

METODO

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN PHENOMENOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

VOL. 10 NUM. 2

ON HISTORY

Edited by
Joseph Cohen
&
Raphael Zagury-Orly

sdvig press

Executive Editors

Andrea Altobrando & Alice Pugliese

Editorial Advisory Board

Jonna Bornemark	Niall Keane	Nicholas Smith
Frances Bottenberg	Mansoorah Khalilizand	Michael Städtler
Emanuele Caminada	Ferdinando G. Menga	Asuka Suehisa
Ilaria D'Angelo	Irina Poleshchuk	Michela Summa
Marco Deodati	Giuseppe Primiero	Francesca Valentini
Angelo Giavatto	Jacob Rump	Nicola Zippel
	Kriszta Sajber	

Editorial Manager

Pierfrancesco Biasetti

Associate Editor

Simone Aurora

Web Editor

Nicoletta Scapparone

Scientific Board

Jocelyn Benoist	Gianna Gigliotti	Karel Novotny
Rudolf Bernet	Bina Gupta	Shigeru Taguchi
Luciano Boi	Sara Heinämaa	László Tengelyi †
Jagna Brudzinska	Klaus Held	Richard Tieszen †
David Carr	Pierre Kerszberg	Ugo Maria Ugazio
Fabio Ciaramelli	Hans Lindahl	Julio Cesar Vargas
Stanislaw Czerniak	Dieter Lohmar	Bejarano
Vittorio De Palma	Sandro Mancini	Bernhard Waldenfels
Nicholas De Warren	Eduard Marbach	David Webb
Alfredo Ferrarin	Ullrich Melle	Ichiro Yamaguchi
Thomas Fuchs		Dan Zahavi

Founding Committee

Andrea Altobrando	Ilaria D'Angelo	Ferdinando G. Menga
Giampaolo Bartoli	Marco Deodati	Alice Pugliese
Pierfrancesco Biasetti	Pietro Giuffrida	Michela Summa
Emanuele Caminada	Francesco Lanzillotti	Nicola Zippel

<http://www.metodo-rivista.eu>

Vol. 10, n. 2 (2022)

On History

Edited by Joseph Cohen and Raphael Zagury-Orly

Published by sdvig press
Lausanne

All contents, except the pictures, are licensed according to the
[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



ISSN 2281-9177

Contents

Introduction

Joseph Cohen & Raphael Zagury Orly <i>On History</i>	7
---	---

Articles

Christophe Bouton <i>The Judgment of History. Meaning and Political Usages of a "Topos"</i>	13
--	----

Guelfo Carbone <i>Time and Revolution</i>	43
--	----

David Carr <i>The Varieties of Historical Experience</i>	77
---	----

Joseph Cohen <i>Futurités de l'être : entre le « mourir » et le « vivre » de l'Autre. Note sur Heidegger et Jonas [Futurities of being: between the 'dying' and the 'living' of the Other. A note on Heidegger and Jonas]</i>	95
--	----

Cedric Cohen-Skalli <i>Lyotard, the End of Metanarratives and the Memory of the Algerian War</i> . 119	
---	--

Nicolas de Warren <i>The Question of History in Jan Patočka's Heretical Essays</i>	149
---	-----

James Dodd <i>Reflection of Historicity</i>	181
--	-----

Orietta Ombrosi <i>History of Survivors and History as Countertime</i>	215
---	-----

Georgios Tsgadis
On Ecological Apocalypse: Biodegradation, Quantum Erasure, World.....243

Nicola Turrini
Dare forma alla mente. Archeologia cognitiva e filosofia della storia [Shaping the Mind. Cognitive Archeology and the Philosophy of History].....275

Raphael Zagury-Orly
Interroger l'histoire. Écouter les spectres [Questioning History. Listening to the Spectres].....305

Reviews

Elena Billwiller
Fare critica con la fenomenologia. Osservazioni su E. Magrì & P. McQueen (eds.). Critical Phenomenology. An Introduction. Cambridge: Polity Press 2023339

Liotard, the End of Metanarratives and the Memory of the Algerian War

Cedric Cohen-Skalli

University of Haifa*

ccohensk@univ.haifa.ac.il

ABSTRACT. Jean-François Lyotard's intellectual evolution in the late 1970s and 1980s is well known in continental philosophy. In 1979, with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard became famous for his report on "the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation". Later, in his magnum opus *Le différend* he expanded on this, claiming that "a universal rule of judgment between heterogeneous genres is lacking in general". Yet, this creative moment in Lyotard's career, responsible for shaping the philosophical concept of the postmodern condition, is rarely connected to his book *La guerre des Algériens* (1989). This work was supposed to implement his new postmodern concepts in relation to the war in Algeria. The present article looks at *La guerre des Algériens*, within its broader historical and philosophical context, as a unique opportunity to evaluate the validity of Lyotard's philosophical shift, especially his new concept of radical heterogeneity at work in history.

KEYWORDS. Lyotard, postmodern philosophy, Algerian war, postcolonial France, postcolonial Algeria.

* *Correspondence:* Cedric Cohen-Skalli – Bucerius Institute for Research of Contemporary German History and Society, University of Haifa, 199 Aba Khoushy Ave., Haifa 3498838, Israel.



1. Introduction

In 1979, with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-François Lyotard became famous both in France and worldwide for his report on «the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation».¹ He meant by that formula the decay of «some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth»;² broadly speaking, the major theories of historical development since the Enlightenment. Lyotard's report, although sober in appearance, sounded prophetic, announcing a new age. Indeed, the years 1978–80 were pivotal, with Thatcher's premiership, the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing jihad, the US–China normalization, Begin's premiership, the Camp David agreements and other changes. Lyotard's report had a bearing not on these ostensible political transformations, but on a long and less visible transformation of the conditions of knowledge production. Yet, the visible conclusion of Lyotard's report, «the decline of the unifying and legitimating power of the grand narratives»,³ participated in the global shift of these pivotal years.

