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Returning to the “Return”: *pied-noir* Memories of 1962

❖ Claire Eldridge¹

In October 2001, the front cover of *La Lettre de Véritas*, the monthly bulletin of the eponymous *pied-noir* association,² featured an image of the recently destroyed Twin Towers. Rendered in black and white under the headline “*Le terrorisme aveugle, lâche et inhumain*”, the image depicted a shard of broken building jutting starkly upwards into the forever altered New York skyline. In common with newspapers and magazines across the globe, *Véritas* chose to devote a significant portion of their publication to commenting on the 9/11 attacks. Less common was *Véritas*’ decision to juxtapose this picture of Ground Zero with a picture of a road in Algeria stretching into the distance on which a series of dead and bloodied bodies were neatly laid out. Placed side by side, the two images were respectively captioned “*Amérique 2001 : des milliers de morts ensevelis*” and “*Algérie 1954-1962 : corps martyrisés à l’infini*” (*Véritas*, 2001). To an outside observer, bringing together in the same space these two distinct historical events and associated casualties may seem unusual at best and inappropriate at worst. Yet for regular readers of *pied-noir* publications such a pairing would make perfect sense, conforming to a recurring pattern whereby international events are used as a way for the community to map their experiences onto a broader historical canvas and thus to position and articulate their own trauma and suffering.

This example is only one of many in which a seemingly outward looking interest in global events in fact reveals an insular preoccupation with the

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2 *Véritas* was created in March 1996 by former Mayor of Algiers, Joseph Hattab Pacha, and his sister, Anne Cazal. The association’s full title is the Comité pour le rétablissement de la vérité Historique sur l’Algérie Française. Giving a flavour of the association’s political stance, Joseph Ortiz, leader of the Week of the Barricades, was named honorary president, despite being deceased when the first issue of *La Lettre de Véritas* was published in March 1996. The association is notable for its hardline right-wing views, intemperate polemic, and use of graphic images.

pied-noir community's own position and identity. Although not used in this instance, the most frequently invoked experience in comparisons with international events is the *pieds-noirs'* identity-defining "exile" from Algeria in 1962 and subsequent arrival in France. Together, these two historical moments have structured and sustained a communal identity and collective mobilisation that now spans five decades. The centrality of these two events to the *pied-noir* community is well known and increasingly well documented academically (see Hureau, 1987; Jordi, 1993; Baussant, 2002; Savarese, 2002; Smith, 2006; Esclangon-Morin, 2007). However, their use as memory devices and mobilisation tools has not been examined as closely. One strategy employed by the *pied-noir* community has been to frame their own narratives of exile and arrival by comparing and contrasting them to other global events that have taken place within their lifetime. By deconstructing this apparently international framing of the *pied-noir* past it is possible to trace the ways in which a particular segment of the wider *pied-noir* community have attempted to negotiate their sense of being simultaneously part of and apart from their own nation, as well as the unease that stems from this. It is thus possible to see how these seemingly international comparisons actually serve a much narrower national purpose, which is to define and embed a communal identity that is closely, although not always positively, tied to France.³ This in turn allows the evolving relationship between this community and their so-called "motherland" to be highlighted, as well as offering an insight into how the *pieds-noirs* understand their position within French society and within the nation's collective memory. The over-arching argument presented here is that, for all *pied-noir* discourse encompasses a broad map of international territories and events; the route of these voyages is essentially circuitous, returning to their own "return" to France in 1962. This is, furthermore, a return to a fundamental preoccupation with their own experience as national migrants, and to the implications of that experience for the present-day identity of the community.

The use of examples drawn from the international arena as a way to frame specific national and communal agendas in turn poses some interesting questions in light of recent scholarship within memory studies that has sought to emphasise the increasingly interconnected nature of the histories and memories of different groups, particularly with respect to trauma. The most prominent example is Michael Rothberg, who recently proposed a new theoretical approach for thinking about the relationship between histories of the Holocaust and decolonisation. Summarising his thesis, Rothberg writes: "Against the framework that understands collective memory as competitive –

3 It should be noted that international is being used here in a descriptive sense to denote events taking place beyond the borders of metropolitan France. It is not being used in reference to the academic field of international history and the now substantial literature discussing the definition and scope of the field, particularly with reference to transnational history and the relationship that exists between the two. For a flavor of these discussions of these see: Bayly, Beckert, Connelly, Hofmeyer, Kozol and Seed (2006) Terminology – Diplomatic History, International History, and Transnationalism, *H-Diplo thread*, 19 March 2009, [on line] accessed 16/06/2013. Initial post available at URL: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Diplo&month=0903&week=c&msg=RWOhObKQ1Y16VmJxi%2bOMXg&user=&pw=>, with subsequent responses available in the March and April archives URL: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=lx&list=H-Diplo&user=&pw=&month=0903> and URL: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=lx&list=H-Diplo&month=0904&user=&pw=>

as a zero sum struggle over scarce resources – I suggest we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiations, cross-referencing and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (Rothberg, 2009: 3). For this author, the invocation in the same space of seemingly incomparable histories can be a way for memorial hegemony to be challenged, for counter-memories to be articulated, and for new modalities of working through to be developed. To support his case for a multidirectional memory, Rothberg draws on a cast of illustrious figures including W.E.B. Du Bois, Aimé Césaire, Hannah Arendt, Charlotte Delbo, and the film director Michael Haneke. Together, these figures and their work demonstrate for Rothberg that "remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal and cultural sites" (2009: 11). However, while Rothberg's examination of literary and philosophical responses to displacement is innovative and fascinating, it rests to a large extent on atypical examples. At the grassroots level examined here, the experience of decolonisation and the resultant identity destabilisation produced a very different reaction. Rather than embrace the liminality of their postcolonial situation and status as national migrants, *pied-noir* association discourse reveals that this remains a source of discomfort and uncertainty. When *pied-noir* activists invoke other global traumas and make international comparisons, it is not, as in Rothberg's examples, to encourage new historical synergies, but rather to create opportunities to re-iterate, clarify, and thus strengthen through repetition their own position and narratives.

