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**Producing Ambiguous Threats: The Xenos and Xenophobia in  
Postcolonial France**

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# **Producing Ambiguous Threats**

## **The *Xenos* and Xenophobia in Postcolonial France**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the University of Westminster  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**University of Westminster**  
School of Social Sciences  
Centre for the Study of Democracy

2022

## **Abstract**

In a Western postcolonial society like France, some subjects are produced as threats and persecuted accordingly because they are ambiguous, that is, neither similar nor different, neither one thing nor its opposite. This research groups those subjects under the analytical term *xenos* (both the host and the guest in the ancient Greek hospitality) and studies three figures of the *xenos* in postcolonial France: the homosexual Arab man, the intersex person, and the foreigner. To understand how those ambiguous subjects are produced as threats, this research reworks the notion of xenophobia away from its traditional meaning to analyse practices of subjectification that have emerged beside the traditional binary, dominating Western differentiation (e.g., French/stranger). To that end, it resorts to a Foucaultian archaeology to analyse the regularity of discursive and non-discursive practices of subjectification – like xenophobic discourse, knowledge, and persecution – which form a xenophobic apparatus. Through archaeology, this research analyses, on the one hand, the intensification of fear entailed by xenophobia, and, on the other hand, the strategy of disambiguation articulated through the xenophobic apparatus. Indeed, after being produced as an ambiguous threat, the *xenos* is legitimately disambiguated into a similar or different subject through xenophobic knowledge and persecution. Because the *xenos* is both dominated and allegedly threatening, this research approaches this ambiguous subject through the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity. Yet, because the *xenos* emerges beside the binary opposition between identity and difference, they cannot be analysed under the poststructuralist difference, especially since the latter is a tool for subversion while the *xenos*' ambiguity is here problematised in relation with xenophobia. Additionally, this research extrapolates from the historicisation of the political and epistemological problematisation of difference since Foucault's "classical age" to demonstrate that the problematisation of ambiguity is typically postcolonial. In the end, by analysing the subjectification of the *xenos* in postcolonial France, this research demonstrates that differentiation and political opposition are not exclusively binary.

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## **Acknowledgements**

Throughout the four years which were necessary to write this thesis, I have understood that, even if you think that you are aware of the difficulties which constitute a doctoral degree, nothing can prepare you to the intensity of doubt, frustration, and isolation experienced during what is euphemistically called “a journey”. Only the people you knew before you started and those you have met after can remind you of the reasons which brought you there and make you realise how important it is that you have been given time and resources to learn, think, and write, no matter how hard it is – especially because it is hard. Only they can tell you about this fire that kindles in your eyes when you start talking about what you have just read, how it has unsettled you, how it has made you think differently, how it has led you to a new path in your research. Only they can acknowledge your distress and, at the same time, put it in perspective with the world around. I would therefore like to express my gratitude and affection to some of those people.

First, to my director of studies, Dr Paulina Tambakaki. Thank you for believing that the initial project could become a PhD thesis. Thank you for encouraging me to get lost at the beginning, for reminding me that spending so much time on a topic chosen by me would constitute a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and for pointing at directions that were always stimulating. Thank you for letting this research be transformed throughout the years while always giving me in-depth feedback to make sure that the argument would hold. Thank you for coping with my anxiety, doubts, and frustration. Thank you for putting my wellbeing first in any situation and supporting me when I needed it. Thank you for the long discussions in your office, outside, online – your time has been precious. Thank you for sharing your experience and your work-in-progress with me, it gave me perspective and confidence.

I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Dr Ben Pitcher, who has been my first contact at the University of Westminster. Thank you for your availability throughout the years, your feedback, your honesty, and your encouragement at the end of the process. My gratitude to the staff of the School of Social Sciences and the members of the Centre for the Study of Democracy. In particular, thank you to Prof Graham Smith, who trusted me with the organisation of a seminar on French politics



and political thought and whose presence and acute attention at every CSD event never ceased to impress me.

Thank you to those friends I made in room 406: Francesco, Claudio, Sara, and Giulia – “it takes one to know one”, to twist one of those efficient phrases for which English is famous. If writing our theses in English made us careful with words, I like to think that talking through this third language made us attentive to what each of us had to say. Thank you for your patience and your support, the lunch breaks and the late drinks, the calm and the laughter, thank you for always understanding at once where I stood.

Thank you to my London family: Marie and Moussa, Géraldine, and Marine. Your presence, love, and listening gave me so much joy. The days, evenings, and nights spent together are engraved in my mind – they resonate with giggles and music. Thank you to my housemates at the Builders Merchants: Adam, Rosie, Jonny, Emily, and especially Frankie. I could not have dreamt of a better place to live in London, of better people with whom to share my everyday life.

Thank you to my friends in Paris and elsewhere for not forgetting me while I was away, physically and emotionally. Thank you for believing that it was worth it. Thank you to Simon, you showed me again that you will always be there. You make me laugh, you see me better than I am, and that helps me to get there. Thank you to Florentin, you offered me a haven in sharing your Romanian heaven when I needed it most, you took care of me, and helped me reach the finish line – I am forever grateful. Thank you to Sido Lansari for sharing your precious work with me.

Finally, thank you to my parents, Christine and Jean-Louis. Thank you for instilling your curiosity about the world into me. It made me read, research, travel, and befriend amazing people. Thank you for always believing in me and trusting my choices. Thank you for your love, it has lifted me to places I would have never dreamt of. I wish you could be in the room with me, for the viva, to see what you have made possible. Thank you to my sister, Alexia, for understanding me and for the countless nights that we spent talking about our lives and projects.

## **Statement of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the product of my own work. All sources used are referenced.

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Emmanuel Jouai

London, September 2021

“It is only when I type something in your language that you refer to me as having communication. I smell things. I listen to things. I feel things. I taste things. I look at things. It is not enough to look and listen and taste and smell and feel, I have to do those to the right things, such as look at books, and fail to do them to the wrong things, or else people doubt that I am a thinking being. And since their definition of thought defines their definition of personhood so ridiculously much, they doubt that I am a real person as well. ... I find it very interesting by the way that failure to learn your language is seen as a deficit, but failure to learn my language is seen as so natural that people like me are officially described as mysterious and puzzling, rather than anyone admitting that it is themselves who are confused, not autistic people or other cognitively disabled people who are inherently confusing.” (Baggs, 2007)

“Normative bodies have a ‘tautological’ relation to social ideals: *they feel pride at approximating an ideal that has already taken their shape.*” (Ahmed, 2014, 166)

“This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other.” (Foucault, 2002b, xvi)

**Introduction**

**Historicising Poststructuralism  
to Problematise Xenophobia**

**1 Thinking the Emergence of the *Xenos*, Xenophobia, and  
Ambiguity from Poststructuralism**

This thesis reworks the notion of xenophobia to analyse the production of specific subjects – analytically grouped under the term *xenos* – as ambiguous and threatening. Away from the problematisation of a racial difference to which xenophobia is usually associated, this research shows that, today, the subjectification of the *xenos* (both the host and the guest in the ancient Greek practice of hospitality) entails that they are neither similar nor different, neither one thing nor its opposite. Ambiguous, they emerge beside the traditional Western binary differentiation, and this specificity turns them into a threat to the political foundation of a postcolonial society like France – the field of study of this research. Because xenophobia intensifies the production of the *xenos* as an ambiguous threat, it legitimises their persecution through the articulation of xenophobic knowledge, which is itself legitimised by the fear allegedly caused by the *xenos*. The aim of xenophobic persecution is thus to disambiguate the *xenos* into a subject who conforms to a binary structure, either similar or different.

This research contributes to the poststructuralist literature that focuses on practices of subjectification, and on the affirmation of difference over identity. It draws from Michel Foucault’s archaeological analysis of discursive and non-discursive practices of subjectification to understand how xenophobia intensifies those practices which form a xenophobic apparatus. It also extrapolates from Foucault’s historical epistemology – which historicises the problematisations of similarity and difference – to analyse a problematisation of ambiguity that would be postcolonial. This research also argues that the xenophobic practices of subjectification of the *xenos* (as ambiguous and threatening) escape the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity. While the latter is a specific form of problematisation of difference that emerged in the aftermaths of the Second World War (WWII), ambiguity has appeared,

in our postcolonial times, beside the binary opposition between identity and difference. Furthermore, this research shows that the *xenos*' ambiguity threatens the traditional Western binary differentiation, and thus incorporates an analysis of fear into its archaeological methodology. To illustrate this reflection, the thesis introduces a study of academic discourses: the medical discourse on the intersex, and the juridical discourse on the foreigner as they are produced in French universities.

### 1.1 Postcolonial Xenophobia and Ambiguity

This research analyses the subjectification of the *xenos* and, therefore, aims to understand the workings of xenophobia in a postcolonial society like France. I frame “postcolonial France” as, on the one hand, the multicultural society which has existed in France since the 1950s-1960s waves of decolonisation of the former French colonies and, on the other hand, as the way this society tends to represent and appraise itself through different types of discourse (political, cultural, scientific). In fact, the two sides are often in conflict (see Scott, 2007; Laborde, 2011; Silverstein, 2018), and I analyse xenophobia in this constant tension.<sup>1</sup>

Problematising xenophobia in postcolonial France requires that it be thought of as distant from its traditional association with racialisation, which has operated in France since the seventeenth century (cf. Chapter 2). It does not mean that what I analyse as “racialising xenophobia” has disappeared in our postcolonial times and postcolonial France in particular. Non-French people are still produced in binary opposition to French people, but not *any* non-French subject is produced, through racialising xenophobia, as a stranger and dominated as such.<sup>2</sup> If, in postcolonial France, the French subject is still the sovereign – what I call the similar subject – the stranger is still the other, the different (threatening and dominated) subject.

Rather, the problematisation of xenophobia undertaken here implies that some subjects are produced as *neither* similar *nor* different – i.e., as ambiguous – and that they too

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, France works as an example of a Western postcolonial society. Because it shares characteristics with other European imperial nation-states, France is therefore not used as an exceptional instance. However, a historicised study of the subjectification of the *xenos* implies that the argument be grounded on detailed and sometimes singular events and phenomena.