In the final paragraph of the report, Lyotard sketches the new epistemological-political alternative in the 1980s and beyond. On the one hand, he said:

We are finally in a position to understand how the computerization of society affects this problematic. It could become the 'dream' instrument for controlling and regulating the market system, extended to include knowledge itself and

1 LYOTARD 1991, xxiv.

2 LYOTARD 1991, xxiii.

3 LYOTARD 1991, 38.

governed exclusively by the performativity principle. In that case, it would inevitably involve the use of terror.⁴

The replacement of the emancipatory historical scheme by the “performativity principle” coupled with computerization seemed, following Lyotard, to invert the liberation promises of modern knowledge into a Darwinian process of adaptation to the digital efficiency imperatives. On the other hand, he said:

[the computerization of society] could also aid groups discussing metaprescriptives by supplying them with the information they usually lack for making knowledgeable decisions. The line to follow for computerization to take the second of these two paths is, in principle, quite simple: give the public free access to the memory and data banks. Language games would then be games of perfect information at any given moment. But they would also be nonzero-sum games, and by virtue of that fact discussion would never risk fixating in a position of minimax equilibrium because it had exhausted its stakes [...] This sketches the outline of a politics that would respect both the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown.⁵

Envisioning a computerization of society coupled with the principle of «free access to the memory and data banks», Lyotard imagines an alternative to his dark vision of the digital age. A vision in which the irreducible plurality of discourses would not be submitted exclusively to the performative imperative, but also enhanced by free access to information and by an infinite capacity to create new knowledge in infinite forms out of the accessed data. The decline of the grand narratives reported by Lyotard in 1979 thus opened up a vision of a complex new age: a market of discourses without historical teleology balancing between digital coercion and digital freedom and creativity.

4 LYOTARD 1991, 67.

5 LYOTARD 1991, 67.

Within a few years, in 1983, Lyotard came up with his magnum opus *Le différend*,⁶ later translated as *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. There, he expanded his report into a philosophical thesis and problem: «a universal rule of judgment between heterogeneous genres is lacking in general».⁷ This evolution and creative moment in Lyotard's philosophical career is well known. Yet, it is rarely connected to a more circumstantial publication of his, a few years later. In 1989, the Parisian publishing house Galilée, together with Lyotard and Mohammed Ramdani, presented a "new" book entitled *Jean-François Lyotard, La guerre des Algériens : écrits 1956-1963 choix de textes et présentation par Mohammed Ramdani*.⁸ This book was in fact a compendium of Lyotard's articles on the Algerian war written for the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* during the years 1956–63.⁹ *Socialisme ou Barbarie - Organe de Critique et d'Orientation Révolutionnaire (Socialism or Barbarism: Organ of Criticism and Revolutionary Orientation)* was published in the years 1949–65, and associated with famous intellectual figures like Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort and with the birth of the French New Left in the 1960s. To Lyotard's twelve "old" articles were added two forewords written in 1989: one by Mohammed Ramdani, the editor of the book, and the other by Lyotard himself. This reprinting of articles was a challenge to the still reigning silence on the Algerian war and to the well-established interpretations of it, as Ramdani mentions in his foreword:¹⁰

Thirty-five years after November 1, 1954, the Algerian war remains a taboo subject [...] It is therefore not surprising to note that any serious reflection, any comprehension of 'the

6 LYOTARD 1983.

7 LYOTARD 1988, xi.

8 LYOTARD AND RAMDANI 1989. For an English translation, see LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 165–314.

9 For a first overview of the lines of reflection developed by the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* founded by Castoriadis and Lefort, see SOCIALISME OU BARBARIE 2007.

10 On the silence around the Algerian war in France in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and on the instrumentalization of the memory of the war by the Algerian State and the FLN party (the National Liberation Front), see STORA 1998.

events', or as one said then of the 'Algerian question', in the constellation of its differends, were evacuated, and that one preferred— as usual— to the critical and self-critical analysis oblivion and flight into resentment. On both sides of the Mediterranean, and certainly not for the same reasons, we have witnessed a sealing off. Silence and oblivion have been decreed for fear that a sulfurous anamnesis would come to unstitch the traumas [...] The Algerian war quickly became the name of a stubborn oblivion that proliferates in the shadow cast by blissful litanies.¹¹

Echoing Lyotard's report on the decline of the grand narratives and his later concept of differend, the author of the introduction justified the re-publication of Lyotard's articles as a necessary confrontation with the dangerous amnesia regarding the complexities of the Algerian war which had developed in both France and Algeria. Colonization and anticolonial liberation, two modern discourses in conflict, or in differend, were responsible for a dangerous situation of amnesia, silence in France and selective and hyper-politicized memory in Algeria. Ramdani closes his introduction by expressing his personal hopes and probably those which led to publication of the book: «The texts by Lyotard gathered here show that a reading of the event was possible in the only idiom that does not pay for itself with illusions, the one that points out and reactivates differends.»¹² Rejecting the modernist projection of conflictual situations into a future teleological resolution within historical development, the re-publication of Lyotard's articles was supposed to acknowledge the postmodern understanding of the decline of metanarratives and the irresolvable situation of differend between conflicting speeches. It seems therefore that Lyotard's book *La guerre des Algériens*, within its broader historical and philosophical context, offers us a unique opportunity to evaluate Lyotard's shift vis-à-vis the modern philosophical concept of history. The following study of this book will address this shift, pointing at

11 LYOTARD AND RAMDANI 1989, 9 (my translation).

12 LYOTARD AND RAMDANI 1989, 31 (my translation).

Lyotard's own philosophical evolution from his earlier writings to his mature period in the 1980s, but also studying critically the meaning of this evolution vis-à-vis Algerian and French history. After elucidating the editorial conception of Lyotard's book as an argument for his postmodern concept of history at a pivotal historical moment, my study will critically engage with Lyotard's reinterpretation of his earlier work in order to check the validity of his concept of history vis-à-vis the historical shift of Algeria and France from a colonial to a postcolonial situation.

2. The editorial project: the re-publication of Lyotard's articles and a twofold change

Lyotard's 1989 circumstantial reprint-book can be understood as part of a twofold change. A change no less important than the one mentioned in relation with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* and *The Differend*. The immediate background to the publication involved the riots of October 1988. On the night of 4–5 October, and in the following days, adolescents and youngsters in Algiers burned cars, threw stones at shops, ransacked public buildings, and looted fancy stores and premises of famous companies and the ruling FLN political party (the National Liberation Front). Schools and universities, and even whole neighborhoods, were occupied. The ensuing crackdown by the army is said to have made hundreds of victims and countless injured, arrested and tortured persons. Within a few days, these popular riots and the subsequent repression by the army launched a political process that came to challenge and transform the FLN regime in Algeria established immediately after independence in July 1962.¹³ This multifaceted transformation process hesitated between various options: reform of the FLN regime, full-fledged liberal democratization or political Islam. With the victory of the Islamist party FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) in elections in 1991 and the