By juxtaposing the negative zero sum game of what he labels "competitive memory" against the positively conceptualised productive potential of multidirectional memory Rothberg risks presenting an overly reductive view of how memory works in relation to other histories. The *pied-noir* memories examined here are arguably also multidirectional in the sense that they borrow from and re-interpret other histories in light of their own, but not necessarily in ways that feature in Rothberg's model. Characterising these as "unproductive" forms of engagement with the past ignores the diverse and complex rationales that underpin so-called "zero-sum" memories as well as what these can add to our understanding of how different communities relate to and process the past. It also creates an artificially rigid divide between memory processes – multidirectional versus competitive – that proves problematic to sustain. Instead, this article adopts a much looser framework which can accommodate memories that are competitive, comparative, and multidirectional, potentially simultaneously.

In order to explore these particular *pied-noir* perspectives on the past, it is necessary to provide some historical context regarding the relationship between the settler community of French Algeria and the *Métropole*, including how this was affected by Algerian independence in 1962 and the "return" of the settlers to France. This will be followed by an outline of the theoretical approaches adopted and the nature of the corpus examined. The remaining discussion will highlight the key strategies employed by *pied-noir* associations when articulating and negotiating their status as national migrants. It will focus in particular on how international events are inserted into *pied-noir* discourses, and the functions these references serve. Evolutions in the use of international comparisons over the past five decades and how this relates to broader collective memory strategies within the *pied-noir* community will also be considered.

Historical Context: *Français à part entière?*

Discussions relating to Frenchness have a long pedigree within the *pied-noir* community. When their ancestors first arrived in Algeria during the nineteenth century it was often not from France that they came, but rather from other European nations such as Spain, Italy, Germany, and Malta. The resultant multinational early settler community created a rich cultural melting pot, but also anxiety on the part of the French authorities about the loyalties of this diverse population. Their solution was to pass naturalisation laws in 1889 and 1893 that unilaterally conferred French citizenship upon the Europeans of Algeria and their descendants. Although ancestral cultures and traditional practices were not completely erased, passage through Republican institutions such as schools and the army helped ensure that by the early twentieth century the dominant identity among the settler population was their French identity.⁴ This evolution from foreigner to Frenchman appeared to be confirmed by the disproportionately high rates of enlistment in both World Wars, seen as reflecting a strong desire among the settlers to prove their fidelity to their motherland in her time of need. It also informed the commitment of the settlers to the maintenance of a French presence in Algeria throughout the War of Independence (1954-62). This commitment manifested itself in various ways, including, at the extreme end of the spectrum, support for the clandestine paramilitary group the Organisation armée secrète (OAS) who used terrorism in a determined attempt to derail the ongoing independence negotiations. Even though by no means all settlers supported the OAS's extreme tactics, the group's motto, "*L'Algérie est française et le restera*", struck a chord with many, encapsulating a communal sense of self that saw the Frenchness of Algeria, and by implication of the settlers, not simply as a foreign imposition, but as an organic and lived reality.

When France ultimately ceded Algeria in the summer of 1962 and retreated back to the *Métropole*, it was in many respects logical for the settlers to follow: they saw themselves as French and could not envisage living in a land that was no longer French. This, in combination with factors such as a desire to remain close to family and friends, to continue their existing way of life and, often, very real concerns for their safety, prompted approximately 85% of the overall population, almost one million people, to cross the Mediterranean by the autumn of 1962 (Scioldo-Zürcher, 2010: 15). This massive migration brought to the surface certain latent paradoxes relating to the Frenchness of the settlers. One of the most obvious was rooted in terminology: for the French state, the settlers were *rapatriés* (Shepard, 2006), legally defined as returning French nationals. However, in reality, although some settlers would have spent brief periods of time in France on holiday, at university, or completing military service, many were "returning" to a land they had never previously set foot in. Attempting to

4 A similar evolution took place within the Jewish community of French Algeria after they were naturalised by the 1871 Crémieux Decree. Their sense of *francité* survived the abrogation of their citizenship during the Vichy years and was ultimately demonstrated by their decision to depart en masse for France at the end of the War of Independence. The specific trajectory of this community is, however, outside the scope of this present article. For further information on this increasingly dynamic area of scholarship see works by Joëlle Bahloul, Sarah Beth Sussman, Samuel Kalman, Ethan Katz, Naomi Davidson, Michael Robert Shurkin, Joshua Cole, Nathan Godley, Joshua Schreier, Maud Mandel, Colette Zytznicki, and Robert Watson.

assuage the anxiety generated by this traumatic migration to a largely unfamiliar land, many settlers invoked the idea of the metropolitan French as their imagined national community and hoped for solidarity and a warm welcome on this basis. They were ultimately to be disappointed. The chaos and disruption associated with the largely unplanned for arrival of so many settlers stretched resources and tempers to breaking point across France, especially in Marseille which bore the brunt of the migration. This was exacerbated by war weariness among the French public, not to mention a certain degree of suspicion towards a population widely portrayed in the media as having close ties with the OAS who had exported the violence of the conflict in Algeria onto metropolitan soil during its final stages (Shepard, 2006: 223-227). Far from feeling "*chez eux*", which is what many had hoped for, the settlers were instead left with the impression that they were "*étrangers parmi les leurs*" (Jordi, 1997: 184). Particularly unsettling for the new arrivals was that their sense of Frenchness was now being questioned by the majority population who found the culture, attitudes, even the accents of the settlers to be decidedly foreign. To the betrayal the settlers already felt they had suffered at the hands of the government who had refused to continue to fight for French Algeria and had instead capitulated, unnecessarily in the eyes of many, to the demands of the FLN, was now added a potent sense of rejection by a nation they had been brought up to identify with and idealise.