<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in postcolonial France, some French nationals are produced as strangers (cf. Chapter 2).

are subject to a specific domination. In this research, I focus on three figures of ambiguous subjects in postcolonial France: the homosexual Arab man, the intersex, and the foreigner (that I distinguish from the stranger).<sup>3</sup> I group these ambiguous subjects under the analytical notion of the *xenos* who, in the ancient Greek practice of hospitality, referred to both the host and the guest. It is thanks to the ambiguity of this notion and its potential for analysis that xenophobia can be problematised and reworked away from its traditional meaning which limits our understanding of subjectification to a binary opposition (French/stranger). Indeed, analysing the specific subjectification of the *xenos* – because of their ambiguity – requires us to think *beside* practices of subjectification operating through binary differentiation. *Beside* and not *beyond* because,<sup>4</sup> first, the latter would assume that racialising xenophobia has disappeared, which is not the case (cf. Chapter 2). Different types of domination can operate immanently to one another, which implies that racialising xenophobia and “postcolonial xenophobia” are not exclusive of each other even if they emerged at different periods. Likewise, different types of problematisation – of similarity, difference, or ambiguity – can be productive in an immanent way, regardless of the time in which they emerge (cf. Chapter 4). Second, because my analysis shows that, if postcolonial xenophobia intensifies the subjectification of the *xenos* as ambiguous – i.e., *neither* similar *nor* different – it also produces those subjects as threats to legitimise their “disambiguation” into subjects that are *either* similar *or* different (cf. Chapter 3). In other words, xenophobia aims to, first, produce ambiguous subjects as threats to, second, *force* them into a binary frame of differentiation. The subjectification of the *xenos* thus involves intentional violence, hence my identification of their specific domination as persecution (cf. Chapter 4). If we consider the intersex, they are produced as an ambiguous threat to the binary sexual differentiation only to be disambiguated, through mutilations, into a dyadic – i.e., “typical” – man or woman (cf. Chapter 5). Thus, analysing postcolonial xenophobia

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<sup>3</sup> This selection is not exhaustive but chimes with the specific xenophobic discourses I analyse here: the white gays’ discourse on the homosexual Arab (Chapter 3), the medical discourse on the intersex, and the juridical discourse on the foreigner (both in Chapter 5). Potentially, the Afropean (Miano, 2020; Pitts, 2020) or the Muslim veiled woman (Guénif-Souilamas, 2006; Scott, 2007) could also be analysed as figures of the *xenos* in postcolonial France.

<sup>4</sup> I draw from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s choice for “beside” instead of “beneath” or “behind” (which imply depth or hiddenness and therefore hermeneutic), and instead of “beyond” (which implies transcendence, sublation, revolutionary future). Rather, “beside” makes us think in terms of immanence (the *xenos* does not transcend the similar and different subjects), away from notions of “origin and telos” but, above all, away from binary differentiation (Sedgwick, 2004, 8).

and the problematisation of ambiguity does not imply negating the powerful political foundation on which our Western societies function and that I call, after Judith Butler, “the oppositional binary” (Butler, 2006, 71).<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the necessity to rework xenophobia away from its traditional meaning comes from the fact that not only does it acknowledge the ambiguity of the *xenos* as something that escapes the binary opposition between similarity and difference, but xenophobia also produces this ambiguity as a threat to the political foundation supported by this binary opposition. Therefore, xenophobia aims to annihilate ambiguity, notably through the persecution of the *xenos*. The latter is *per se* of interest for political theory, and I approach it as a specific form of domination in which, as Michel Foucault argues, “the pertinent opposition is not ... that between the legitimate and the illegitimate, but that between struggle and submission” (Foucault, 2003, 17).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the notion of threat allegedly embodied by the *xenos* and their ambiguity entail that this research incorporates an analysis of fear drawing from Sara Ahmed’s (2014) cultural politics of emotions (cf. Chapter 3) while extending her argument of the participation of emotions in practices of subjectification further than what her analysis of postcolonial societies allows, because it is limited to binary differentiation – e.g., between the national and the stranger (Ahmed, 2000; 2014).

The triple action of postcolonial xenophobia (producing ambiguity as such, turning it into a threat, and disambiguating the *xenos*) means that it problematises ambiguity. As explained below, I follow Foucault in understanding problematisation in political and epistemological terms (the production of a political issue as much as a problem for

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<sup>5</sup> I define the oppositional binary as the political foundation that enhances similarity at the expense of difference and the resulting uneven binary structure of differentiation and subjectification (cf. Chapter 1).

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, like Marx, analyses historical relations of domination (rather than sovereignty or legitimacy) to articulate his theory of power. However, ideology and exploitation are not as important for him as they are for Marx. Furthermore, domination – like power – is not only repressive but also productive (of, e.g., subjects). As Emmanuel Renault explains, for Foucault, “the concept of domination refers to a stabilisation and convergence of different power relations”. Moreover, domination “is conceived as formally diverse, which implies that one subject can occupy dominating and dominated positions according to the situation”, and it is relative to resistance: a subject is more or less dominated “depending on whether she resists or not” (Renault, 2015, 201). Renault also argues that this approach to domination holds until Foucault’s analysis switches from war – drawing from Marx – to governmentality: this shift implies that theory is no longer about fighting against domination but about being less “governed” (Renault, 2015, 205). From Chapter 2, I argue for maintaining the relationship between politics and war established by the “early Foucault” (2003, 15).

thought and a foundation for knowledge). Additionally, xenophobia forces us to acknowledge that ambiguity is problematised as such in our postcolonial times through the analysis of the historical subjectification of the *xenos*.<sup>7</sup> I therefore situate my discussion of xenophobia within poststructuralism and historical epistemology.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 The Poststructuralist Subject and Difference

Indeed, a segment of the poststructuralist literature, which focuses on practices of subjectification and which affirms difference over identity, seems the most suitable to account for the workings of postcolonial xenophobia, the subjectification of the *xenos*, and the problematisation of ambiguity. This diverse literature spans more than half a century and is therefore not always perfectly consistent. From the first generation of (mainly French) poststructuralist thinkers in the 1960s-1980s, to the nascent (mainly North-American) feminist, hybrid, and queer theories in the 1980s-1990s which built themselves partly through discussing the former, to the more contemporary postcolonial or even decolonial productions that either use poststructuralism as a point of departure, or frontally criticise some of its core findings,<sup>9</sup> there are many lines of separation. Nevertheless, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, Joan W. Scott, Homi K. Bhabha, Robert J. C. Young, Judith Butler, Étienne Balibar, Rosi Braidotti, Aoileann Ní Mhurchú (whom I discuss primarily), but also Katarina Kolozova, Joseph A. Massad, Sara Ahmed, Santiago Castro-Gómez, Walter Mignolo, and Eve K. Sedgwick (whom I use to discuss the former and who cannot be considered as poststructuralist in the narrow sense), all contest the possibility to think from the sovereign subject of Western metaphysics (cf. Chapter 1). They refuse a subjectivity that would serve as an origin (of thought, of truth, of history, of power) and they identify the historical European subject as one who emerged on the back of “his”

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<sup>7</sup> As Todd May explains, Foucault’s subjectification is the process entailing “to be subject to relations of power and to be a subject, one of self-knowledge” (May, 2014, 498).

<sup>8</sup> I introduce the French tradition of historical epistemology in 2.3.

<sup>9</sup> I follow Walter Mignolo’s distinction between “postcolonial” and “decolonial”. For him, postcoloniality “emerged from the experience of British colonization ... and ... after the concept of postmodernity was introduced by the late 1970s” while decolonial thinking developed *during* colonisation, without the influence of poststructuralism and postmodernism, and not only in the former British empire. That said, postcolonial and decolonial theories both “strive to unveil colonial strategies promoting the reproduction of subjects whose aims and goals are to control and possess” (Mignolo, 2011, xxiii-xxxi).



others: women, the colonised, the homosexual, and so on.<sup>10</sup> They also consider that any subject is constituted rather than constitutive, that they are produced through practices of subjectification – “a differential of subordination and subjectivation”, according to Balibar (2003, 17) – and that those practices should be analysed. As Wendy Brown writes, the “poststructuralist formulations of the subject” entail that she is “not simply oppressed but brought into being by – that is, an effect of – subjection” (Brown, 1995, 18). Furthermore, they also all affirm difference over identity – and this is considered a common element in poststructuralist thoughts (Belsey, 2002, 17; Balibar, 2003, 15; Howarth, 2013, 81; Rae, 2020, 20).<sup>11</sup> If the European sovereign subject emerged on the back of his others, poststructuralists understand that it is the latter – i.e., the different subject – that make the former’s emergence possible. Historically, the other and difference have been made inferior, negatively problematised, turned into a threat, and dominated (thus establishing the oppositional binary). As William E. Connolly argues, “otherness” is produced “as intrinsically evil, irrational, abnormal, mad, sick, primitive, monstrous, dangerous, or anarchical” while identity is produced as “intrinsically good, coherent, complete or rational ... in order to protect itself from the other that would unravel its self-certainty” (Connolly, 2002a, 65).

The poststructuralist literature gathered here theoretically re-evaluates the position of difference and the other because, without them, there is no identity and no sovereign subject. Difference takes the upper hand in its theoretical relation with identity, and the latter is then seen as a political problem. Against all odds and against history (particularly after the Holocaust for the first generation), poststructuralism makes difference more powerful than identity. As Catherine Belsey explains:

The history of poststructuralism is the story of the way Saussure’s ideas [meaning is differential, not referential] were taken up by later generations, especially in France, and particularly after the Second World War, when the history of National Socialism – and of French collaboration with it – seemed to demand an explanation that existing theories of culture were unable to provide. The key term in this story is “difference”. (Belsey, 2002, 17)

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<sup>10</sup> In the thesis, I use the pronouns he/his for the sovereign (similar subject), she/her for the other (different subject), and they/them for the *xenos* (ambiguous subject).

<sup>11</sup> In Chapter 1, I explain the distinction between the poststructuralist notion of identity and what I call similarity.

Consequently, poststructuralism can also explain why difference has been produced as a threat to identity while being dominated. For poststructuralism, difference has always paid for its power to challenge identity. Finally, the literature gathered in this research is interested in the subject produced as a threat through something closely related to xenophobia – from its traditional sense to “my” reworked version. The stranger (Kristeva), the nomad (Deleuze and Guattari but also Braidotti), the hybrid (Bhabha and Young), veiled women in France (Scott), and the queer (Butler), all give us clues regarding a subjectification operating in a postcolonial society like France, which involves fear and violence, and which – simultaneously – problematises difference and shows that difference is problematised in the first place.

