Chard



Figure 26. 'Un nid de résistance', Chard



Figure 28. 17 April 2017, '500,000 Français ont reçu deux cartes d'électeur'. Le dessin du Monde de ce lundi 17 avril. Plantu



Figure 29. 'Patrimoine le Pen', Plantu for Le Monde. 22 Dec. 2015

La surprise du chef



Figure 30. 'La Surprise du Chef', 9 Sept. 2014. Plantu.

Appendix: Chapter 6. Êtes-Vous Charlie?

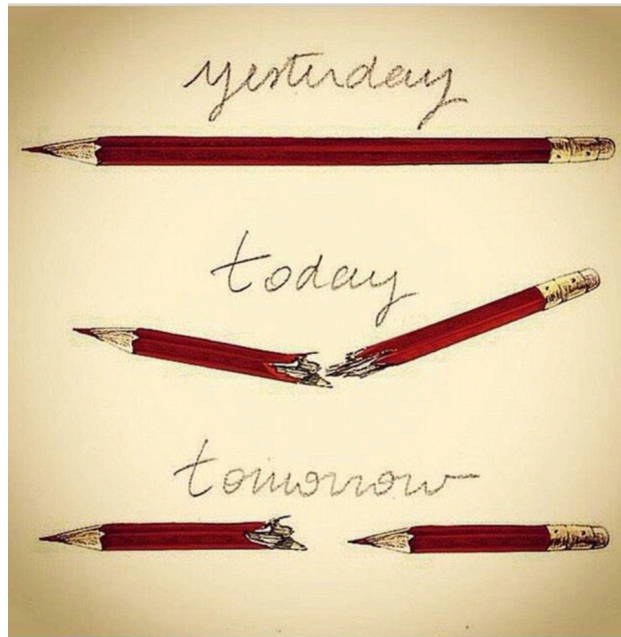


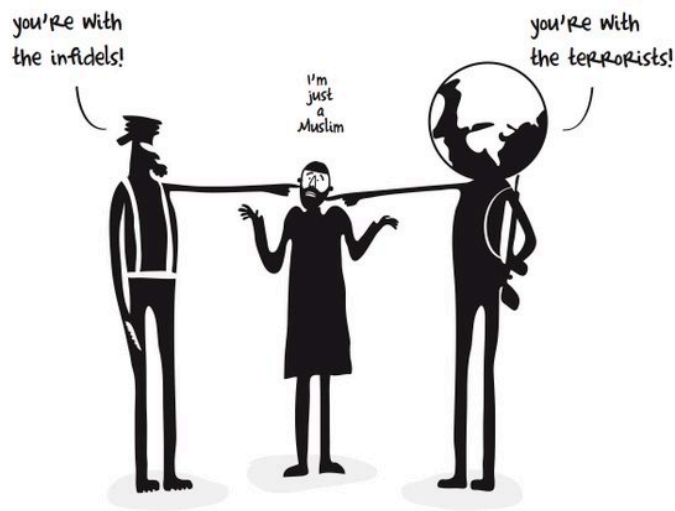
Figure 31: 'Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow'. 7 Jan. 2015. Lucille Clerc



Figure 32. 'Charlie Hebdo attack has another victim'. 7 Jan. 2015. Carlos Latuff.



Figure 33. 'Turquie: Attentat lors d'un mariage à Gaziantep: 30 morts et près de 100 blessés'. Aug. 21st 2016, Plantu for Le Monde.



Khalid Albaih

Figure 34. 'I'm just a Muslim'. 8 Jan. 2015. Khalid Albaih for Al Jazeera.



Figure 35. 'De tout cœur avec Charlie Hebdo'. 7 Jan. 2015. Plantu for Le Monde.



Figure 41. 'Le dessin de presse dans tous ses états'. 21 Sept. 2015. Plantu for Cartooning for Peace.