It was in this space between ejection from Algeria and rejection by France that the recent arrivals took it upon themselves to forge a new identity, one which transformed the individual settlers of French Algeria into the community of *pieds-noirs* that exists today. Although this new identity was in many senses a co-production involving other actors, notably the French State, the *pieds-noirs* regarded it as an entirely self-generated phenomenon, likening it to the way in which their pioneering ancestors had carved out their own space within the colony during the nineteenth century. This new identity was predicated on the idea of positively revalorising the perceived differences possessed by the *rapatriés* as complementary extras that enriched their Frenchness rather than detracted from it. The ensuing narrative took the regional particularities of colonial Algeria and presented them as cultural differences in France resulting from the unique "Algerian" heritage of the *pieds-noirs*. "*Nous portons en nous, malgré le 'manque' géographique, tous les éléments constitutifs d'une province*", reported *L'Algérieniste*, the monthly magazine of the Cercle Algérieniste association.

"Nous sommes des provinciaux sans province, des Algériens-Français ou simplement des Algériens comme d'autres sont Bretons, Corses, ou Basques. Il est une seule chose que nous ne puissions et ne voulons pas admettre, c'est d'être des rapatriés car ce terme impropre et impersonnel tend à détruire notre identité" (Calmein, 1980: 5).

Although the seeds for this transformation were sown during the *pieds-noirs'* first decades in France, what brought them to fruition was the reorientation of the priorities of the community during the 1970s and 1980s from the material, namely their search for housing, employment, and indemnification, to the cultural and commemorative. This shift was epitomised by the ascendancy of organisations like the Cercle Algérieniste which promised through their many different cultural initiatives to "*raconter ce que fut la vie quotidienne de notre peuple... préserver son langage, son esprit, et ses qualités...*", in service of the

association's ultimate objective: "*sauver une culture et une communauté en péril*" (Cercle Algérieniste, 1975). The Cercle Algérieniste and the multitude of similar organisations that emerged in their wake worked to maintain a productive duality between the French and so-called "Algerian" elements that the community had come to identify with. These organisations took a special pride in having responded to the French refusal to regard them as *Français à part entière* of the national community by creating a positive identity that allowed them to be *Français entièrement à part* on their own terms.⁵

The irony was, however, that a key reason why the *pieds-noirs* were able to devote time and energy to the creation and dissemination of this identity was precisely because while their *francité* may have been questioned at a cultural level, from a legal and administrative perspective they were always viewed as fully French. Their legal status as repatriated French citizens obliged the government of the day to put into place a range of measures aimed at facilitating full socio-economic integration as quickly as possible. Although initially caught unprepared, the French state mobilised rapidly, devoting extensive resources to assist the *rapatriés* in finding accommodation and employment (Scioldo-Zürcher, 2010). These efforts were complemented by long-running and detailed parliamentary debates regarding appropriate levels of compensation for the belongings and livelihoods the *rapatriés* had left behind, which resulted in a series of indemnification laws beginning in 1970 and continuing into the twenty first century.⁶ The end result was the swift and comprehensive integration of the *pied-noir* population. The effectiveness of the state's response is attested to by the lack of differentiation in terms of socio-economic status and life chances between the children of *pieds-noirs* and the rest of the French population. By taking care of the material needs of the community, the state in effect enabled the *pieds-noirs* to focus on developing a cultural and commemorative agenda. Yet the instrumental role of the state in years following the arrival of the *pieds-noirs* is almost entirely absent from their self-created narratives. Instead, the community propagates an image of itself as forced, in the face of indifference, if not outright hostility, from their co-nationals and the state, to rebuild their lives relying only on each other for support. The State's perceived failure to provide adequate assistance is equated with its, and the wider population's, failure to fully accept the Frenchness of the *rapatriés*.

5 It is important to note that this endeavour to create and maintain a distinct collective identity took place within the wider context of sustained opposition within certain sectors, not least academia, to the perceived increase in *communautarisme* in France in the latter half of the twentieth century. This development is often linked to Pierre Nora's 1989 assertion that such *communautariste* identities and associated privatised memories posed a threat to the Republic. Indeed, one of the aims of the state-sponsored integration programmes discussed below was precisely to detach the *pieds-noirs* from any particularist affiliations and instead to firmly embed them within the national community (Nora, 1989).

6 Indemnification laws were passed in 1970, 1974, and 1978. These were all greeted with derision by the *pieds-noirs* who saw them as insufficient. The community were happier with the provisions of the more generous and comprehensive 1987 law, which the state hoped would definitively conclude the issue. Indeed it was almost the final word, its provisions not being substantially modified until the controversial 23 February 2005 law which, in addition to stipulating that schools should teach the "positive effects" of the French presence overseas, also set out a range of new financial provisions for *pieds-noirs* and *harkis*. For the text of this law see <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000444898&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>, accessed 22/06/2013.

Contained within the discourse of *pied-noir* associations is thus a recurring tension between claims that their Frenchness has been questioned and the simultaneous promotion of an identity that voluntarily emphasises their distinctiveness in cultural and historical terms from the metropolitan French who now surround them. The result is a complicated relationship between the *pieds-noirs* and France that oscillates between identification and rejection, between proximity and distance, and between Frenchness and foreignness.⁷ Although the roots of these complexities can be seen to lie in the colonial period itself, particularly in the diverse origins of the original settlers, it was arguably the twin experiences of exile from Algeria and arrival in France in 1962 that really crystallised the paradoxes inherent in the community's self-perception and relationship to the *Métropole*. Indeed, it is hard to over-state the importance of the summer of 1962 to the *pied-noir* identity and worldview. As the foundational moment in the history of the *pied-noir* community, these few weeks in 1962 would, as the historian Jean-Jacques Jordi noted, "structure a memory and forge a collective mentality that persists to this day" (2003: 63). This is evident not only from the frequency with which these events are directly evoked by associations in their publications, but also, and perhaps more tellingly, in the way that exile and arrival have become the prisms through which all other experiences and events are filtered. This can be seen quite clearly when looking at the ways in which international events have been treated within the pages of publications produced by *pied-noir* associations over the past five decades. In spite of the portrayal of the *pieds-noirs* as a relatively insular community,⁸ they are not completely disconnected from the outside world. Global events, ranging from the Six Day War through the first Gulf War to the Balkan Wars of the late 1990s and, more recently, 9/11 and the 2004 Tsunami, have all been covered by association publications. Yet they feature less as events in their own right than as ways for the *pieds-noirs* to frame and articulate their own history. Examining the different ways in which this is achieved provides an insight into how the community understands its own identity, its position in relation to France, and the ways in which all three have evolved over time.