13 For a description of the riots and the political process it sparked, see AÏT-AOUDIA 2015.

suspension of elections in early 1992, the political process of the years 1988–91 collapsed into what historian Benjamin Stora labeled «the invisible war», a terrible decade of civil war throughout the country.¹⁴

The second background to Lyotard's book was more global and diffuse. It refers to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the communist bloc around the year 1989. The collapse in a domino effect of one socialist republic after another in Eastern Europe sparked in the West a series of celebrations of the "victory" of the liberal democracies. In France, this celebration coincided partly with the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution. The October 1988 riots and the fall of communism around 1989 thus constitute the background against which the editorial conception of the book as well as its reading have to be understood. From the perspective of the editorial group responsible for the re-publication of Lyotard's articles, the year 1989, the consequences of which were still very uncertain, echoed and even seemed to attest to the realization of Lyotard's earlier prophecy on the decline of metanarratives, instantiated in the collapse of failed socialist states in Eastern Europe and in the challenge against the FLN regime in Algeria.

The fall of communism is not referred to as such in Lyotard's introduction to the volume, since it was written in June 1989, a few months before the actual fall of the Berlin Wall in November.¹⁵ Yet, the collapse of Marxism forms the central theme of Lyotard's text. Thus, after explaining his years with the Marxist group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and the journal of the same name, Lyotard justifies the re-publication of his "old" articles in the following way:

14 STORA 2001a. For a detailed and subtle description of the larger context and atmosphere of the October riots and of the unsuccessful process of democratization, see EVANS AND PHILLIPS 2007, 103–76. See also MARTINEZ 2000.

15 Lyotard's introductory text "The Name Algeria" is dated at the end "June 1989". Just before the signature and the date, Lyotard writes: «At least a testimony will have been made to this intractability that, at one time, bore the name Algeria, and that endures.» LYOTARD AND RAMDANI 1989, 39.

I have also remembered my debt to the group for another reason. By placing our struggle under the sign of a fidelity to the intractable [*fidélité à l'intraversable*], I mean that the 'work' we did can and must be continued, even when everything indicates that Marxism is finished with as a revolutionary perspective (and doubtless every truly revolutionary perspective is finished with), when the intractable voice or the voice of the intractable is no longer heard in Western societies on the social and political wavelengths. The radicality of Socialism or Barbarism, if one were to be faithful to its form, would remain a dead letter under present conditions.¹⁶

On the surface, Lyotard is presenting the reprinting of his articles as a complex change of context—a personal move from the heterodox Marxist context of interpretation and projection accepted in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* to the postmodern context of the 1980s for which he became one of the leading exponents. The same events in Algeria, the same texts about the war, changed their meaning by changing their context of interpretation. From the “realm of social and political struggles” in the mid-20th century, and the expectations involved in it from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, they were projected into a new, postmodern realm in which the revolutionary perspective lost its meaning. Lyotard even goes so far as to advance that «it is inaccurate and intellectually dishonest to impose the hope that, as Marxists, we should only invest in the revolutionary activity of the industrial proletariat, upon the freely spontaneous activities of [...] the people of the Third World».¹⁷ With the collapse of Marxism and soon the communist bloc, the war of the Algerians can no longer be projected into the great narratives of emancipation. It has gained a new ontological, political and epistemological status with the fall of the developmental concept of history and with the 1988 riots and the ensuing political process.

16 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 168.

17 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 169.

To understand Lyotard's words adequately, a few biographical facts must be considered. In 1950, Lyotard (aged 26) met Pierre Souyri (1925-1979) in the Algerian city of Constantine, where they had both been high-school teachers for two years. This encounter and the friendship that sparked between the young philosopher and this already experienced political activist and Marxist analyst led Lyotard to join the radical and highly heterodox Marxism of Socialisme ou Barbarie.¹⁸ Following their return to France in 1952, they both joined the group, formed by Castoriadis and Lefort, in about 1954. So it was in Algeria, in the peculiar late-colonial situation of a young teacher coming from the "*métropole*" to teach in Constantine, that Lyotard took the path of a radical and critical Marxism. This educational and colonial mission with which the young philosophy professor was charged met with «the immensity of the injustice. An entire people, from a great civilization, wronged, humiliated, denied their identity.»¹⁹ This dual encounter with colonial injustice and with a fascinating friend capable of interpreting it in an authentic Marxist idiom ignited in Lyotard a political, moral and philosophical vocation:

When the group Socialism or Barbarism gave me responsibility for the Algerian section in 1955, Algeria did not name a 'question' of revolutionary politics for me, it was also the name of a debt. I owed and I owe my awakening, *tout court*, to Constantine.²⁰

Confronted with the demise of Marxism and the communist bloc in Europe, Lyotard looks back at his years of radical commitment that began with meeting Souyri in Algeria and tries to distinguish between what is dead, namely «Marxism» and any «revolutionary perspective», and what will and should survive, which he names the «fidelity to the intractable». Yet, Lyotard did not observe the collapse of Marxism as an observer external to his historical environment. He

18 For a description of the first meeting with Pierre Souyri, see LYOTARD, 1993 1990, 120–3.

19 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 170.

20 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993.

contributed to it, as the two earlier-mentioned books, *The Postmodern Condition* and *The Differend*, clearly attested. Lyotard's path out of revolutionary activism in the late 1960s dissolved the bond of friendship with his early political mentor, Souyri.²¹

As for the complex historical process launched by the 1988 riots and their impact on the one-party regime of the FLN– the other historical background to the re-publication of Lyotard's articles on the Algerian war– Mohammed Ramdani interprets it as a «striking testimony» in favor of Lyotard's early criticism of the nationalism of the FLN and of its implementation after independence. Lyotard's perspicacity stood in sharp contrast to French «intelligentsia on the left», who «participated more in nationalistic mythology, made their own and propagated the fictions and stories of nationalism than thought about the theoretical-practical reality of nationalism in the figure of the FLN».²² Ramdani mocks Sartre's repeated justification of anticolonial nationalism as «the only way out that the Algerians have to put an end to their exploitation».²³ Reminding his readers how the French left in the interwar period rejected the Algerian national movement,²⁴ he explains that its later conversion to anticolonial nationalism after World War II came out of the same «gravely erroneous analysis of the Algerian problem»; i.e., out of the same developmental historical concept which justified at turns the rejection of nationalism in favor of the building of an Algerian proletariat, and later its adoption as a necessary solution:

[I]t is in the name of nationalism that democracy and socialism have lost their chances in Algeria, in the name of nationalism that human rights have been undermined since independence, that the proletariat and the peasantry have been muzzled, that

21 It is well known that Lyotard did not wait for the actual collapse of the communist bloc to develop a highly critical attitude towards Marxism. See, for example, LYOTARD 1990, 95–102, where he relates his resignation from the group *Pouvoir Ouvrier* in 1966 and the end of his friendship with Souyri.