Appendix: Chapter 7. Countering Elite Depictions of *Frenchness*



Figure 50. 'Uncivilized Muslims'. Oct. 2nd and 11th, 2015. Oumma.



Figure 55. 'N'oublions jamais nos parents'. April 16th 2016 and August 12th, 2017. Oumma.



Figure 56. Benevolent, Wise and Virtuous (i). August 27th 2016, Jan. 2nd 2017, Oumma.

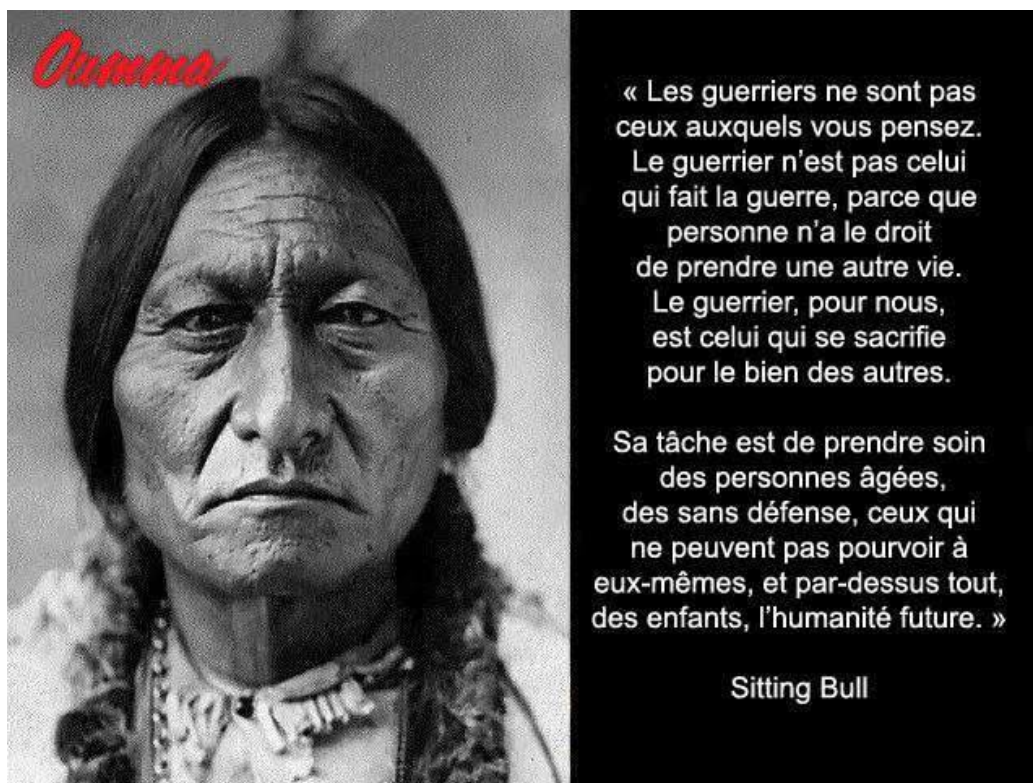


Figure 57. Benevolent, Wise and Virtuous (ii). June 11th, July 5th, Spt. 25, Oct. 4th, Nov. 17th 2016, Oumma.

CHRÉTIENS ET MUSULMANS PRIENT
POUR LA PAIX DANS LE MONDE ...



Figure 59. 'Chrétiens et Musulmans prient pour la paix dans le monde'. Dec. 10 2015, Oumma.



« Les guerriers ne sont pas ceux auxquels vous pensez. Le guerrier n'est pas celui qui fait la guerre, parce que personne n'a le droit de prendre une autre vie. Le guerrier, pour nous, est celui qui se sacrifie pour le bien des autres.

Sa tâche est de prendre soin des personnes âgées, des sans défense, ceux qui ne peuvent pas pourvoir à eux-mêmes, et par-dessus tout, des enfants, l'humanité future. »

Sitting Bull

Figure 61. 'Sitting Bull'. March 14th 2017, Oumma.