Theoretical Frameworks: Agency and Memory Entrepreneurs

From a theoretical perspective, this involves deconstructing the collective discourses and memories advanced by *pied-noir* associations. Focusing on their self-presentation, as opposed to externally generated and imposed representations, such an analysis rests on a relational and agency-driven conception of memory and identity construction. It shares Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan's healthy scepticism toward the dominant term "collective memory"; which they

7 This notion of "foreignness" is of course very different to the kind of "foreignness" attributed to other migrants from Algeria, notably those of Arab and Berber origins. This is true both in terms of internal perceptions among the *pieds-noirs* and in terms of reactions from the majority population towards such migrants.

8 The historian Jean-Jacques Jordi for example has referred to the "*solidarité excessive et exclusive*" of the community which manifests itself in "*la recherche du médecin rapatrié, du boulanger rapatrié... avec lesquels on pourra parler de 'là-bas' et évoquer un passé regretté, qui ne saurait revivre certes, mais qui n'appellerait pas en retour des condamnations ou opprobres*" (1997 :182).

view as too inflexible and totalising to accommodate the behaviour and reactions of the plethora of different groups that comprise any given society (1999: 9). These authors instead advocate using the phrase “collective remembrance” as a way of acknowledging that memory is a plural and socially framed phenomenon that involves “gathering together bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public.” For Winter and Sivan, the “public” is “the group that produces, expresses and consumes [the past]”; while what they create is “not a cluster of individual memories; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (1999: 6). Central to this is the concept of agency. Rather than viewing communities as the passive recipients of discourses dictated from above, it is important to remember that these groups are active participants in a multi-faceted process. For Winter in particular, the work of memory collation is done primarily by agents of remembrance operating in civil society. Borrowing from anthropology, he terms these groups of agents “fictive kin”, a phrase he uses as “shorthand for a multiplicity of groups” with “fictive” meant to imply constructed and created, rather than imaginary or untrue. These are small-scale agents whose work is “liminal” allowing them to occupy “the space between individual memory and the national theatre of collective memory choreographed by social and political leaders” (Winter, 1999a: 41). Thus although primarily concerned with locally-rooted social action, the author remains aware that fictive kin memories are not formed in isolation, and that there is continual dialogue between individuals, groups, and the state. Such a description encapsulates particularly well the arena in which the activist element of the *pied-noir* community operates.

It is this activist core that constitutes the focal point for this article. Although by no means representative of the full spectrum of views contained within the broad and diverse *rapatrié* population, activists are important because they constitute the public face of the wider community. They are the “memory entrepreneurs” who have consistently collated and disseminated the past as they understand it, both to their fellow *pieds-noirs* and also to the wider French public through publications linked to various associations, through conferences and cultural events, and even via the mainstream media by regularly participating in discussion panels and documentaries broadcast by major French networks or even producing their own films. While acknowledging that other opinions and other kinds of *pieds-noirs* do exist, this article will concentrate on this particular activist element because of their agenda setting role. The analysis that follows is based on the printed output of the major *pied-noir* associations of the past fifty years, primarily weekly, monthly, or quarterly bulletins and magazines. Some of these associations, such as the Association Nationale des Français d’Afrique du Nord, d’Outre-mer, et de leurs Amis (ANFANOMA), have been going since the 1950s; some, like the Cercle Algérieniste, formed in the 1970s; while others such as Véritas or the officially unaffiliated magazine Pieds-Noirs d’Hier et d’Aujourd’hui came into existence in the 1990s. All but one of the associations mentioned, the Groupement National Pour l’Indemnisation (GNPI), still exists today. This longevity usefully enables one to trace over time changes in the way international events are portrayed and used within their publications. The question of how representative these associations are of the views of the *pieds-noirs* as a whole is, however, more difficult to ascertain. The associations themselves, particularly those with a national network of branches such as ANFANOMA and the Cercle Algérieniste, of course claim to incarnate the values and opinions of the wider community. However, the only concrete estimations of

the validity of such assertions date from the mid-1990s when it was argued that between 400 and 800 organisations of varying types and sizes existed, to which 10 to 15% of the pied-noir population belonged (Jordi, 1993: 179; Roche, 1994: 153; Calmein, 1994: 15). In spite of a lack of concrete data, it seems fair to assume that we are dealing with a minority perspective and this must be borne in mind in the ensuing discussion. Yet although only a partial portrait, the prominence of this activist strata and its impact upon mainstream perceptions of the *pieds-noirs* make it worth examining. The remaining discussion will outline the key strategies employed by these *pied-noir* associations when inserting international events into their discourses, before going on to explore the purposes served by these evocations and the ways in which these can illuminate the relationship between the *rapatriés* and their sense of *francité*.