22 LYOTARD AND RAMDANI 1989, 18.

23 LYOTARD AND RAMDANI, 19.

24 See STORA 1982, 65–92.

criticism has been equated with subversion, and that the freedom and emancipation of the Algerian people and youth have been postponed. From this, the riots in October 1988 bear a stunning testimony. Jean-François Lyotard gives to understand that the signs of the degeneration of the FLN were already clear during the war.²⁵

By collecting Lyotard's long-forgotten and somewhat esoteric articles into a book published at this turning point in Algerian history, Ramdani and the entire editorial team wanted to impact the historical outlook of French intellectual readership, showing them its erroneous approach all through the 20th century.

It is important to contextualize this editorial decision. The October 1988 riots were the culmination of a decade of deep changes in the Algerian State and society.²⁶ Following the death of Houari Boumediene, the leading political figure of the newly independent Algeria, in 1978, and the severe economic crisis resulting from the deepening of foreign debt, the new President, Chadli Bendjedid, initiated a policy of reforms. It involved progressively abandoning Boumediene's socialist model and adapting the economy and the State to measures of economic liberalization demanded by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, but also to the spirit of Gorbachev's perestroika. Chadli's new political and economic orientation produced a conflict of interests with the old guard of the FLN. This conflict within the State was amplified and exacerbated by the internal tensions and changes already underway in Algerian society during the 1980s. In their analysis of the political and social background of the 1988 riots, Evans and Phillips underline three main factors. First, the Algerian youth of the 1980s, confronted with mass unemployment and the provocative wealth of the elites, developed a counter-culture disconnected from the tenets of the state ideology of the FLN.²⁷ Secondly, the Berber Spring in 1980 and its aftermath

25 LYOTARD AND RAMDANI 1989, 19.

26 EVANS AND PHILLIPS 2007, 103–42; STORA 2001b, 77–97.

27 EVANS AND PHILLIPS 2007, 107–11.

challenged the official conception of the «Algerian national identity as being Arab-Muslim» and promoted a conception of pluralism and democracy.²⁸ Thirdly, during the 1980s, the Islamist movement grew and became both an instrument of the FLN State in order to cope with its own failures and an independent movement drawing on foreign sources of inspiration and attracting more and more of the new Algerian youth.²⁹ To sum up, the 1980s in Algeria were years in which the State elites as well as the wider Algerian society challenged and eventually damaged the official ideology and justification of the FLN State based on a mixture of Islamo-populism, nationalism and socialism. As a consequence, the amalgam which formed the state ideology decomposed into conflicting elements: the national apparatus, the promise of social justice and Islam.

By re-publishing Lyotard's articles on the Algerian war in the dual context of the fall of communism and the decomposition of the FLN State in Algeria, Lyotard, Ramdani and the Galilée publishing house tried to address this double collapse. This renewed publication suggested looking back at the Algerian war and at the first years of independence as a moment in which postcolonial nationalism and socialism merged into a bureaucratic and repressive State.³⁰ Against the former hopes that the struggles against colonialism would lead to a revolutionary situation and eventually to socialism, the reading of Lyotard's "old" articles in the new 1989 context was supposed to establish the fact that the wars of liberation did not bring about socialism, but a kind of repetition of the failure of the Russian Revolution.³¹ This editorial operation raises a difficult question: was the reading of Lyotard's early criticism of the FLN ideology and praxis enough to establish Lyotard's postmodern thesis on history and to provide a key to understand the shift of 1989?

28 EVANS AND PHILLIPS 2007, 122–5.

29 EVANS AND PHILLIPS 2007, 125–7. See also Kepel 2006, 159–76.

30 Benjamin Stora elaborates on the effect of the «return to the Algerian war of 1954–1962» due to the «civil» war of the 1990s. See STORA 2001a, 51–68.

31 To feel the hope and the disappointment, it is worth reading LEFORT 1947 and CASTORIADIS 1964.

3. A forgotten context

If the re-publication of Lyotard's articles in 1989 was meant to celebrate the new postmodern condition, and the concrete and possible liberation it offered from the 19th-century metanarratives and regimes built on them, it was nonetheless missing an important dimension. A dimension linked neither to the collapse of the communist bloc nor to the Algerian political crisis, but to postcolonial France or even postmodern France. Since the end of World War II, greater numbers of Muslim Algerians had begun to migrate to metropolitan France. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, a wide range of reasons led to a significant increase in Algerian immigration to France. Thus, the census of 1975 counted 710,000 Algerian foreign residents in France out of a total population of 54 million.³² In those years, as Algerian immigration was progressively reaching the size of a mass phenomenon, the memory of the Algerian war in France remained mostly secluded in family settings. In his important book *La gangrène et l'oubli*, Benjamin Stora showed that at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, with the sweeping amnesty of the criminals of the Algerian war and their reintegration into the French army, the repressed memory of the war returned, shaping public discourse on the Algerian immigrant and on postcolonial immigration in general. From the 1962 Evian agreements establishing the independent Algerian state to the left-wing government of François Mitterrand in the 1980s, a series of decrees and laws constructed «the oblivion of the Algerian war».³³ As summed up by Stora, the law of 1982 «rehabilitates executives, officers and generals convicted or sanctioned for having participated in the subversion against the republic. The putschists [against General de Gaulle in 1961] become again members of the French army in November 1982.»³⁴