I articulate this research precisely from this last point. If the *xenos* is produced as an ambiguous threat, that is, neither similar nor different, how can the literature that explicitly affirms difference over identity, and focuses on practices that both problematise difference and reveal its problematisation in general, grasp the specificity of their subjectification? To be sure, the poststructuralist difference is not a reduced version of difference – univocal and determined by its relation to identity. The poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity implies that difference is acknowledged as heterogeneous, excessive, and often subversive (cf. Chapter 1). Consequently, the *xenos*' ambiguity could be apprehended as a difference. Yet, it might be where this literature finds its limit. Coming back to the intersex, their subjectification implies that we think beside the productive binary sexual differentiation between masculine and feminine, *even if* the poststructuralist approach to the feminine is much richer than “what is not masculine” (Braidotti, 1994; Scott, 1999; Butler, 2006). The subjectification of the intersex involves their production as ambiguous and, therefore, as a threat to sexual differentiation, which is a primary stage to violently disambiguate them into either a typical man (the sovereign, the similar subject) or a typical woman (the other, the *different* subject). This persecutory violence is legitimised since the intersex allegedly represents a threat because of their ambiguity, not because of their difference, whose position is already “occupied” by women. Thus, when considering the singular position of the intersex, one can realise that difference, not only identity, is also part of the structure allegedly threatened by

ambiguity.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it is not enough to assume an equivocal difference to understand what is at stake in the intersex's case. Furthermore, sticking to difference, even in its poststructuralist form, would amount to assuming that colonial massacres and the Holocaust<sup>13</sup> have not changed our ways to problematise nor what we problematise. Yet, those events are extreme instances of problematisation of difference and they had consequences.<sup>14</sup>

Drawing from Foucault's historical epistemology (Foucault, 2002b), I indeed assume that the seventeenth century saw the emergence of the problematisation of difference as a result of "events" like the formation of diverse apparatuses: colonial (Said, 2003), rationalist (Foucault, 2006), or heterosexual (Foucault, 1978; Huffer, 2010). All those apparatuses are linked to one another and are supported by – and support – binary differentiations: coloniser/colonised, rational/mad, heterosexual/homosexual. To be sure, the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity can be approached as a competing form of problematisation of difference, insofar as it responded to the Holocaust, the colonial massacres (later), and the type of problematisation of difference that allowed them. While those events showed a difference turned into such a problem that it had to be eliminated, poststructuralism contributes to making difference the core of all relations, the key to understanding everything, including politics.

Nevertheless, I would argue that those events have had an impact that did not stop at the way we problematise difference in the West: they have also made possible the problematisation of ambiguity. To come back again to the intersex, their ambiguity (not their difference) has become united with a problem after WWII, and their

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<sup>12</sup> As Fredric Jameson argues, "the very concept of difference itself is booby-trapped; it is at least pseudodialectical, and its imperceptible alternation with its sometimes indistinguishable opposite number, Identity, is among the oldest language and thought games recorded in (several) philosophical traditions" (Jameson, 2005, 341).

<sup>13</sup> As Ida Danewid writes, many postcolonial thinkers understand the Holocaust as the "logical culmination" of colonial violence (Danewid, 2017, 1680). Aimé Césaire's famous quote in that regard is telling: "what [the Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century] cannot forgive Hitler for is not *the crime* in itself, *the crime against man*, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and the 'niggers' of Africa" (Césaire, 2000, 36).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Foucault, who resorts to "eventialisation" to break "historical continuities", "immediate anthropological traits", and "evidences" (Foucault, 1994c, 23).

persecution has become systematic from the 1970s (Karkazis, 2008; Petit, 2018). Thus, it is not “sufficient” – even if it might have been necessary – to affirm the wronged element of a binary relation (here, women or the feminine) to understand what is happening to a subject like the intersex. The intersex emerges immanently to this binary relation and is made intelligible because they escape it. So, rather than denying the productivity of the oppositional binary (since xenophobic practices of subjectification intend to disambiguate the *xenos* into either a similar or different subject) and rather than discarding the way forward made possible by the affirmation of difference over identity (since it has allowed us to focus on the dominated element of a given relation), this research shows that it is possible to look at specific situations from a different perspective.

By acknowledging ambiguity as distinctly intelligible beside difference, we might contribute to the enrichment of the poststructuralist literature that focuses on practices of subjectification and on the affirmation of difference over identity. By approaching xenophobia as an indicator that our ways of problematising have changed since the second half of the twentieth century, we might contribute to the field of historical epistemology. By analysing xenophobia as what intensifies the subjectification of ambiguous subjects as threats to be disambiguated through persecution, we might be able to shed new light on relations of domination operating in a Western postcolonial society like France. In all those ways, xenophobia should be studied as a – political and epistemological – historical problem.

## **2 The Problematisation of Xenophobia: Political, Ontological, Epistemological, and Methodological Considerations**

### **2.1 From Problematisation to Politicisation**

Understanding problematisation in a Foucaultian sense is necessary to introduce the ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions of this research. Foucault defined problematisation in a twofold political and epistemological sense as “the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that ... pose problem for politics” and as “the ensemble of discursive and non-discursive practices which brings something into the play of true and false and which constitutes it as an object of

thought” (Foucault, 1994c, 593 and 670). Drawing from Foucault, problematising xenophobia away from its traditional sense involves making the notion “uncertain”, making it “lose its familiarity”, notably by provoking “a certain number of difficulties around it” – like the contention that binary differentiation is not enough to explain specific situations. Foucault also argues that “problematization by thought” takes time after the actual emergence of the problematic phenomena to analyse and that there are many ways to look at the same problem (Foucault, 1994c, 597-598), which can explain why the issue of ambiguity has not been dealt with sufficiently (or at least in the same way as I do here) in political theory. Problematising might actually be the task of political theory, as Wendy Brown describes it:

As a meaning-making enterprise, theory depicts a world that does not quite exist, that is not quite the world we inhabit. But this is theory’s incomparable value, not its failure. Theory does not simply decipher the meanings of the world but recodes and rearranges meanings to reveal something about the meanings and incoherencies that we live with. To do this revelatory and speculative work, theory must work to one side of direct referents, or at least it must disregard the conventional meanings and locations of those referents. Theory violates the self-representation of things to represent those things and their relation – the world – differently. (Brown, 2002, 573-574)

Thus, it is through problematisation that xenophobia can “lose” its traditional meaning to help us understand how ambiguity has been itself problematised. It is through the problematisation of xenophobia that this research intends to “violate its self-representation” to analyse what is happening to ambiguous subjects in a Western postcolonial society like France. It is through the problematisation of xenophobia that diverse experiences of persecution – those of the homosexual Arab man, of the intersex, of the foreigner – can be analysed as sharing a regularity. That said, this problematisation of xenophobia does not claim to be the only “revelatory and speculative work” to understand the specific subjectification of those people.

Problematisation also entails that knowledge and politics are closely linked, as Foucault’s conceptualisation of the nexus “power-knowledge” entails: “There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1995, 27). In this research, the relationship between, on the one hand, power and domination (operating in the practices of subjectification) and, on the other hand, knowledge is important. Indeed, I argue that xenophobia intensifies the

subjectification of the *xenos* as ambiguous and threatening because it goes through the articulation of xenophobic knowledge, which is legitimised by the fear allegedly caused by ambiguous subjects and which itself legitimises their persecution (cf. Chapter 4).

Yet, as Brown reminds us, we should not conflate power and politics. To be sure, Foucault tells us that “politics is the continuation of war by other means”, and that we should understand power according to relations of domination rather than according to the traditional theory of sovereignty (Foucault, 2003, 15 and 111). Yet, it does not mean that the notions and realities of power and politics perfectly overlap. Precisely, power and “the political” do not perfectly overlap. While, for Foucault, there is no escape from power – even in resistance (Foucault, 1978; Brown, 1995) – Brown claims that the political should be understood as limited to “the distinct problematic of the values and powers binding collectivities” (Brown, 2002, 570). If, as she writes, Foucault “politicized certain practices and knowledge fields heretofore imagined relatively insulated from” power relations, this tendency “need not be conflated with political life tout court” (Brown, 2008, 79-80). The notion that matters here, echoing problematisation, is “politicisation”. As Brown explains, if “politicization introduces power where it was presumed not to exist before” and if “power [is] everywhere in the human universe”, then “everything pertaining to human existence can be politicized” (Brown, 2002, 570). In other words, rather than assuming that everything belongs to the realm of the political, politicisation allows us to make explicit and intelligible the relations of power and domination that operate at every level, notably that of the constitution of an individual.

Here, I need to address the missing critique of capitalism in this research which, as Brown writes, should be necessary “to theorize the politics of recognition, the sexual order of things, the nature of citizenship, or the reconfiguration of privacy” (Brown, 2002, 564). At almost every step of my journey into the subjectification of the *xenos* in postcolonial France, the socio-economic question can be raised. It is especially significant when I investigate the xenophobic subjectification of the homosexual Arab man, as the works of Joseph A. Massad (2007) and Fatima El-Tayeb (2011; 2012) demonstrate unequivocally (cf. Chapter 3). From gay sexual tourism in former colonies to socio-economic segregation in European suburbs, from class-distorted

perceptions of “homosexuality” in Arab countries to white bourgeois homonormativity in Western countries, the class issue has been studied in detail. Furthermore, following Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson, it can also be said that the integration of “difference” into the “system”, now allegedly threatened by ambiguity, results from the ability of (late) capitalism to absorb and process what resists it (Jameson, 2005, 4-5). A critique of capitalism is thus absent from this research because I lacked space to elaborate a rigorous one, and not because I deny that the class question is linked to the emergence of postcolonial xenophobia, the problematisation of ambiguity, and the subjectification of the *xenos*. I am aware of the often-pertinent critique provided against poststructuralist – and especially Foucaultian – scholarship on this matter, and I realise that this research might contribute to feed it, despite this introductory precaution.