Strategies: From Co-operation to Competition

During the 1960s and 1970s, references to international events within *pied-noir* publications were quite sparse. Much fewer in numbers during these decades than today, the focus of the associations that were active at this time, notably ANFANOMA, was overwhelmingly on practical issues relating to re-insertion. The pages of publications such as *France Horizon*, the monthly magazine of ANFANOMA, were consequently dominated by summaries of key parliamentary debates relating to measures to assist the *rapatriés* and practical advice to help their readers navigate the complex bureaucracy surrounding the aid that was available to them. Aid, it should be noted, that was systematically deemed insufficient. Yet although coverage of international events was rare, the Six Day War being a particular exception (*France Horizon*, 1967: 16), manifestations of international solidarity were in evidence. Larger organisations like ANFANOMA possessed overseas branches in countries such as Corsica, Morocco, Senegal, Switzerland, Canada, and Argentina, all of whom were regularly given space within *France Horizon* to report their news. This included a short but concerted campaign in 1962 to encourage *pieds-noirs* to migrate from France to Argentina where they were assured of a warm official welcome, including generous land grants from the Argentine government. The successful transplantation of the handful of *pieds-noirs* who took up this offer was reported the following year (*France Horizon*, 1962: 8; *France Horizon*, 1963: 3). Equally, the remit of the single-issue Groupement national pour l'indemnisation (GNPI), founded in 1963, extended beyond the *pieds-noirs* to all those who had been dispossessed as a result of decolonisation. This scope was reflected in early issues of their *Bulletin*, which carried reports on the progress of indemnification campaigns across the globe. For the GNPI, compensation was a judicial issue, demanded on the basis that it was a legal right owed not just to *pieds-noirs*, but to all *rapatriés* under the French constitution. ANFANOMA was similarly concerned that the provisions of the 1961 Boulin law, which formed the basis of the French government's response to the returning settlers from Algeria, be scrupulously extended to all French *rapatriés*, including those threatened with expulsion from France's five

Indian *comptoirs* (France Horizon, 1963a: 21).⁹

In these cases, Frenchness, more particularly French citizenship, was invoked as an inclusive notion, a point of commonality among those displaced by decolonisation and a guarantee of support and equality of treatment from the state. But even in countries where there was not a *pied-noir* presence, or even a French colonial connection, concern was evinced for the fate of other perceived "victims" of resettlement stemming from global traumas. This was the impetus behind collaboration between ANFANOMA and various associations representing German expellees (*Vertriebene*) who were displaced from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, including the prominent *Bund der Vertriebenen* (BdV). Beginning in late 1966 and continuing for several years, ANFANOMA and the BdV organised a series of meetings at which they expressed their solidarity with each other and with all other "refugees" who had been the victims of forced exile (France Horizon, 1966: 12-13). Here, fellowship was based on mutual exclusion; on situations where nationality afforded no protection from suffering and where in fact the common fate of the two populations was deemed to be the product of "*une cuisine entre hommes politiques assis autour d'une table à laquelle la justice et le droit n'avaient pas trouvé place*" (France Horizon, 1966a: 12). Glossing over the problems of placing these two very different historical events within the same framework, co-operation was founded upon common denominators that were devoid of any specific context, such as the desire to "*élever [notre] voix contre le terrible phénomène du vol collectif de la patrie*", or the promise never to accept "*une politique qui désavantagerait les voisins et amis que vous êtes !*" (France Horizon, 1966b: 13; France Horizon, 1967a: 12).

These initiatives were notable because they sought to place different experiences of exile alongside one another in a mutually supportive as opposed to competitive logic. This ethos of co-operation and transnational solidarity was not, however, to last. By the mid-1970s, as immediate material needs became much less acute and *pied-noir* associations turned to cultural and commemorative matters, a more individualistic preoccupation became evident. This manifested itself in a discursive framework orientated around establishing exclusivity and primacy in terms of trauma. Exile ceased to be a point of commonality, or a way to make productive connections, and increasingly became a standard against which associations sought to judge the suffering of others in relation to their own. Although they never claimed a large share of association attention, from the 1970s onwards international events appear with increasing regularity in the pages of *pied-noir* publications. At first glance, the range of international

9 Passed into law on 26 December 1961, "*loi 61-1439 relative à l'accueil et à la réinstallation des Français d'outre-mer*", is more commonly known as the loi Boulin after then Secretary of State for Repatriates, Robert Boulin. The first article stated that "*Les Français ayant dû ou estimé devoir quitter, par suite d'événements politiques, un territoire où ils étaient établis et qui était antérieurement placé sous la souveraineté, le protectorat ou la tutelle de la France, pourront bénéficier du concours de l'État, en vertu de la solidarité nationale affirmée par le préambule de la Constitution de 1946, dans les conditions prévues par la présente loi [...] ce concours se manifeste par un ensemble de mesures de nature à intégrer les Français rapatriés dans les structures économiques et sociales de la nation*". The issue in this article was that while the Boulin Law theoretically covered all *rapatriés*, a *decree d'application* was required to activate its provisions for each individual territory and no such law was envisaged for the Indian *comptoirs*. The full text of the law can be found in the *Journal officiel de la République française, Lois et décrets*, 28 décembre 1961, pp. 11996-11997.

events covered can seem eclectic and it should be noted that there is considerable variation between, but also within, various associations and their publications. While Véritas opined at length about 9/11, neither *L'Algérieniste* nor *France Horizon*, the publications of the Cercle Algérieniste and ANFANOMA respectively, mentioned the tragedy. However, all three associations, in common with many others, commented extensively on the events in the Balkans in the late 1990s. Across the corpus examined for this article, the evidence suggests that it is not the scale, gravity or significance of the global event that determines its inclusion within *pieds-noirs* publications, but rather the extent to which parallels can be drawn with the *pieds-noirs'* own experiences. The focus has therefore been on events, particularly conflicts, with the potential to displace people and to create migrants or refugees.

This logic explains the disproportionate preoccupation among *pied-noir* associations with unfolding events in New Caledonia in the mid-1980s which received greater attention than other pivotal events of that decade such as the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹⁰ In contrast, the drive for independence by the indigenous Kanak population of New Caledonia in the mid-1980s was cast by many *pied-noir* journals as "*une nouvelle affaire algérienne*" (Calmein, 1985: 69). This assessment was based on a range of factors including the assertion that the only reason people of New Caledonia were expressing a desire to be free from French control was because they, like the Algerian people, were being manipulated by outside forces closely connected to Communism. This was related to the belief that the independence-seeking Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste (FLNKS) constituted a "mini FLN" because it was unrepresentative of the will of the majority. Also highlighted was the biased media coverage of events which, like in Algeria, focused exclusively on stories showing "*les affreux colons blancs exploitant les pauvres indigènes*" and the fact that, as in Algeria, the French government seemed, in their refusal to back the settler population, once again poised to choose the "foreigner" (i.e. the Kanaks) over the French inhabitants of the territory. The wider *pied-noir* community was thus enjoined to offer their support so that the pro-French element of New Caledonia did not become "*rapatriés*" like themselves (Calmein, 1985: 69-72).