32 See WEIL 2008, 152.

33 STORA 1998, 281–2.

34 STORA 1998, 282–3 (my translation).

This new law of amnesty paved the way for the return of the colonialist far right into the French politics of the 1980s. Jean-Marie Le Pen, an officer in the Algerian war allegedly guilty of acts of torture as a member of special units of the French army, succeeded throughout the 1980s to lead his far-right movement, Front National, from 0.8% at the presidential elections in 1981 to 14.5% at the presidential elections in 1988. Since then, his movement has remained a stable political force, recently growing to 40% at the 2022 elections. Le Pen's successful discourse allowed the colonial and racist concepts of French imperialism to return to the forefront, this time shaping the attitude towards Algerian immigrant. «The former colonized, by his intrusion into the metropole, is perceived as colonizing the territory of 'the civilized' .»³⁵ This image of the Algerian immigrant as a "conqueror" in Le Pen's discourse was related to the complex affirmation of the dual identity of the second generation linked to Algerian immigration, called "*beurs*". On the one hand, the *beurs* became French citizens resulting from the fact that they were born in France to parents born on French soil, Algeria being before 1962 a French *department*. This legal situation was largely new, since it naturalized sons and daughters of Muslim Algerians, giving them retrospectively the same rights as Catholics and Jews in Algeria. This naturalization happened bureaucratically, in silence, without mentioning more than a century of exclusion and *indigénat*, nor referring to the Algerian war. The *beurs*, however, were scions of a long and complex colonial history. They could not nor did they want to give up their national and religious identity as Muslim Algerians, following the regular course of assimilation expected by the French State and society. During the 1980s, a series of events—riots followed by police repression; marches for justice; the foundation of political, cultural and religious movements and institutions—made clear that the previous model of republican assimilation was challenged by the pluralism of identities reclaimed by the *beurs*. French and Algerian citizenship, Islam and the popular counter-culture of the suburbs, demands for social justice and

35 STORA 1998, 289 (my translation).

French universalism were mixed together in the figure of the *beur*. A few weeks after the publication of Lyotard's book *La guerre des Algériens*, the affair of the "Islamic veil" exploded in October 1989 in the suburban city of Creil and later in the entire country, crystalizing the new tensions of postmodern France far away from the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.³⁶

In sharp contrast to the picture depicted in the newly written introductions to *La guerre des Algériens*, the differend was not applying only to an Algerian postcolonial national regime in crisis, nor to socialist regimes collapsing in the Eastern bloc. The French national-republican regime together with its broad cultural and philosophical apparatus was entering a crisis that even perspicacious critiques like Lyotard and Ramdani were not willing to engage with. The postmodern condition was not only a problem in Algeria or in the communist bloc, nor a problem of a frame of interpretation in the West. It was decomposing postcolonial France in at least three components: the old republican regime, the far-right movements and a postcolonial society searching to affirm its multicultural and multireligious dimensions. The paradox, which will now be exposed in the following pages, is that Lyotard's old articles on the Algerian war were pointing at this decomposition and the contradictions of late-colonial France. And yet in the 1989 re-publication, this dimension was largely forgotten in favor of Lyotard's concepts of the postmodern condition and differend.

4. The particular versus the general lessons of the Algerian war

The originality of Lyotard's approach to the Algerian conflict in his series of articles for the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (1956–63) can be sensed in his interpretation of the general strike of the Algerians in January 1957, a central episode in the Battle of Algiers in that same

36 STORA 1998, 297–300.

year.³⁷ In his fourth article on the Algerian war, entitled «A New Phase in the Algerian Question», Lyotard writes two striking paragraphs on the «significance of the strike»:

The wage earners and the shopkeepers broke the minimum of solidarity that, *in fact*, links people, even within a torn society, and that extends, *in fact*, the gesture of a baker, a dock worker, or an administrator to the status of a social activity. Thus the repressive apparatus was, at the beginning of the strike, *isolated* from social reality; it appeared as a massive organization but nevertheless as lacking weight. In abandoning their function, the Muslim workers performed (on a lesser scale, but in the same way as the Hungarian workers) the most radical critique of the state there is. They concretely revealed its abstraction.

But a dictator without a popular arm to twist resembles a paranoiac. The repressive apparatus, abandoned by social reality, reconstructed the scenario of an imaginary 'reality': one by one, with trucks loaded with machine guns and blaring Arab music (the supreme psychological ruse of our specialists of the Muslim soul), they went to drive workers, schoolchildren, petty officials, primary-school teachers out of their homes. They put them in their place. Then, the proconsul came down from the palace, walked a few paces surrounded by guards in the rue Michelet, and had the goodness to judge this scenario convincing.³⁸

Lyotard focuses here on a temporary situation: the strike of January 1957. This situation is not interpreted merely in terms of its concrete efficiency for the struggle of the Algerians for independence. It is analyzed as a genuine expression of what Lyotard calls in his introduction to the book «the inventive quality of the immediate

37 STORA 2001c, 49–56.

38 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 189–90. (original emphasis)

practice of workers' struggle».³⁹ The Algerians did not defeat the French colonial state by simply refraining from work. Yet, by this momentary suspension of any activity, they found a very effective means to reveal both the externality of the colonial state and its fundamental need for the participation of the Algerians in its projects. Only three years before writing these lines for *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Lyotard had published a book entitled *La phénoménologie* in the prestigious collection *Que sais-je?* Lyotard's analysis of the strike bears much similitude with his description of Husserl's *epoché*:

This is the true meaning of bracketing: it brings the gaze of consciousness back to itself, it converts the direction of the gaze and by suspending the world, removes the veil which hid its own truth from the ego [...] The position of the world has been 'put out of action', not annihilated: it remains alive although in a 'modified' form, which allows consciousness to be fully aware of itself.⁴⁰

Confronted with this suspension of its concrete social implementation, the State responded by manifesting itself as an external repressive apparatus, visible to every Algerian. This repressive apparatus was now engaged in a grotesque endeavor (later called the Battle of Algiers): recreating the social order that benefited colonialism. As Lyotard puts it in another article for *Socialisme ou Barbarie*: «The absurdity of the military task in Algeria is that it wants at the same time to manage Algeria *with* the Algerians and *without* them (not to say *against* them).»⁴¹ The farcical tone of the description of the military

39 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 166.