## 2.2 Politicising Ontology

This research starts from an interest in how historical relations of power and domination operate at the level of subjectification, but politicisation also extends to the levels of knowledge production and ontology. If ontology is, as Alexandros Kiouпкиolis writes, a “fundamental logic of being” as much as the “suppositions about the constitution of human agents and their social world” (Kiouпкиolis, 2011, 691-692), then it becomes a condition for research that needs to be unpacked. To be sure, politics should not be exclusively conditioned by ontology, especially when the former “implies primarily the subversion of social fixity, the questioning of established order, transformative praxis and the construction of new subjectivities and social aggregations” and the latter “is entangled with order, stabilization, unity”, as Kiouпкиolis reminds us (Kiouпкиolis, 2011, 697).<sup>15</sup> However, even research focusing exclusively on politics cannot forgo making its “ontological commitment” explicit (Oksala, 2010a, 446-449). Lois McNay actually writes that “ontological reflection is an unavoidable aspect of political thinking insofar as the latter is always grounded, explicitly or implicitly, in certain presuppositions about fundamental features of social reality and human agency” (McNay, 2014, 12).

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Simon Critchley (2013), who would rather see a continuity between ethics and politics than between the latter and ontology.

Yet, if, on the one hand, power and “the political” do not perfectly overlap and, on the other hand, any research in political theory should make its ontological commitments explicit, it does not necessarily mean that “the political” is ontologically autonomous. Indeed, this would have the effect of depoliticising other fields of actions and practices. From a critical perspective, McNay explains that ontologically isolating “the political” from those other fields originally entails “a strategic theoretical manoeuvre, a temporary bracketing of social life” which is supposed to “enable[] the clearer identification of constant political dynamics and principles within the flux of daily existence, and consequently of possibilities for progressive democratic change” (McNay, 2014, 4). This is, for instance, Oliver Marchart’s endeavour to identify the ontological character of the political as “antagonism” (Marchart, 2018), which can come close to Foucault’s definition of politics as “the continuation of war by other means” (Foucault, 2003, 15).<sup>16</sup> However, as McNay argues, this “retreat” from the sphere of “the mundane, instrumental concerns of social life” can become permanent, which entails the emergence of an “ideal theory” which denies the role of relations of domination in constituting “many individuals’ lives and instead relies on an idealised social ontology – the formal, undifferentiated equality of atomised individuals” (McNay, 2014, 3-9).

On the contrary, this research argues that xenophobic persecution is a constitutive part of the current subjectification of the subjects I call *xenos* – which does not mean that they cannot resist it. Yet, analytically grouping them as *xenos* implies that they suffer persecution because, through xenophobia, their ambiguity is produced as a threat to be violently annihilated toward disambiguation. Additionally, this research does not intend to turn ambiguity into an ontological character on its own, be it “weak” (White, 2000). Ambiguity should not be understood as the ontology of the *xenos*, but rather as a political and epistemological discursive – not linguistic – production.<sup>17</sup> Ambiguity is

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<sup>16</sup> Yet, Foucault’s contestation of “Man, in the analytic of finitude, [as] a strange empirico-transcendental doublet” (Foucault, 2002b, 347) implies that there is no “bracketing of social life”, nor “transcendental cast”, in his political theory, as McNay would put it (McNay, 2014, 2-4). Furthermore, Foucault privileges the term “agonism” to “antagonism” (Foucault, 1982, 790).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Brown’s definition of Foucault’s discourse: “Different from mere language or speech, ... discourse embraces a relatively bounded field of terms, categories, and beliefs expressed through statements that are commonsensical within the discourse. As an ensemble of speech practices that carry values, classifications, and meanings, discourse simultaneously constitutes a truth about subjects, and constitutes subjects in terms of this truth regime. For Foucault, discourse never merely describes but rather, creates relationships and channels of authority through the articulation of norms” (Brown, 2008, 71).



here approached as having a meaning (i.e., threat) imposed as a result of practices of subjectification. It is neither the gate through which the *xenos* can see, feel, and experience the world, nor the always-already-there profound essence of the *xenos* that a philosophical analysis has to discover.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, ambiguity should not be understood as what McNay calls “the formal, undifferentiated equality of atomised individuals”, as mentioned above. Yes, we could say that we are all ambiguous because no one is either typically similar or typically different.<sup>19</sup> This would mean that ambiguity is universally shared and could be part of what McNay criticises as “a certain cluster of ideas to do with indeterminacy, flux, becoming, contestation, plurality” (McNay, 2014, 14), but also with contingency or even difference itself (cf. Chapter 1).

Yet, it would deny that those who are targeted as ambiguous – like those who are targeted as different, for that matter – have to pay a singular price because they have been produced, through xenophobia, as threats. In McNay’s words: “Many individuals, particularly those belonging to disempowered groups, do not experience their lives as an active process of becoming, nor do they regard their conditions of existence as open to struggle and transformation” (McNay, 2014, 14). Ambiguity, because it is persecuted, is not so much experienced as a blessing as it is a curse, even if it comes from society and not from ambiguity or the *xenos* themselves. Indeed, in Chapter 4, I argue that, because of their threatening ambiguity, the *xenos* goes through a form of domination (persecution) that cannot, in any decent manner, be compared to what Foucault analysed as “normalisation”, which indeed affects everyone (Foucault, 1995). As McNay explains: “It is undoubtedly the case that all individuals suffer by virtue of their existential vulnerability and the finitude of the human condition, but social suffering is not something that afflicts all individuals equally” (McNay, 2014, 21). To avoid the “social weightlessness” entailed by the ontological isolation of the political, McNay thus suggests resorting to a “social theoretical negativism” which should be approached as a way of “appreciating how the experience of subordinated

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<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that ambiguity is not “real”. If it is not a “natural object”, it is “nevertheless something, because [it is] established in a set of real practices which imperiously mark [it] out in reality”, as Oksala puts it for madness in Foucault’s work (Oksala, 2010a, 459). The same thing can be said about the *xenos*.

<sup>19</sup> Contrary to, e.g., Simone de Beauvoir’s endeavour in *Ethics of Ambiguity* where she claims that everyone travels continuously between their being-in-itself and being-for-itself, life and death, facticity and freedom – which makes them ambiguous (Beauvoir, 2018).

social groups can yield a fuller theoretical knowledge of oppression and inequality whose phenomenal significance is either not immediately understood from the outside or not recognised at all” (McNay, 2014, 22-32). It is in that sense that ambiguity should not be understood as an ontology, but also that the *xenos* should not be understood as a political identity, or xenophobia as an activist tool that could be used directly in social struggles. All three are analytical notions that have no pretension beyond contributing to “a fuller theoretical knowledge of oppression”.

This analytical-political stance thus implies following Foucault in his “politicisation of ontology”, in Johanna Oksala’s words, which define ontology both as “our understanding of reality” and “the grid of intelligibility inside of which it is possible to think” (Oksala, 2010a, 447 and 463). In that sense, Foucault’s ontology “argues for the contingency and indeterminacy of the present”, which is, as Oksala explains, “in no way original” (Oksala, 2010a, 448).<sup>20</sup> What distinguishes Foucault is rather that he “question[s] the ground of pluralism”, which means that, “according to him, the common world is already a sedimentation of power relations and not simply a given and objective space containing the plurality of individuals who inhabit it” (Oksala, 2010a, 462). In other words, ontology should be understood as “the result of social practices always incorporating power relations, but also of concrete struggles over truth and objectivity in social space” (Oksala, 2010a, 447). This is what leads Oksala to argue that “ontology is politics that has forgotten itself” (Oksala, 2010a, 464).

For us, this means that the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity, which has everything to do with the ontology of contingency identified by Oksala, cannot simply be given as the beginning and end of analysis. Politicising the poststructuralist ontologies of the various theories discussed in this research indeed seeks to “denaturalise” the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity, that is, in Oksala’s words, to make it “arbitrary or at least historically contingent” (Oksala, 2010a, 447). This is my intention here, notably by analysing xenophobia as what problematises ambiguity, in our postcolonial times, beside difference (as it has been affirmed by poststructuralism) *and* by drawing from Foucault’s historical epistemology. Indeed, the latter contextualises the emergence of the problematisation

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<sup>20</sup> Foucault is indeed one of the representatives of the antifoundationalism described by Judith Butler (1992).

of difference in the classical age – against which the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity has historically constituted an “alternative and competing ontological framework[]” (Oksala, 2010a, 447). In that sense, this research attempts to compete with the ontological framework which has naturalised the political foundation that I call “the oppositional binary” – and which is made possible by it. Thus, I would identify my ontological commitment as anti-binary (cf. Sedgwick, 1990). Importantly, it differs from what would be an ontology of ambiguity insofar as the latter neither explicitly communicates the necessary politicisation of ontology nor acknowledges the conflictuality that has led to it.

We can thus see how politicisation is linked to problematisation insofar as “the politicisation of ontology ... does not mean its replacement or denial, but its problematisation”, as Oksala argues (Oksala, 2010a, 463). Indeed, she adds that “problematisation can ... be understood as the possibility of contesting and transforming ontology” (Oksala, 2010a, 463). This also has consequences in terms of our understanding of knowledge production, insofar as knowledge is approached not as a way to discover “our” pre-existing world but, rather, as a practice linked to the (politicised and problematised) ontology we use to act upon this world. Thus, knowledge becomes, in Oksala’s words, drawn from Foucault, “strategic”, “perspectival and finite”, and “importantly historical and political” (Foucault, 1994b, 551; Oksala, 2010a, 453). This leads me to the French tradition of historical epistemology.

### **2.3 The French Tradition of Historical Epistemology and Michel Foucault’s Archaeology**

This tradition, initiated by Gaston Bachelard (1985) and furthered by Georges Canguilhem (1989; 1994) and Michel Foucault (2002b; 2006), approaches knowledge away from the activity of a constitutive subject’s consciousness whose mission would be to discover atemporal and universal truths. If the subject is produced through practices of subjectification within a competition for power, truth itself “functions”, in Foucault’s words, “as a weapon that is used to win an exclusively partisan victory” (Foucault, 2003, 57). Thus, there are as many truths as there are adversaries in the

political war, as many truths as there are politicised ontologies.<sup>21</sup> Foucault also argues that the “division between true and false” has a lot to do with a political “system of exclusion” that would reveal “arbitrary divisions ... organised around historical contingencies; ... constantly moving; ... supported by institutional systems that impose and reproduce them; ... operat[ing] with constraint and sometimes violence” (Foucault, 2009a, 16).<sup>22</sup> Consequently, knowledge itself is “a weapon in a war” (Foucault, 2003, 173); a war made possible, intelligible, and itself a key for intelligibility by a historical and political discourse (Foucault, 2003, 49 and 163). Thus, in this research, knowledge is approached as a discursive practice of subjectification that has reached what Foucault calls a “threshold of epistemologisation”. The latter is studied through archaeology and gathers discursive formations that claim to be both verifiable and coherent, which would supposedly make them the most suitable to constitute knowledge. (Foucault, 2002a, 206). This perspective problematises and politicises the field of knowledge. Like any discursive practice, knowledge articulates an intentional strategy. In our case, xenophobic knowledge articulates a strategy of disambiguation of the *xenos* into either a similar or a different subject. This intentionality – a notion Foucault borrows from phenomenology, takes away from consciousness, and applies to the strategies of historical relations of power (Foucault, 1978, 94) – is shared with a non-discursive practice: persecution. Together, xenophobic knowledge and persecution take part in the formation of a xenophobic apparatus which can be analysed through archaeology.