What the *pieds-noirs* saw as history repeating itself in New Caledonia provided them with a welcome opportunity to repeat their own history. This is also the function served when they invoke other contemporary events where the historical parallels are perhaps less obvious. At the close of the 1990s, as the Balkans occupied the prime spot in the nightly news, Jean-Marc Lopez of the magazine *Pieds-Noirs d'Hier et d'Aujourd'Hui* remarked that as each new story broke, "*Ce n'est pas sans nous rappeler à plus d'un titre l'Algérie*", before embarking on a detailed, but rather contrived, comparative account of the two wars and the fates of the associated communities (1999: 12). More tenuous still was the Algerian connection found in a 1992 report by *Le Figaro* revealing the existence of concentration camps in Yugoslavia during the Second World War. Here, the *pied-noir* journal *L'Algérieniste* fixated on the fact that one of

¹⁰ Although not strictly international because Nouvelle Calédonie was a French territory at this point, the example is included because it took place beyond the borders of metropolitan France and, as such, was not treated in the same way as domestic news within the pages of the *pied-noir* association press.

the government figures denouncing the camps was the same man who had previously refused their requests to actively investigate cases of 500-700 settlers who disappeared in the final stages of the War of Independence. This link allowed the Cercle Algérieniste to expand upon the theme of state-sponsored indifference towards the *pieds-noirs* in general at the close of the Algerian War, and the fate of their missing members in particular (Cercle Algérieniste, 1992: 152). Testifying to the longevity of this strategy, ten years previously the association had made a similar argument contrasting the public outcry following massacres of civilians in Beirut in 1982 to the lack of concern expressed over the events in Oran on 5 July when independence celebrations by Algerians developed into a riot that claimed the lives of scores of settlers who, the *pieds-noirs* claimed, were "*saignés comme du bétail dans les abattoirs*" (Saint-Ygnan, 1983: 4). What these examples demonstrate is the selective invocation of contemporary events in order to frame a presentation of some aspect of the *pieds-noirs'* own history. The international event itself is ultimately less important than the *pied-noir* narrative whose retelling it facilitates. Consequently, the apparent broadening of perspective post-1975 indicated by the inclusion of contemporary events within *pied-noir* publications is quickly revealed to be deceptive; it simply represents an alternative way of articulating canonical *pied-noir* concerns, principally connected to violent population displacement and forced migration.

Within such discourses historically distinct events are conflated, their specific contexts erased and replaced with claims of commonality on a moral level, usually framed in terms of injustice or inhumanity. With reference to events in Kosovo, regular *Pieds-Noirs d'Hier et d'Aujourd'Hui* contributor Jacques Torres was therefore able to write "*'Nettoyage ethnique', nous on connaît. Génocide, nous on connaît. 'La valise ou le cercueil', on connaît, nous aussi*" (1999a: 13). Such phrasing allows *pieds-noirs* to situate their trauma within legitimate and increasingly transnational vocabularies relating to suffering and, especially, to victimhood. Jacques Torres, for example, goes on in his article to enumerate other conflicts he felt had been unjustly subjected to silence, including Rwanda and the Sudan. He also criticised government inaction in relation to ongoing situations where minority populations, such as the Tibetans or Kurds, were in particular danger. Implicit in both these lists were the parallels he saw with the fate suffered by the *pieds-noirs* in 1962 (1999a: 13).

Although Jacques Torres frames his article with the caveat: "*Certes il est indécent de comparer, de chiffrer l'horreur de la guerre et de quantifier le malheur...*" (1999a: 13), this is effectively what such texts do. The suffering of others is acknowledged, but the main purpose is usually to establish the primacy of the trauma endured by the *pieds-noirs*. Speaking about the men, women, and children being held hostage in Iraq in late 1990, Marcel Gamba argued that although unfortunate for those concerned, what people forget is that "*la communauté Francophile d'Algérie : chrétiens, juifs et musulmans, fidèles à la France, a subi pareil sort, et bien plus cruel en 1962*" (1990: 7). Equally, in reacting to the Tsunami that hit the Indian Ocean on Boxing Day 2004, the front page of *La lettre de Véritas* read: "*Et la vague de morts les a emportés... Nos cœurs sont affligés pour les disparus d'Asie. Mais toutes les vagues de morts ne viennent pas de la mer et nos cœurs saignent encore pour nos disparus d'Algérie*" (2005). Taking a global look at the many atrocities committed over the course of the twentieth-century, *pied-noir* associations consistently conclude their own losses were

either worse, or at least merit equal attention. Consequently, two months after 9/11, Georges-Emile Paul of Véritas could be found writing:

"Pourtant, et sans minimiser l'ampleur de ce qui fut, il y a deux mois, la double tragédie de New York et de Washington, c'est bien à nos portes, à huit cent kilomètres de chez nous, que se poursuit méthodiquement la plus effroyable tuerie dont nul, en fait, à ce jour, n'a voulu voir l'ampleur et les conséquences à terme... Et voilà que les événements actuels donnent un relief amplifié au crime gaulliste et à la tragédie de 1962" (Paul, 2001 : 11).