40 LYOTARD 1978, 25 (my translation).

41 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 266–7. (original emphasis) The theme of inclusion–exclusion is also central to Castoriadis' post-Marxist conception of «modern capitalism»: «La contradiction profonde de cette société ... réside dans le fait que le capitalisme (et cela arrive a son paroxysme sous le capitalisme bureaucratique) est obligé d'essayer de réaliser simultanément l'exclusion et la participation des gens par rapport à leurs activités, que les homes sont astreints de faire fonctionner le système la moitié du temps *contre* les règles et donc en lutte contre lui» (Castoriadis, «Recommencer la révolution» in

repression and brutal «return to normality» touches the very essence of the «inventive quality of the immediate practice» of the Algerians. Without changing anything, it forced the colonial system to reveal its historical and constructed nature. Moreover, it forced French colonialism to reveal its inner and insoluble contradiction:

For this absurdity [of the military task in Algeria] is nothing other than the very absurdity of capitalist society transposed onto the terrain of Algeria, where violence brings it fully to light: in the factory, as well, the employers try to make the workers participate in the organization of their work but only within the framework of methods and objectives defined by the employers themselves, that is without ever letting the workers actually manage. In this respect, the Algerian war is exemplary because it crystallizes and strips bare the most fundamental contradiction of the capitalist world, the only one that is truly insoluble within the system itself.⁴²

This inner and concealed contradiction of French colonialism in Algeria and of capitalism in general is then brilliantly articulated later in the article with «the crisis in [French] society over the past fifteen years». Lyotard understands this crisis in terms of depoliticization: «The problem posed by this profound erosion of activities and ideals is precisely that of how to know *how*, by *what means* the revolutionary project can henceforth express itself, organize itself, fight. A certain idea of politics dies in this society.»⁴³ Notwithstanding this audacious association of the decline of French colonialism and a new metropolitan phenomenon of decomposition of the revolutionary organizations in the left, the older Lyotard in his 1989 introduction to the book did not consider it an insight worth being developed. Indeed, when he attempts to extract from his earlier writings and engagement a philosophical lesson still valid for his contemporary readership, he is

SOCIALISME OU BARBARIE 2007, 289).

42 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 267. (original emphasis)

43 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 276. (original emphasis)

more inclined to amend his earlier notion of contradiction with his new concept of «the intractable»:

A system can be as exhaustively provided as possible with information, with memory, with anticipatory and defensive mechanisms, even with openness towards events– the idea that guided Socialism or Barbarism was ultimately, even if it was expressed in other terms, the idea that there is something within the system that it cannot, in principle, *deal with*. Something that a system must, by virtue of its nature, overlook. And if history, especially modern history, is not simply a tale of development, the result of an automatic process of selection by trial and error, this is because ‘something intractable’ is hidden and remains lodged at the secret heart of everything that fits into the system, something that cannot fail to make things happen in it [*d’y faire événements*].⁴⁴

Lyotard’s later reformulation of the major lesson of his political engagement and critique around the Algerian war leaves aside one of his most original insights on late-colonial and postcolonial France in favor of a more general lesson encapsulated in the new concept of the intractable. This term defines a global frame of interpretation which points at the necessarily hidden background of historical events. No state, no colonial empire, no revolutionary movement, no social organization, no system of information can master the differend, the intractable at work in its midst. Merging his earlier work in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* with his later philosophical thesis on the decline of metanarratives and on the lack of a «universal rule of judgment between heterogeneous genres», Lyotard favored a general claim regarding history as an open-ended process resulting from a hidden but radical heterogeneity to a more particular appreciation or critique of French history articulating the Enlightenment, the Revolution, the French Empire and postmodern and postcolonial France. By choosing a

44 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 166. (original emphasis)

general lesson concerning history in general over a particular lesson concerning French colonial and postcolonial history, Lyotard was offering a more attractive and global frame of interpretation, while positioning France and the Western cultural sphere as less committed to metanarratives and more dedicated to enabling and voicing the deployment of the differend and the intractable in history as an open-ended process.

5. Colonial and postcolonial nationalism

The potentialities and limits of Lyotard's reformulation of the Marxist notion of contradiction with the term "intractable" can be demonstrated with another major contribution of Lyotard's articles on the Algerian war. This concerns the ways in which he analyzes the intractable in the late Algerian colonial State and in the first months after independence in 1962. Lyotard's starting point is a harsh criticism of the Marxist interpretation of the colonial society in terms of classes. The reason for this break with classical Marxism, a typical attitude of the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, is to be found in the silence and the muzzling of political opposition in France vis-à-vis the terrible repression during the year 1957. Mentioning the indirect support of the socialist and communist parties for the repression in Algeria, Lyotard adds boldly: «we must admit that the French working class has not, in all honesty, fought against the war in Algeria in the past two years». ⁴⁵ This lack of solidarity with the Algerians on the basis of class or party famously prompted an expression of support for the Algerian struggle outside the official organizations of the French left. It also prompted Lyotard to tackle the intellectual taboos of the French left, like the supposed «solidarity between the proletariat and the colonized»:

45 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 198.

When concepts or schemas are refuted by historical reality over a period of forty years, the task of revolutionaries is to discard them without remorse and to replace them with others that make an effective struggle possible.⁴⁶

Lyotard's «complete revision of the question of colonialism» insisted on the reality of anticolonial nationalism, as being capable of mobilizing «all the Algerian classes in the struggle for independence», as well as «all Europeans in Algeria» against it. «The nationalist ideology (like the colonialist ideology that is its counterpart) is not a mere fiction.»⁴⁷ This acknowledgment of conflicting nationalisms in the late phase of colonialism shed light on the defection of the French left to the cause of Algerian nationalism not only during the war, but also a long time prior to it:

This attitude was not born yesterday. In 1936, the Communist party violently attacked the Messalists; it denounced them as allies of the fascist colonists. The Muslim Congress of January 1937 (there was not yet an Algerian Communist party) in Algiers expelled the members of the Etoile nord-africaine, who sang the hymn of independence, from the room; finally it 'allowed' the Etoile to be dissolved by Blum without comment.⁴⁸

Lyotard refers here courageously to the failed attempt of the Front Populaire in 1936 to reform the status of some Algerian Muslim citizens, granting 20,000 of them full citizenship without having to renounce their obedience to Islam. The famous leader of the Algerian interwar nationalism, Messali Hadj, was ready to compromise, yet he rejected this reform of French colonialism in Algeria, claiming that

46 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 198. On the topic, see also FANON 1961; MÉMMI 1957.

47 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 198.

48 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 209.

our country is now administratively attached to France and depends on its central authority. But this attachment was the consequence of a brutal conquest, followed by a military occupation which currently relies upon the 19th army corps, and to which the people had never given their support.⁴⁹

These and other claims brought about the expulsion and dissolution of Hadj's nationalist party and later Hadj's imprisonment. All this under the leftist government of the Front Populaire. There is a parallelism between the French left's refusal to acknowledge the importance of the national dimension of the struggle of the Algerians and the practical exclusion of the Algerians from French leftist organizations. Before and even during the Algerian war, there had been no significant convergence of the French workers and the Algerian Muslims because of the importance of the national identification. Lyotard's insight on the French left's incapacity to grasp conceptually, practically and morally the national divide in colonial Algeria raises seminal questions for postcolonial France. Yet, it must be said that Lyotard rarely approaches the complex articulation of Islam and nationalism in Algerian nationalism and accepts the term "nationalism" as "a lived reality" with far less criticism than the one showed vis-à-vis the Marxist term of "class".