Historical epistemology also assumes that the productions and foundations of knowledge have transformed throughout history. It does not amount to a “progressist” interpretation of knowledge and history, in which we would go from a past full of errors to a future full of truths (Foucault, 2002b, xxiii). Indeed, historical epistemology is not interested in evaluating a given form of knowledge as more or less rational or

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<sup>21</sup> Arnold I. Davidson explains that, rather than indulging in a “absolutist/relativist distinction”, we should approach the question of knowledge by distinguishing “conditions of validity”, which “determine[] that a given statement is true or false”, from “conditions of possibility”, which help us to understand “how a statement becomes a possible candidate for either truth or falsehood” (Davidson, 2004, xii). Davidson explains that Foucault, who is not a relativist, is interested in the latter and therefore focuses on the historical relations of power that can transform the conditions of objectivity in knowledge.

<sup>22</sup> Ian Hacking shows that this system of exclusion is hard to understand when we only approach knowledge production in terms of the discovery of truth, but that it gets clearer when we start imagining what happens to what is considered as false (Hacking, 2004, 8).

scientific than another. Rather, it acknowledges historical contexts to understand what forms of consistent knowledge they have made possible. Thus, this research does not claim to problematise ambiguity as a method of knowing the world in a better way than before. It rather argues that ambiguity has started being problematised in our postcolonial times and that this problematisation is revealed and intensified by xenophobia. Historical epistemology is therefore different from the traditional Anglo-American conception of epistemology understood, in Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's words, as "a theory of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) that inquires into what it is that makes knowledge (*Wissen*) scientific" (Rheinberger, 2010). Rather, the French tradition reflects on historical conditions of possibility for a given object to become an object for knowledge. (Rheinberger, 2010, 2-3).

Connected to the postwar critique of the subject, historical epistemology does not start from a sovereign subject who would seek to know pre-existing objects. As Rheinberger explains, it begins the analysis "from the object to be known", in our case: the *xenos* and xenophobia. Rheinberger adds that "this shift in the problem constellation is at the same time both at the core of epistemology and the point of departure for its historicization" (Rheinberger, 2010, 3). This epistemological position thus "subject[s] the theory of knowledge to an empirical-historical regime, grasping its object as itself historically variable, not based in some transcendental presupposition or a priori norm" (Rheinberger, 2010, 3). For instance, the production of oppositions through knowledge becomes utterly contextual. To be sure, the opposition between masculine and feminine seems natural because it has been repeated for such a long time that its historical character is no longer visible. But the opposition between homosexuality (in France, produced as white) and Arabness (produced, notably through the affirmation of difference, as escaping the homo-hetero binary) does not seem so natural. Yet, it conditions xenophobic knowledge as a practice of subjectification of the homosexual Arab man in postcolonial France and contributes to turn him into an ambiguous threat (cf. Chapter 3).

It entails that xenophobia could not have been conceptualised before ambiguity started being problematised, partly because of xenophobia itself. This helps us to understand how, in the poststructuralist literature that focuses on practices of subjectification and affirms difference over identity, ambiguity has until now been analysed under the traits

of difference. Indeed, it is only by historicising the emergence of the problematisation of ambiguity, which implies historicising the problematisation of difference itself, that we can stop considering the latter as “some transcendental presupposition or a priori norm”, as quoted above, and see it as what Foucault calls “a historical a priori” (Foucault, 2002b, xxiii). Only then does ambiguity become intelligible beside difference. Only then postcolonial xenophobia becomes intelligible beside racialising xenophobia and other intensities that take part in practices of subjectification through binary differentiation. Xenophobia thus becomes intelligible through a methodology which mainly draws from Foucault’s archaeology (Foucault, 2002b, xxiii-xxiv), but which also incorporates fear as a driver of the xenophobic knowledge production of an object – the *xenos*, who is reified as the cause of fear and the target of a legitimised persecution (cf. Chapter 3).

As Arnold I. Davidson explains, Foucault’s archaeology is interested in “epistemological transformations” (Foucault, 1994b, 29), that is, “the condition[s] of possibility for the truth-or-falsity of a domain of scientific discourse” (Davidson, 2004, 195). Archaeology is thus interested in knowledge (*savoir*) rather than in science *per se*, which differentiates it from traditional epistemology (Foucault, 2002a, 215; Davidson, 2004, 193-194). This research analyses xenophobic knowledge not as a science, but as what intensifies the production of, e.g., a xenophobic medical discourse about the intersex and a xenophobic juridical discourse about the foreigner, both taught in French universities. It also approaches the problematisation of ambiguity as an epistemological transformation. As Davidson explains, because the conditions of validity of a scientific statement (true/false) are not the same as its conditions of possibility, knowledge “can take place even through a system of affirmations that turn out to be scientifically false” (Davidson, 2004, 195). Indeed, Foucault argues that archaeology uncovers “discursive practices insofar as they give rise to a corpus of knowledge, insofar as they assume the status and role of a science” while they “may never, in fact, succeed in becoming sciences” (Foucault, 2002a, 210). Informed by the history of how medicine (physiopathological or psychopathological alike) has “treated”, e.g., homosexuality or race, this research studies the regularity of xenophobic discourses that have reached a threshold of epistemologisation to demonstrate their power (they lead to the legitimised persecution of the *xenos*), their “rationality”, and their “logic”, while never crediting them with the status of so-called

sciences or absolute truths. By studying the regularity of practices – mainly discursive but also non-discursive<sup>23</sup> – archaeology allows us to understand that they are contingent and not necessary. As Davidson explains, “the work of the intellectual is ... to speak about that which is while making it appear as capable of not existing or capable of not being as it is” (Davidson, 2004, 189). Similarly, if I analyse xenophobic discourse, knowledge, and persecution as the practices that contingently condition the subjectification of the *xenos*, it is to demonstrate that it does not have to be that way.

Archaeology is a methodology which problematises and politicises in the senses mentioned above because it allows us to analyse *the regularity* of – in our case – xenophobia as what conditions the subjectification of ambiguous subjects and their production as threats.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Foucault explains that “the least statement ... puts into operation a whole set of rules in accordance with which its object, its modality, the concepts that it employs, and the strategy of which it is a part, are formed” (Foucault, 2002a, 163). In other words, a discursive practice regularly produces an object (here, the *xenos*) through different types of enunciative statements uttered from different positions of subjectivity, it disseminates concepts, and it articulates a strategy (Foucault, 2002a, 81). While Foucault does not relate the formation of concepts “either to the structure of ideality or to the succession of ideas” (Foucault, 2002a, 78), he explains that archaeology is the “preconceptual analysis of discourse” which aims to “describe – not the laws of the internal construction of concepts, not their progressive and individual genesis in the mind of man – but their anonymous dispersion” (Foucault, 2002a, 67-68). Davidson concurs and argues that concepts should be analysed through the uses we make of them and, especially, through their “strategic potentialities” (Davidson, 2004, 187). Thus, in Chapter 5, I problematise and politicise the concepts disseminated by the medical and the juridical discourses about, respectively, the intersex and the foreigner. About the former, a whole range of diseases, symptoms, and treatments; about the latter, a whole list of administrative documents, matching statuses, and processes of removal. Those concepts are not only scientific “tools”, they above all pathologise the intersex and police the foreigner, thus

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<sup>23</sup> For me, archaeology is not a methodology limited to discourse (while genealogy would allow us to analyse discursive and non-discursive practices together). It can also be used to analyse non-discursive practices like xenophobic persecution, insofar as it focuses on their strategy (cf. Foucault, 2002a, 174).

<sup>24</sup> Foucault defines regularity as “the set of conditions in which the enunciative function operates, and which guarantees and defines its existence” (Foucault, 2002a, 160).

producing them as threats. This legitimises their persecution (through mutilation and removal), which articulates a strategy of disambiguation. Therefore, the notion of strategy is crucial to analysing the xenophobic apparatus, made of diverse practices, as something regular. The disambiguation of the *xenos* is the strategy articulated by any xenophobic practice, and, if xenophobia is intelligible at all, it is because of the central situation of strategy in the archaeological methodology, as Foucault explains (Foucault, 1994c, 16).

Finally, Foucault understands strategies as intentional, that is, as oriented toward an object (here, a threatening ambiguous subject to be disambiguated). Because intentionality is a characteristic shared with emotions, as Sara Ahmed explains (Ahmed, 2014, 7), it is through this perspective that I am able to incorporate her analysis of fear to a Foucaultian archaeology (cf. Chapter 3). Besides being intentional, Foucault's strategies and Ahmed's emotions also are fundamentally historical and should therefore be historicised, as the French tradition of epistemology and Foucault's poststructuralist archaeology allow us to do.

Now, Hannah Arendt should certainly not be approached as a poststructuralist thinker.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, contrary to Foucault, her work cannot be approached through historicism. Yet, I find her conceptualisation of political antisemitism very useful to analyse xenophobia in a genealogical perspective. Indeed, through "comprehension" or "understanding" (Arendt, 2005, 307-327; 2012, 9) – a methodology which can be compared with archaeology – Arendt offers a historicisation of political antisemitism which allows me to clarify the context of emergence of xenophobia before looking for the latter in a selection of poststructuralist theories (cf. Chapter 1).

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<sup>25</sup> Amy Allen reminds us that "Foucault is an anti-metaphysical, anti-essentialist post-structuralist, whereas Arendt's Aristotelianism seems to commit her both to essentialism and to metaphysics" (Allen, 2002, 131). Moreover, Arendt neither cares about practices of subjectification nor about affirming difference over identity, the two major points of convergence of the poststructuralist literature I discuss in this thesis.