In addition to establishing primacy in terms of suffering endured, associations often seek to claim historical primacy by arguing that what others across the globe are now experiencing are the echos of phenomena first visited upon the *pieds-noirs*. Thus for Anne Cazal the images of 9/11 displayed on her television screen instinctively transported her back to 1 November 1954 and an Algeria confronted by terrorism, *"ce fleau sans expression, ce masque sans âme, celui d'un fanatisme exacerbé et monstrueux qui ne respecte rien au monde"* (2001: 3). Islamic in inspiration, the fundamentalism that was on display on 9/11, but also 7/7, the Gulf War, and even in Kosovo was, according to several *pied-noir* associations, the same in essence as the blind violence and fanatical hatred of the FLN that they had first endured between 1954 and 1962 (Augeai, 1991: 24; Lopez, 1999: 12; Hattab Pacha, 2005: 2). However, indifference on the part of the French State and the international community to the fate of the *pieds-noirs* led to such warnings being ignored. Thus in relation to 9/11, Anne Cazal was able to write of the *"huit ans pendant lesquels nous avons hurlé pour alarmer l'Europe, l'Amérique et le monde entier contre ce terrorisme fanatique et aveugle"*, adding that *"depuis notre exil, nous ne cessons de renouveler ce dramatique appel mais personne ne nous a entendus..."* (2001: 3).

Behind these various invocations of contemporary international events it is possible to see a common set of concerns being voiced. These articulate the unstable relationship the *pied-noir* community has with France and with their own sense of Frenchness, the origins of which can be traced back to the trauma of their forced exile in 1962. The two themes that emerge most strongly from this corpus of international comparisons are abandonment and indifference, the two reactions that the *pieds-noirs* indelibly associate with their identity-defining migration from Algeria to France. The *pied-noir* community firmly believe that they were the victims of a deliberate policy of abandonment in Algeria and are thus highly sensitive to instances where they feel the same scenario is being replayed. An equally sensitive issue for *pieds-noirs* are instances where they feel priority is given to foreigners over Frenchmen. With each international tragedy that is reported some reference is usually made to the sympathy extended by the French public to the victims which, while honourable and natural, contrasts sharply with the lack of concern displayed towards the *pieds-noirs* in 1962. This trend was strongly in evidence with respect to the unfolding events in Kosovo at the end of the 1990s where the reaction of the international community towards the Kosovan refugees was seen to be particularly galling in light of the apathy displayed by that same community towards the *pieds-noirs* during their 1962 "flight". This was the case to such an extent that, as *France Horizon* highlighted, the French media appeared to have forgotten that the *pied-noir* migration had ever happened, describing the Kosovan population displacement as the largest witnessed since the Second World War. An error that permitted the

author of the article to re-iterate the scale and magnitude of the events being occluded: "*Rappelons à ces amnésiques que nous étions 1 200 000 Européens et Musulmans mêlés, rescapés du génocide, condamnés à l'exil, en cette année fatale de 1962, à fuir et quitter pour toujours ce qui reste à jamais notre terre*" (Bénéjean, 1999: 24).

Within these articles, the phrase "*élan de solidarité*" recurs frequently, portrayed as an invaluable commodity that was being freely extended to the Kosovans, but which had been cruelly withheld from the *pieds-noirs*. This prompted several *pied-noir* associations to ask why it was that French people were able to empathise so easily and so generously with the plight of foreigners, but not with their own compatriots. In particular, bitterness over the welcome (or lack thereof) they received in 1962 is often translated into accusations of hypocrisy levelled at the metropolitan French whose conscience, the *pieds-noirs* complain, is moved only in certain circumstances. "*Il doit y avoir certainement des 'bons' et des 'mauvais' massacres*", remarked the GNPI in 1970 as news of the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam was breaking. The association went on to argue that it was only the *pieds-noirs* who were incapable of making such distinctions, suggesting a magnanimity within the *pied-noir* community towards the suffering of others that was not reflected more broadly by a society which had not hesitated to place the returning settlers in the "*mauvais*" camp in 1962 (1970: 26). These comments were echoed thirty years later by Jean-Marc Lopez of *Pieds-Noirs d'Hier et d'Aujourd'Hui* in the context of conflict in the Balkans. Lopez felt that the respective "media-friendliness" of the group in question was crucial in determining how much exposure they were given by the national media and the tone of this coverage. "*La mémoire des hommes est bien selective*" he noted, "*Il y a des bonnes victimes médiatiques et de mauvaises que l'on doit oublier à jamais*" (2000: 5).

In these and other comments there is a strong sense of identification by the *pieds-noirs* with the France and the French; phrases such as "*mes compatriots*" and "*notre pays*" demonstrating an affective proximity that then makes the perceived rejection, or lack of empathy, all the more painful. With respect to the "*élan impressionnant de solidarité*" being shown towards Kosovan refugees, Jacques Torres was prompted to ask: "*Et puis, il vaut mieux voler au secours d'étrangers que des siens. Au fait, 37 ans après, sommes-nous bien considérés, par le Français moyen, comme des 'siens' ?*" (1999a: 13). This final question, "*sommes-nous bien considérés, par le Français moyen, comme des 'siens' ?*", goes to the heart of the matter. Over time and across association publications it is possible to see the *pied-noir* community articulating their uncertainty over the answer to this question. Underpinning their demands for recognition of their suffering from the French State and for sympathy from their co-nationals on this basis is thus a quest for confirmation of their full membership within the national community and for symbolic acknowledgement of this.

Conclusion

In 1962, the settler community of French Algeria saw themselves as fully part of the French nation. However, when French Algeria ended they instead found themselves designated as *rapatriés*, migrants returning to a land that was nominally their own but which was in fact deeply unfamiliar. Since 1962, they have sought to assimilate this migratory element into their identity by stressing their cultural uniqueness in light of their historical origins and their attachment to Algeria, presenting themselves as simultaneously part of and apart from metropolitan France. Equally apparent, however, is their desire to reclaim the French pillar of their identity that was so destabilised by their experiences in 1962, particularly the way in which they felt rejected by their imagined national community upon arrival.¹¹ The function of international comparisons within the *pied-noir* activist *milieu* is therefore a very practical one aimed at creating an opportunity to reiterate their own history with the ultimate aim of securing space for their narrative and their suffering within the historical memory of the French nation. Hence the constant refrain that underpins these comparisons: what about *us*, when will *our* suffering gain the recognition it deserves?¹² Thus for all Anne Cazal of Véritas was able to agree that the plight of Kosovan refugees was indeed terrible, the real point of her argument was to stress "*il faut remémorer, encore et encore, et cela ne sera jamais assez, les exactions organisées par le régime gaulliste pour parvenir à mater ce peuple [les pieds-noirs] infortuné et à la contraindre à quitter sa terre*" (1999: 3). Comments like Cazal's are indicative of how marginalised *pieds-noirs* perceive themselves and their history to be within France, even though it is precisely because of their successful integration, socio-economically at least, that they can afford to be a vocal minority campaigning for cultural and commemorative acknowledgement. Yet without this acknowledgement, their sense of belonging remains problematic. This helps to explain why activists feel compelled to campaign to ensure that within the finite space of the national memory and the equally finite resource of national compassion their cause receives its due place. For these *pieds-noirs* the circumstances surrounding their migration in 1962 remains a source of instability, depriving them of the security that they feel should be afforded by their French nationality. Regardless of the detours that may be taken via international events, *pied-noir* associations inevitably return to the "return" of 1962. In so doing, they repeatedly return to the ambiguity and anxiety embodied in that moment.