Beyond the explanation-acknowledgment of the nationalistic nature of the Algerian struggle, for external reasons linked to the failures of the French left, Lyotard proposes an internal explanation centered around the concept of «the burying of class antagonisms in colonial society». Indeed, as described in his article «Algerian Contradictions Exposed», the social and class distinctions are blurred by the national distinction between colonizers and colonized:

It is true that in itself the Algerian struggle has not found a manifest class content in the formulation given to it by the Front. Is it because the Front, insofar it is made up of a

49 SIMON 2000, 24 (my translation).

bourgeois leadership, *wants* to stifle this class content? No doubt. But it is also because it *can*. And if the French left in this case can so easily lose its Marxism, or whatever else it uses as a substitute, it is because the peculiarity of Algerian colonial society lies in the fact that class borders are deeply buried under *national* borders. It is in a complete *abstract* way, that is, exclusively *economistic*, that one can speak of *a* proletariat, *a* middle class and *a* bourgeoisie in Algeria. If there is *a* peasantry, it is because it is entirely and exclusively Algerian, and it is this class that evidently constitutes the social base of the national movement, at the same time that it is the clearest expression of the radical expropriation that workers undergo as Algerians.⁵⁰

In an effort to define the Algerian self-perception of their social position in the colonial society, Lyotard endorses the concept of the “people” in the following way: «a people [...] that is an amalgam of antagonistic social strata [...] the consciousness of that elementary solidarity without which there would not even be a society». By analyzing seriously the nationalistic nature of the struggle of the Algerians, Lyotard reveals that it is informed by the very structure of the colonial society, namely the burying of class antagonisms in national differences. «Colonization both creates the conditions of this complementarity [between the contradictory elements of the people] and blocks its development», meaning the development of the internal social tensions within the Algerian people. Therefore, «the consciousness of being expropriated from oneself can [...] only be nationalistic».⁵¹

The grand finale in Lyotard’s analysis of the national struggle of the Algerians is without doubt his analysis of the first months of the new Algerian State, of postcolonial Algeria.⁵² In an article on the situation

50 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 210 (original emphasis).

51 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 212.

52 For a description of the first years of the independent Algerian State, see STORA 2001b, 7–32.

in 1962–63 entitled «Algeria Evacuated», Lyotard implements again his earlier understanding of colonial and anticolonial nationalism:

The masses left the stage at the moment when ‘politics’ entered it. A group of men, borrowing some of the recent energy of the passion for independence, attempted to provide *for* the Algerians (intended for them, but in their place) some goals and some means around which they might unite once more. But when the masses are missing from the construction of a society, the result of this difficult process of construction is only the simulacrum of a state.⁵³

This simulacrum of a state is also designated as «the construction of the state from the top down». In this situation, the particular interest of economic and military leading agents and the general social and economic problems of the Algerian society are blurred by the nationalistic perception of the war of liberation, which created a strong amalgam between the FLN apparatus and the national Algerian quest. As a consequence, «the workers could not set themselves the problem they were unable to solve: that of putting an end to exploitation».⁵⁴ The advantages of anticolonial nationalism (the appeal to all strata of the Algerian society) became in the postcolonial situation a disadvantage, making it impossible to articulate the interests of the exploited majority (peasants and workers) against the national leadership, party and army formed in the period of the national struggle. The postcolonial situation thus reveals the problems of the national amalgam used to finish the colonial domination. This provoked in Algeria a double phenomenon, according to Lyotard. First, «a society absent from itself» and second, an abstract and later bureaucratic state. This double historical process clearly recalls Lyotard’s analysis of the strike of 1957, when the Algerians deserted the colonial society and the abstraction of the French State. If in the first phase of the war, according to Lyotard, the Algerians made

53 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 303. (original emphasis)

54 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 303.

themselves absent from the colonial society, after the war, in the first phase of the new postcolonial State, the Algerians deserted or were excluded from the process of state-building. This repetition was deeply connected with the burying of class antagonism in Algerian colonial society, and with the great difficulty for the colonial society of perceiving itself other than in nationalistic terms.⁵⁵

«No revolution took place», concludes Lyotard in the first paragraph of «Algeria Evacuated». He depicts the postcolonial moment as a moment of relapse between a “no longer” («the momentum that animated the masses in the course of the nationalist struggle is now gone») and a “not yet” («the problems that assail the workers, which the present leadership’s policy is incapable of resolving, will end by making conditions ripe for a new intervention by the masses»)⁵⁶. The burying of class antagonism in the national liberation makes of the postcolonial situation an in-between time between the revolution that could not happen and «the revolution [that] remains to be made». Yet the originality of Lyotard’s analysis consisted in juxtaposing the colonial and postcolonial Algerian failure with the failure of the French workers’ movement which gave birth to a general phenomenon of “depoliticization” in parallel with the end of colonialism and the beginning of postcolonial France.

This idea of a global and radical transformation of society seems absent from the present attitude of the workers, along with the idea that collective action can bring about this

55 This conclusion of Lyotard raises many questions that should be confronted with Said’s project of a critical study of Orientalism. «Lastly», writes Said, «for readers in the so-called Third World, this study proposes itself as a step towards an understanding not so much of Western politics and of the non-Western World in those politics as of the *strength* of Western cultural discourse, a strength too often mistaken as merely decorative or ‘superstructural’. My hope is to illustrate the formidable structure of cultural domination and, specifically for formerly colonized peoples, the dangers and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or upon others.» SAID 1978, 25. (original emphasis)

56 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 293.

transformation. The spread of this depoliticization greatly exceeds implicit criticism of the parties and the unions.⁵⁷

6. Epilogue: the postmodern withdrawal

Lyotard's early analyses of the repeated failure of the French colonial state and of the young Algerian independent state were shedding light on the postcolonial differend, and the intractable in *métropole* France and in Algeria. The national Algerian question could not be heard, nor solved by the French colonial state or the French left. This fueled a political and military movement and apparatus which liberated the Algerians from French colonialism, but could not give them the means of their auto-emancipation. This colonial and postcolonial conundrum circulated between Algeria and France from 1963, the date of Lyotard's last article on Algeria, to 1989, the date of the re-publication of *La guerre des Algériens*. Lyotard's unique mixture of support for the militants of the FLN and a critique of their organization was becoming particularly relevant in the context of the revolt against the FLN state, the unacknowledged postcolonial crisis in France and the collapse of the communist bloc in Europe. It could produce a kind of explanation, a kind of justification for a new practice. The question was, of course: which kind of explanation and justification? The philosophical evolution of Lyotard in the late 1970s and in the 1980s centered around the postmodern decline of metanarratives, and the irreducible differend between genres of speech decided the kind of interpretation to be extracted from the earlier articles but also from the time elapsed since the end of the Algerian war.