### 3 Hannah Arendt's Conception of Political Antisemitism: An Attempt to Give Xenophobia a (Pre-Poststructuralist) Genealogy

The genealogical link between xenophobia and political antisemitism – developed by Arendt in 1951 in “Antisemitism”, the first book of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*<sup>26</sup> – is important for two main reasons. First, if Arendt started writing the book before the end of WWII, the time of publication is key to understand my problematisation of xenophobia as a typical postcolonial intensity. To be sure, Arendt introduces antisemitism as “a secular nineteenth-century ideology” (Arendt, 2012, 5), however, her discussion and theorisation of the notion, happening mainly after the Holocaust, entails an approach to antisemitism and “Jewishness” (also produced as a threat) that often hints at my approach to xenophobia and ambiguity, which indeed emerged in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> Arendt’s articulation of the concept of antisemitism shows that the Holocaust has had an effect – in political theory and politics – on the possibility to problematise difference (Jewishness) and the ways to think about the subjectification of subjects considered as different (the Jews). That said, because Arendt writes mainly about the nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century manifestations of this problematisation, I do not pretend to find in her account of antisemitism a perfect match to the *postcolonial* xenophobic problematisation of ambiguity. This is why this discussion is found before Chapter 1.

Second, Arendt sees the French context as particularly telling to analyse political antisemitism as a “political movement” that “dominated the political scene” at the crossroads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Arendt, 2012, 53). She refers especially to the Dreyfus Affair which constitutes for her “the earliest instance of the success of antisemitism as a catalytic agent for all other political issues” (Arendt, 2012, 57). As Pierre Villard shows, the very word *xenophobe* appeared in French in 1900

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<sup>26</sup> I rely on Peter Staudenmaier’s synthesis of the critiques against Arendt’s theorisation of antisemitism to acknowledge that her arguments are often historically debatable, sometimes politically problematic. Nevertheless, I agree with Staudenmaier about the “valuable political insights” that she makes, particularly in the prospect of a genealogical link with postcolonial xenophobia (Staudenmaier, 2012, 155).

<sup>27</sup> Staudenmaier considers that Arendt’s “propensity to view the history of antisemitism backwards through the distorting lens of the Holocaust” constitutes a weakness of her analysis because it “tends to absolve many historically potent varieties of antisemitism that were not themselves genocidal” (Staudenmaier, 2012, 178). In this research, however, the Holocaust does not so much constitute the telos of the reflection on the problematisation of difference, but rather the starting point of the poststructuralist possibility to affirm difference over identity and to problematise ambiguity.

and is entirely related to antisemitism and the Dreyfus Affair (Villard, 1984, 192). Anatole France (1986), a pro-Dreyfus writer, invented the word in his novel *Monsieur Bergeret in Paris*, written in reference to the Affair. In it, as Villard explains, France draws a link between xenophobes and antisemites insofar as he replies to the antisemitic rhetoric according to which Jews are not French.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, historically and politically (the word comes from an *anti*-antisemite), a genealogy exists between political antisemitism and xenophobia. At the time of the Dreyfus Affair, Arendt reminds us that people were shouting indifferently “Death to the Jews!” and “France for the French!” in the streets (Arendt, 2012, 119). For the sake of historical precision, I also focus on France in this research. Not because I view France as an exceptional or exemplary field in general, or in terms of xenophobia in particular – although the contrast between the discourse of the self-proclaimed “country of the rights of Man”<sup>29</sup> and the oppression of, among others, strangers would justify a debunking analysis. Rather, borrowing Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s words to explain why her argument centres on India in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, I feel that “that accident of birth and education has provided me with a *sense* of the historical canvas, a hold on some of the pertinent languages that are useful tools for a *bricoleur*” (Spivak, 1988, 281). “Yet”, as Spivak warns about “the Indian case”, postcolonial France “cannot be taken as representative of all countries, nations, cultures, and the like” (Spivak, 1988, 281). This is because my study of xenophobia is contextualised not only historically, but also epistemologically in a postcolonial Western European environment, in the midst of which France bears some specificities that I analyse from Chapter 2 to ground my analysis. Slavery, the birth of the nation-state, the French Revolution, colonisation, the two world wars have made France what it is today,<sup>30</sup> which does not mean that its current situation does not share similarities with other (Western) postcolonial societies.

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<sup>28</sup> The ideologist of the far-right league Action française, Charles Maurras, grouped freemasons, protestants, Jews, and “metics” (i.e., strangers) as so-called members of “the anti-France” (Crane, 2008; Winock, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> When referring to the French understanding of human rights, I use the locution “rights of Man” to stress the gendered conception of such rights and universalism in French history.

<sup>30</sup> As Omar Slaouti and Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison write: “The long history of slavery and colonisation [is] notably at the origin of the French nation-state, of Western modernity, and of the emergence of capitalism” (Slaouti and Le Cour Grandmaison, 2020, 10).

Despite the many differences that distinguish and sometimes oppose Arendt with Foucault,<sup>31</sup> both continuously attend to the contexts of their topics and take seriously the discourses and practices articulated in situations of oppression. They do not shy away from the necessity to understand the rationality at work in domination rather than dismissing it as inauthentic, irrational, contradictory, or morally wrong and unworthy of analysis. Because of the ways they write, this endeavour has often been associated with cynicism, cold-heartedness, or useless provocation. In the case of Foucault, it appears as early as in *History of Madness*, where he mocks the persistent “humanist” myth according to which Pinel (in France) and Tuke (in England) would have “freed the mads” from an undifferentiated and undifferentiating confinement with criminals and beggars (Foucault, 2006, 463-512).<sup>32</sup> In the case of Arendt, it is one of the many reasons the public opinion, survivors from the extermination camps, her own (Jewish) friends, and academics have criticised her account of the trial of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* – first published in *The New Yorker* in 1963 (Arendt, 2006). But it already appears a decade before in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, only six years after the end of WWII. This is where I start my discussion of Arendt’s conceptualisation of political antisemitism because, despite the disturbing tones Arendt and Foucault use at times, their insights are incredibly powerful for making us understand dominating practices. Thus, their sarcasm might also be understood as a way to protect themselves while exploring the logics of oppression.

Arendt is struck by what she sees as the only two analyses of antisemitism available: the “scapegoat theory”<sup>33</sup> and the “eternal antisemitism theory”. About the former, Arendt writes that “the theory that the Jews are always the scapegoat implies that the scapegoat might have been anyone else as well”. This is problematic because it would prevent us from understanding the specificity of antisemitism and it would “uphold[] the perfect innocence of the victim, an innocence which insinuates not only that no

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<sup>31</sup> Allen sums up those differences (Allen, 2002, 131), but she also shows the ways Arendt and Foucault might be brought together to think “power, subjectivity, and agency”. Johanna Oksala (2010b) on violence, Alexander D. Barder and Francois Debrix (2011) on agonism, and of course Giorgio Agamben (1998) on biopolitics and death camps have also associated the two authors.

<sup>32</sup> This is even present in his most methodological books, like *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2002a, 219-232). According to David Macey, a lot of people “were disaffected by [Foucault’s] intellectual arrogance and his ruthless use of irony and sarcasm in arguments and disputes” (Macey, 2019, 59).

<sup>33</sup> Which is different from René Girard’s scapegoat theory introduced in 1982 and discussed in Chapter 4 for its link with “*méconnaissance*” (Girard, 1989).

evil was done but that nothing at all was done which might possibly have a connection with the issue at stake” (Arendt, 2012, 16). I discuss this notion of innocence below. The eternal antisemitism theory implies that “political antisemitism”, operating in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is the most recent manifestation of the “religious Jew-hatred”, which has been the same during the Roman empire, the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment, and so-called modernity (Arendt, 2012, 5).<sup>34</sup> For Arendt, it constitutes a denial of history and of the productivity of historiography (Arendt, 2012, 6-8).<sup>35</sup> This theory is also problematic because, far from “clearly reveal[ing]” antisemitism “as a threat of [the Jewish people’s] extermination”, it dangerously presents this ideology as the “mysterious guarantee of [their] survival” (Arendt, 2012, 20). Against those two theories, Arendt writes provocatively:

It is quite remarkable that the only two doctrines which at least attempt to explain the political significance of the antisemitic movement deny all specific Jewish responsibility and refuse to discuss matters in specific historical terms. In this inherent negation of the significance of human behavior, they bear a terrible resemblance to those modern practices and forms of government which, by means of arbitrary terror, liquidate the very possibility of human activity. Somehow in the extermination camps Jews were murdered as if in accordance with the explanation these doctrines had given of why they were hated: regardless of what they had done or omitted to do, regardless of vice or virtue. Moreover, the murderers themselves, only obeying orders and proud of their passionless efficiency, uncannily resembled the “innocent” instruments of an inhuman impersonal course of events which the doctrine of eternal antisemitism had considered them to be. (Arendt, 2012, 20)

If this quote can make us feel uncomfortable today, one can imagine what it triggered a decade after the beginning of the final solution. Arendt has often been accused of being antisemitic because of such sallies.<sup>36</sup> That said, it is absolutely clear that Arendt does not think that antisemitic persecution, from its emergence to the Holocaust, was in any way “deserved”. Rather, she raises something crucial for the understanding of antisemitism and, by extrapolation, of xenophobia. First, thinking that the persecutors cannot help it because of some eternal drive is absurd (Arendt, 2012, 20).

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<sup>34</sup> This view is indeed widely shared until today, e.g. by rabbi Delphine Horvilleur (2019, 19-21).

<sup>35</sup> Even if Arendt cannot be said to be *historicist*, this effort of *historicisation* (while being constantly criticised by historians) is shared with Foucault.

<sup>36</sup> Her choice of sources, almost exclusively antisemitic, as Staudenmaier reminds us, also explains why this accusation has been asserted. Despite her commitment to fight and historicise antisemitism, Arendt only refers to antisemitic sources and therefore does not always manage to distance herself from their rationale (Staudenmaier, 2012, 157-163).

Second, Jews are not the passive victims of history and of antisemites. They are not helpless. It is because they acted and continue to act, because they lived and continue to live, and because their actions and their lives have impacted the world around them *like any action and life do* that such a terrible – even if contingent – reaction has struck them. Indeed, for Arendt, violence is always “instrumental”, which implies that it is “inscribed in contingency, not in necessity, certainty, or causality chains” (Arendt, 1970, 5-6). In other words, violence is never “a condition of possibility of history” (Arendt, 1970, 11).<sup>37</sup> While the scapegoat and eternal antisemitism theories argue that no matter what they do, Jews are persecuted by antisemites, Arendt identifies the dangerous inescapable outcomes of those thoughts: Jews have no power because regardless of their (in)actions they are persecuted *and* Jews might as well do nothing since this is always going to happen. When Arendt identifies political antisemitism as “a furious reaction” to the emancipation and assimilation of European Jews (Arendt, 2012, 6), she argues that the latter are agents in history, that their actions have a political impact. To be sure, they cannot control nor foresee this impact, but at least they are neither powerless nor insignificant like the Nazis have wanted them to believe.