11 The discussion of international events is only one facet of a broader trend that has also encompassed, for example, campaigns against the number 99 on their *carte d'identité*, traditionally used to designate French citizens born outside of France. The *pieds-noirs* felt this to be highly inappropriate given that their place of birth, Algeria, was a part of France at the time.

12 The *pieds-noirs* are, of course, not the only group – either in France or globally – to adopt such a position, nor are they alone in using other histories and events to highlight their own cause. Staying with the Algerian case-study, the *harkis* and those who campaign on their behalf have often used Vichy as a reference point, demanding, for example, that the State accord them the same recognition and treatment as Jewish victims and survivors of World War Two. In particular, many *harki* groups are looking for the French state to accept responsibility for their fate in 1962 and regularly invoke Jacques Chirac's 1995 Vel d'Hiv speech as a model for the form this should take. For further discussion of the relationship between strategies pursued by the *pieds-noirs* and other groups connected to the Algerian War (Eldridge, forthcoming 2014).

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Claire Eldridge

✦ Returning to the "Return": *pied-noir* Memories of 1962

When Algeria became an independent nation in 1962, the *pieds-noirs* felt compelled to leave their homeland and migrate to France. Deeply traumatic, the twin historical experiences of departure from Algeria and arrival in France were so foundational that they have structured and sustained a communal identity and collective mobilisation that now spans five decades. In seeking to articulate the trauma associated with 1962, one strategy employed by the *pied-noir* community has been to compare and contrast their own experiences to processes of forced migration and violent population displacement that have occurred in other international contexts. By deconstructing this apparently international framing of the *pied-noir* past, this article traces how this community of national migrants have attempted to negotiate their sense of being simultaneously part of and apart from their own nation. This in turn allows the evolving relationship between the community and the State to be highlighted, as well as offering an insight into how the *pieds-noirs* understand their position within the nation's collective memory. The over-arching argument is that, for all *pied-noir* discourse encompasses a broad map of international territories and events, the route of these voyages is essentially circuitous; it always returns to their own "return" to France in 1962 and to the anxiety and ambiguity embedded in that moment.

✦ Revenir sur le « retour » : les mémoires pieds-noirs de 1962

En 1962, quand l'Algérie est devenue une nation indépendante, la communauté pied-noir a été obligée de quitter sa terre natale et d'émigrer vers la France. Profondément traumatisants, ces deux moments charnières, le départ d'Algérie et l'arrivée en France, ont structuré l'identité de cette communauté et sont les fondements d'une mobilisation collective depuis cinquante ans. Cherchant à exprimer le traumatisme associé à 1962, l'une des stratégies employées par la communauté pied-noir a été de comparer son expérience, quant aux processus de migrations forcées, à d'autres déplacements violents de populations, et ce à l'échelle internationale. Cependant, en déconstruisant cette mise en scène internationale du passé pied-noir, il est possible de retracer la manière dont cette communauté de migrants nationaux a tenté de gérer le sentiment d'être à la fois français et étrangers. Cette approche permet aussi de souligner l'évolution des relations entre la communauté et l'État tout en offrant un éclairage sur la façon dont les pieds-noirs comprennent leur position au sein de la mémoire collective de la nation. Le principal argument avancé est que, si tout discours pied-noir englobe de nombreux territoires et événements internationaux, l'itinéraire de ce voyage dans la mémoire est essentiellement circulaire, il revient toujours au « retour » en France de 1962 et à l'anxiété et à l'ambiguïté incarnées par ce moment.

❖ Regresando al «regreso»: las memorias *pieds-noirs* de 1962

Cuando Argelia se convirtió en una nación independiente en 1962, los *pieds-noirs* se vieron obligados a abandonar su tierra natal y emigrar a Francia. Aunque sumamente traumáticas, las experiencias históricas gemelas de partida de Argelia y llegada a Francia fueron tan fundamentales que han estructurado y mantenido una identidad comunitaria y una movilización colectiva que ya abarcan cinco décadas. En su intento por canalizar el trauma asociado con 1962, una de las estrategias empleadas por la comunidad de los *pieds-noirs* ha sido comparar y contrastar sus propias experiencias con procesos de migración forzada y con desplazamientos de población violentos, que se han desarrollado en otros contextos internacionales. A través de la deconstrucción del aparente enmarcado internacional del pasado de los *pieds-noirs*, este artículo identifica cómo esta comunidad de emigrantes nacionales han intentado conciliar el sentimiento de formar parte de su propia nación con el de estar alejados de ella. Esto a su vez permite resaltar la relación en evolución existente entre la comunidad y el estado, así como ofrecer un entendimiento de cómo los *pieds-noirs* conciben su propia posición dentro de la memoria colectiva de la nación. El argumento dominante es que, para todos los *pieds-noirs* el discurso incluye un amplio mapa de territorios y acontecimientos internacionales, la ruta de estas travesías es en esencia enrevesada; siempre regresando a su propio 'regreso' a Francia en 1962 y a las ansiedades y ambigüedades integradas en ese momento.