In this very tense political context of the failure of socialist states and of anticolonial liberation, Lyotard decided to inscribe his own philosophical shift as a new frame of interpretation while labeling it a fidelity to the spirit of his earlier engagement:

57 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 269.

Fidelity does not consist in maintaining the revolutionary tradition at any cost when the intractable has fallen silent in the realm in which it has spoken for over a century, that is, in the realm of social and political struggles. I am not claiming that one should cease to take interest in that realm. Rather, those struggles no longer demand 'work', this work of spirit, of body and soul, that was required in order to hear them and take part in them only thirty years ago. It seems to me that they do not demand anything more than intellectual, ethical and civic probity.⁵⁸

Liotard framed his personal shift juxtaposing his earlier claim on depoliticization in France and in Algeria and his newer claim on the postmodern historical condition: «the political [is] ceasing or would cease to be the privileged site in which the intractable [appears]». ⁵⁹ In order to be faithful in 1989 to the genuine work of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, to be faithful to the discovery of the internal contradictions through the inventiveness of social struggles, Lyotard tells his readers that one has to acknowledge the failure of the political expression of these contradictions in the revolutionary organizations and states. Furthermore, the withdrawal from the political sphere—as the major sphere of projection into metanarratives—is the condition to be able to detect new forms of the “intractable”, to reveal them and to testify for them. I hope to have demonstrated that Lyotard’s own withdrawal justified by a general framework of historical interpretation made him miss the challenges of the postcolonial situation in France and in Algeria. And this at the very moment when the Algerians were struggling towards “democratic” or “Islamist” changes, at the very moment when France was confusedly struggling with its new postcolonial condition and its colonial past. Lyotard’s concepts of the postmodern condition and *differend* led him to overemphasize the collapse of Marxism and the communist bloc in Europe. No doubt it fitted his own personal evolution out of Marxism. It led him to find the

58 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 168–9.

59 LYOTARD, READINGS AND GEIMAN 1993, 169.

answer to the puzzling political question of 1989 in his concept of radical heterogeneity at work in history as exposed in *The Differend* (1983):

The only insurmountable obstacle that the hegemony of the economic genre comes up against is the heterogeneity of phrase regiments and of genres of discourses. This is because there is not 'language' and 'Being' but occurrences. The obstacle does not depend upon the 'will' of human beings in one sense or in another but upon the differend. The differend is reborn from the very resolutions of supposed litigations. It summons humans to situate themselves in unknown phrase universes.⁶⁰

Lyotard's work in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* was to voice the social and historical struggles around the Algerian war from within, rather than from above. This made him discover the postcolonial conundrum of France and Algeria. With his philosophical shift in the 1970s and 1980s, Lyotard elevated radical heterogeneity, a differend necessarily appearing in different historical contexts, as the only reasonable hope. Therefore, the riots in Algeria, the collapse of the communist bloc in Europe and even the postcolonial crisis of France were for him good signs, attesting to the invincibility of historical happenings against metanarratives. They were reestablishing a heterogeneity that has been long concealed. The role of the philosopher was thus to participate in this affirmation of heterogeneity. And this was without a doubt the sense of the re-publication of *La guerre des Algériens* in 1989. The later evolution of Algeria (civil war and a return to a military regime), of France (the postmodern decline of French republic) and the populist evolution of the former communist bloc have shown that the elevation of heterogeneity into a key historical category and ethical norm is but a fleeting illusion, a withdrawal from the political question of the postmodern and postcolonial condition.

⁶⁰ LYOTARD 1988, 181.

References

- AÏT-AOUDIA, M. 2015. *L'expérience démocratique en Algérie (1988-1992) : Apprentissages politiques et changement de régime*. Paris: Presse de Science Po.
- CASTORIADIS, C. 1964. «Recommencer la revolution». *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, 36, 1–36.
- EVANS, M., and PHILLIPS, J. 2007. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- FANON, F. 1961. *Les damnés de la terre*. Paris: François Maspéro.
- KEPEL, G. 2006. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.
- LEFORT, C. 1947. «Les pays coloniaux; Analyse structurelle et stratégie révolutionnaire». *Les Temps Modernes*, 18, 1068–94 (reprinted in Lefort, C. 2007. *Le temps présent : écrits 1945-2005*. Paris: Belin, 49–75).
- LYOTARD, J.-F. 1978. *La phénoménologie*. Paris: Presse Universitaire de France.
- 1983. *Le différend*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.
- 1988. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- 1990. «Mémorial pour un marxisme: Pierre Souyri», in *Pérégrinations*. Paris: Galilée.
- 1991. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- LYOTARD, J.-F., and RAMDANI, T. 1989. *La guerre des Algériens : écrits 1956-1963*. Paris: Galilée.
- LYOTARD, J.-F., READINGS, B., and GEIMAN, K. P. 1993. *Political Writings*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- MARTINEZ, L. 2000. *The Algerian Civil War 1990–1998*. Trans. by J. Derrick. London: C. Hurst & Co.
- MÉMMI, A. 1957. *Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur*. Paris: Gallimard.
- SAID, E. W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- SIMON, J. 2000. *Messali Hadj par les textes*. Condé-sur-Noireau: Editions Bouchènes.
- SOCIALISME OU BARBARIE. 2007. *Socialisme ou Barbarie Anthologie*. Le Mans: Acratie.
- STORA, B. 1982. *Messali Hadj (1898-1974) : Pionnier du nationalisme algérien*. Paris: Sycomore.
- 1998. *La gangrène et l'oubli : La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie*. Paris: La Découverte.
- 2001a. *La guerre invisible : Algérie, années 90*. Paris: Presse de Sciences Po.
- 2001b. *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance (1962-1988)*. Paris: La Découverte.
- 2001c. *Algeria 1830–2000: A Short History*. Trans. by J. M. Todd. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- WEIL, P. 2008. *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making*. Trans. by C. Porter. Durham and London: Duke University Press.