Against the antisemitic justification according to which persecution punishes Jews for their alleged communal wealth, influence, and power, Arendt thus exposes the regularity at work in antisemitism: a reaction to the emancipation and assimilation of the Jews in nineteenth-century Western European societies.<sup>38</sup> Arendt thus positions the Jews as forces whose actions have consequences and can sometimes be perceived by others in the most heinous ways. It is in this sense that she talks about the “responsibility” of the Jews, of the problem of assuming their “innocence”, and of their passive status as “victims”. Although it is done provocatively, it only aims at asserting that Jews are human beings because they can act, because they act, and because these actions have repercussions. She fights against the totalitarian tendency to “liquidate the very possibility of human activity”, as quoted above. Incidentally, France’s first female rabbi and representative of the liberal Jewish movement Delphine Horvilleur

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<sup>37</sup> This conception of violence as instrumental is shared with Foucault (Oksala, 2010b; Frazer and Hutchings, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Arendt argues that Jews never held influence on state affairs and that they were so divided and diverse wealth-wise that it is impossible to substantiate the fact that, as a group, they could have been characterised by their wealth (Arendt, 2012, 14-16). On the contrary, she demonstrates that they did emancipate and assimilate *as Jews* (Arendt, 2012, 75).

tells us that this question of Jewish “responsibility” – no matter how uncomfortable – has always been part of the Jewish literature that analyses antisemitic and anti-Jew persecutions. Symbolic in that respect is a story told in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 99b): the story of Timna, who was prevented from entering the Jewish community by three rabbis. Later, her son Amalek became the greatest enemy of the Jewish people. The two stories could not have been connected to each other but, as Horvilleur explains:

In this excerpt of the Talmud, the rabbis explore a disturbing lead, and their imagination gives to anti-Jew hatred a new origin: the bitterness and disappointment of the stranger who was not allowed to integrate the family and who was not accepted. It is as if, in their eyes, Amalek was loaded with his mother’s disappointment, with an unfinished dream, and with a frustration that was ready to mutate in a muted hatred. Thus, the rabbis ask: “What is our responsibility? How much suffering could have been spared if we had accepted Timna and let this woman join the family? Could we have prevented Amalek’s birth?” (Horvilleur, 2019, 38)

Of course, Horvilleur refuses to blame the victims. As she writes, “antisemitism is not ‘Jews’ problem’ but always already the problem of antisemites” (Horvilleur, 2019, 19). Yet, this consideration from the rabbis demonstrates their attempt to “give to the Jews the possibility to become actors of their history in front of what could happen again. ... It neither confines the victims in their suffering nor (and it is more surprising!) the persecutors in their hatred” (Horvilleur, 2019, 20). Thus, contrary to the antisemitic and, by extension, xenophobic rhetoric, neither the Jew nor the *xenos* are the causes of their persecution. It is only through antisemitism and xenophobia that the victims of persecution can be turned into an origin, while their own actions are actually part of a line of practices that constitute their subjective positions rather than the contrary (cf. Chapter 3). Peter Staudenmaier reminds us that “antisemitism is an ideology about Jews that is autonomous from and only tangentially related to the true conditions of Jewish existence” (Staudenmaier, 2012, 173). In fact, and regardless of its official discourse, antisemitism does not react to the existence of Jews, but to their actions.

As Amy Allen explains, for Arendt, “action discloses who (as opposed to what) the actor is. ... This does not mean that action merely expresses a pre-existing identity, nor does it mean that the identity of the actor is purely performative; instead, the identity of the actor is in part constituted through the action itself” (Allen, 2002, 137).

This is close to Foucault's view on the way power operates upon subjects, that is, "the constitution of the subject through subjection", as Allen notices (Allen, 2002, 137). Indeed, Foucault argues that "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" and that "a relationship of power is ... a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action" (Foucault, 1982, 789-790). This is something often lost on Foucault's theory because he focuses on the practices of subjectification rather than on an agentic subject whose inherent freedom would manifest itself like a momentum toward action, history, or sovereignty.

This is why I mention Arendt's provocation. Indeed, my approach toward xenophobia as what intensifies the production of the *xenos* as an ambiguous threat might at times appear as a pure denial of the *xenos*' active force and political potential. Of course, as I discuss in the Conclusion, there are practices of subjectivation that resist xenophobia. But those practices are out of the scope of this research, which is about xenophobia and the legitimised persecution of ambiguous subjects. This framing comes from what Colin Gordon identifies as a Foucaultian "caution", as much analytical as it is political, which consists of studying, in a systematic way, the strategies of domination rather than those of resistance. Indeed, as Gordon explains, Foucault takes "the cunning of strategy ... as being the exclusive property of forms of domination" and "consistently refuses to assume the standpoint of one speaking for and in the name of the oppressed" (Gordon, 1980, 256). Furthermore, as I show throughout the thesis, the problematisation of ambiguity in our postcolonial times is mainly a result of xenophobia. Thus, it is not only a matter of cautious refusal. Again, an analogy with Arendt's conceptualisation of antisemitism is useful. She argues that "it has been one of the most unfortunate facts in the history of the Jewish people that only its enemies, and almost never its friends, understood that the Jewish question was a political one" (Arendt, 2012, 67). She goes as far as writing that, during the Dreyfus Affair, "the Jews failed to see that what was involved was an organised fight against them on a political front" (Arendt, 2012, 132). Arendt thus thinks that the political problematisation of "the Jewish question", that is, of the Jews considered as a political group (of oppressed people but also of political agents), has been the antisemites' prerogative. In other words, it is first through their domination that Jews became politically meaningful. This is refuted by Staudenmaier who claims that, because

Arendt mainly relies on antisemitic sources, “her ... argument ... simply disregards the extensive, substantial and complex history of Jewish political action” (Staudenmaier, 2012, 171). According to him, “many assimilationist Jews ... were by no means indifferent to, much less complicit in, the upsurge of antisemitism that accompanied their advancing acculturation” (Staudenmaier, 2012, 165). Nevertheless, Arendt regrets that the first Jewish political problematisation of Jewishness has been Zionism, which she sees as “the only direct, unadulterated consequence of nineteenth-century antisemitic movements”, that is, “at least in its Western ideological form, ... a kind of counter-ideology, the ‘answer’ to antisemitism” (Arendt, 2012, 10).<sup>39</sup> In other words, for Arendt, the only political problematisation of Jewishness that aimed at the empowerment of Jews in nineteenth-century Western Europe was a reaction to a reaction, and its goal was to leave Europe.

It is important to make a crucial distinction here. Contrary to Jean-Paul Sartre in *Antisemite and Jew* (1995), Arendt does not think that antisemitism is the condition of possibility of Jewish *existence*. She writes that “Jewish self-consciousness was [n]ever a mere creation of antisemitism” and that the Jew is not “regarded and defined as a Jew by others” (Arendt, 2012, 10). Arendt articulates the Jewish question and antisemitism as political, not existential (let alone “existentialist”) matters – that is, in terms of power, oppression, and action (Arendt, 2012, 132). What is important to understanding from this point – and for the analysis of xenophobia – is Arendt’s argument that history shows that the consideration, the problematisation, the politicisation of difference in general and of Jewish difference in particular, has *contingently* been the doing of those dynamics that aimed at its domination, at its exclusion, at its “alienation” (Arendt, 2012, 78). It could have been otherwise, but it was not. I argue that something similar is at stake with xenophobia – which is why it should be analysed. Xenophobia has been the main intensity to take part in the political and epistemological problematisation of ambiguity. In turn, the production of ambiguity as a problem, through knowledge and politics, has entailed that the persecution of the *xenos* – ambiguous and therefore threatening – is legitimate. Ambiguity could have not been produced as a threat, but it was. The relationship of forces can change but, at the moment, this is the dynamic to analyse.

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<sup>39</sup> She regrets that Zionism is *the only* Jewish problematisation of the Jewish question and that it is a reaction – rather than an anterior initiative – to antisemitism, not that it exists.



Thus, the *xenos*' ambiguity, the fact that they are neither similar nor different, can be compared to what Arendt describes as Jewishness. In that sense, the *xenos*' escape from "the oppositional binary" could be understood as the "action" to which xenophobia reacts. Even if I do not make it the centre of my research, it has to be mentioned, so the following analysis of xenophobic practices of subjectification does not appear as the denial of the *xenos*' agency. This "neither... nor..." ambiguous position constitutes another element of comparison with Arendt's analysis of Jewishness and antisemitism. First, antisemitism articulates Jewishness as problematic only to react to it. Jewishness results from the historical emancipation and assimilation of the Jews, each produced as problematic from an antisemitic point of view.<sup>40</sup> Jewishness thus refers mainly to assimilated Jews and is different from Judaism in the sense that it is the political production of an ideology; it has a role to play in the domination of Jews. Arendt writes that "Jewish origin, without religious and political connotation, became everywhere a psychological quality, was changed into 'Jewishness', and from then on could be considered only in the categories of virtue or vice" (Arendt, 2012, 96). Through xenophobia, ambiguity follows a similar path toward the category of threat (cf. Chapters 3 and 4).

Second, according to Arendt, emancipation and assimilation did not make Jews similar to the national subjects in France, Germany, or Austria. Rather, it made them neither equal nor privileged, neither non-national nor linked to a nation-state, neither "Jew in general" nor "non-Jew", neither "pariah" nor "parvenu" (Arendt, 2012, 24-77). Jews thus find themselves trapped in a position between two realities that are meant to oppose each other. Those sets of oppositions are supposed to be exclusively binary, hence the impossible situation of the Jew, whose alleged Jewishness is produced as neither one nor the other.<sup>41</sup> Importantly, Jewishness has been produced, through antisemitism, as what Arendt calls a vice. Distinct from a crime (which implies a relation to law and to the forbidden), a vice entails, in Arendt's re-articulation of the

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<sup>40</sup> Arendt's view of Jewish assimilation is refuted by Staudenmaier as influenced by the antisemitic literature she uses (Staudenmaier, 2012, 167). Yet, he also acknowledges that, "at the core of [her] negative perspective on assimilation stands a legitimate, if highly contentious, political and ethical evaluation" (Staudenmaier, 2012, 164-165).

<sup>41</sup> According to Horvilleur, the Jew is "accused simultaneously to be one thing and its opposite". Through antisemitism, "the Jew is always a little too much the same and a little bit too much the other" (Horvilleur, 2019, 15-16).

antisemitic ideology, a relation to norm and to the social inclusion of what is “innate” (Arendt, 2012, 97).<sup>42</sup> Arendt writes that “vice is but the corresponding reflection of crime in society. Human wickedness, if accepted by society, is changed from an act of will into an inherent, psychological quality which man cannot choose or reject” (Arendt, 2012, 93). If Judaism was considered a “crime” in Christian-ruled society, Jewishness is turned into a vice, which implies that, through antisemitism, it associates a negative meaning to an inherent condition. Arendt argues that, if “Jews had been able to escape Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was no escape. A crime, moreover, is met with punishment; a vice can only be exterminated” (Arendt, 2012, 100). The antisemitic and Nazi persecutions of the Jews thus follow from the production of Jewishness as a vice. Arendt explains that “a society which had shown its willingness to incorporate crime in the form of vice into its very structure would ... be ready to cleanse itself of viciousness by openly admitting criminals and by publicly committing crimes” (Arendt, 2012, 101).<sup>43</sup> The strategy articulated by political antisemitism is thus the exclusion of Jews, who are produced as bearing an “alien character” or an “innate strangeness” (Arendt, 2012, 5 and 78).

Alien and stranger are here produced in a binary opposition to national, something I develop in detail in Chapter 2 by centring the discussion on French history. As a matter of fact, in France, Arendt argues that “the only brand of ... antisemitism which actually remained strong ... was tied up with a general xenophobia. Especially after the First World War, foreign Jews became the stereotypes of all foreigners” (Arendt, 2012, 59). She adds that, following the Dreyfus Affair and “up to the outbreak of the Second World War[,] it became natural to suspect the Jews of sympathies with the national enemy” (Arendt, 2012, 60). At times, the Jews are German (Arendt, 2012, 60 and 102), at times, they are English (Arendt, 2012, 130).<sup>44</sup> In other words, even if the antisemitic problematisation of Jewishness can be approached as a “neither... nor...” position, as

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<sup>42</sup> This distinction between law and norm is also shared by Foucault (1978; 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Foucault’s developments about nineteenth-century antisemitism and the relationship between racism and biopower twenty-five years after Arendt are very similar (Foucault, 2003, 88-89 and 257). That said, Kim Su Rasmussen aptly distinguish Arendt’s approach to antisemitism and racism as “ideologies” from Foucault’s approach to racism “as a flexible technology of power that entails a new and novel form of [biopolitical] government” (Rasmussen, 2011, 40).

<sup>44</sup> Horvilleur concurs: “Jewish particularism is felt as a threat against the integrity of the nation or of the political power, it endangers the strict equality between the elements of an undifferentiated nation. A suspicion of non-allegiance hangs over it, which ends up justifying the Jews’ departure or their physical elimination” (Horvilleur, 2019, 29).

something that would escape the relation between two opposites, Arendt makes clear that it is first and foremost a matter of problematising difference. According to her, political antisemitism is “a morbid lust for the exotic, abnormal, and *different as such*” (Arendt, 2012, 70, my emphasis). Antisemitism would have forced assimilated Jews to engage in a “tragic endeavour to conform through differentiation and distinction” (Arendt, 2012, 76) in an exclusively and exclusionary binary way. She concludes that “the average Jew ... could only stress *an empty sense of difference* which continued to be interpreted ... from innate strangeness to social alienation” (Arendt, 2012, 78, my emphasis).<sup>45</sup>

Centring the issue around difference does not mean that Arendt’s conceptualisation of the antisemitic problematisation of Jewishness as a vicious difference to be excluded lacks something compared with the xenophobic problematisation of ambiguity articulated in this research. In many ways, what I call ambiguity is still aptly analysed as a difference (cf. Chapter 1). Rather, it shows that, before the Holocaust and the following poststructuralist affirmation of difference, ambiguity was not intelligible as such. Arendt only hints at the conceptualisation of a sort of ambiguous position because the antisemitic subjectification of the Jews, and the fact that she writes after the Holocaust, both allow it. Yet, she studies a phenomenon explicitly emerging in the nineteenth century and, before the Holocaust and the waves of decolonisation, only similarity and difference were problematised (cf. Chapter 4). Thus, despite the valuable inputs of Arendt’s conceptualisation of political antisemitism, analysing the postcolonial and xenophobic subjectification of ambiguous subjects requires a different path, which I suggest following in this thesis.

#### **4 Research Questions and Chapter Outline**

In a postcolonial society like France, where subjects who are considered different are produced as threats and dominated accordingly, how can we account for the specific domination of other subjects, who are not “differentiated” in the same way, but still perceived as threatening? How does the situation of those subjects show that practices of subjectification can escape a binary framework of differentiation (between

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<sup>45</sup> Horvilleur also reminds us that antisemitism has associated Jewishness with femininity, another paradigmatic difference – in a binary sexual structure (Horvilleur, 2019, 80-85).

similarity and difference) and still be inscribed in relations of domination? Can we problematise the notion of xenophobia away from its traditional association with racialisation to understand this specific domination? How can this reworked xenophobia reveal the problematisation of something like ambiguity, beside difference and similarity, in a Western historical epistemology? How can the notions of ambiguity and xenophobia help us to understand the subjectification of the *xenos*, produced as a threat for being neither similar nor different? How does a xenophobic apparatus, formed by the discursive and non-discursive practices of subjectification of ambiguous and threatening subjects, work? What is the role of fear in the formation of this xenophobic apparatus? How does xenophobic knowledge constitute itself and what is its relation to the specific domination, or persecution, of the *xenos*? Finally, what is the political strategy articulated through all xenophobic practices of subjectification?

To answer those questions, the thesis is organised into five chapters. The first chapter gathers poststructuralist literature which focuses on dividing practices of subjectification and affirms difference over identity to acknowledge the specific situation of the *xenos* – this ambiguous subject, produced as a threat for being neither one thing nor its opposite. Thanks to the subjects studied in this literature (the stranger, the nomad, the hybrid, and the queer) which are all potential embodiments of the *xenos*, I analyse the dividing practices of subjectification through binary differentiation. First, the subjectifying division occurs within the subject, which opens us to powerful ethical perspectives. Second, the division occurs between subjects, which situates us within historical power relations. Thanks to the poststructuralist and, especially, the Foucaultian acknowledgement of the historical relations of power that condition the practices of subjectification, the binary opposition that allows us to differentiate one subject from another reveals itself to be pervaded by dynamics of domination. It entails that, through the practices of subjectification structured as binary, one subject is produced on the back of the other. There, the stranger, the nomad, the hybrid, and the queer can meet the *xenos*. As a result of the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity, those dominated subjects are theoretically re-evaluated as the important elements in the relation from which they emerge. Without the dominated, there is no dominant. Thus, the literature gathered here acknowledges the power of the subjects who have historically been dominated, and this helps us to

understand how, dominated, they still are produced as threats. It also articulates a notion of difference which is heterogenous, excessive, and often subversive. However, this literature articulates a binary opposition between identity and difference, especially around subjectification, which prevents it from making intelligible the specific domination of the *xenos* who, in our postcolonial times, is produced as a threat for being neither similar nor different. Drawing from Butler, the chapter also introduces “the oppositional binary”, understood as the political foundation of our Western societies, which the literature gathered here does not question sufficiently. As a result, the chapter ends by articulating the notion of ambiguity to account for the specific subjectification of the *xenos*.

The second chapter analyses xenophobia in its traditional understanding to differentiate it from the notion of “postcolonial xenophobia”, articulated in the following chapters. Because of its historical link with racialisation, I call this traditional xenophobia “racialising xenophobia” and I analyse it in France, from the seventeenth century until today, as a historico-political problematisation of difference. This allows me to stress the importance of historicisation to argue, in the following chapters, for the emergence of postcolonial xenophobia and of the problematisation of ambiguity in postcolonial times. I also analyse racialising xenophobia in relation to the Foucaultian “discourse on the race war” to introduce important points for the analysis of postcolonial xenophobia. Indeed, this discourse entails that we politicise and historicise practices of subjectification against a metaphysical understanding of the subject. War is at the core of political relations, and it has made political relations intelligible since the seventeenth century. If this research questions the inescapability of the oppositional binary, it nevertheless endorses a conflictual approach to politics. Furthermore, linked to “the race war”, racialising xenophobia implies, in France, that the French subject is produced on the back of another subject – the stranger. Different embodiments of this stranger are analysed: the slave and the German in the seventeenth century, the counter-revolutionary and the English during the French Revolution, the former slave after the 1848 abolition of slavery, the indigenous during colonisation, but also the postcolonial immigrant and the Muslim in contemporary France. I also identify two techniques used to subjectify the stranger through racialising xenophobia. The main technique, which emerges with the stranger, is exclusion or, in Foucault’s words, “killing”. The second technique – “deceitful assimilation” – emerges in the

nineteenth century. Understanding the workings of those techniques is important as we find their traces in the strategy articulated through postcolonial xenophobia – i.e., the disambiguation of the *xenos*.

The third chapter introduces an emotional archaeology<sup>46</sup> of postcolonial xenophobia. I first analyse the subjectification of one figure of the *xenos*: the homosexual Arab man in postcolonial France. Discursively produced as neither similar nor different – or neither homosexual nor Arab – particularly by French (radical) gays since the Algerian independence, the homosexual Arab man is ambiguous and therefore threatening. Thus, approaching his subjectification through othering, the problematisation of difference, and the poststructuralist affirmation of difference over identity is not sufficient. Indeed, the same affirmation of difference has been integrated within the oppositional binary because this political foundation not only enhances the domination of similarity over difference, but explicitly relies on difference to hold together. Analysing the subjectification of the homosexual Arab man also shows that he is more often approached as an Arab man than as a homosexual because of the strategy of disambiguation articulated through postcolonial xenophobia. This strategy is analysed through an emotional archaeology, which draws from Foucault’s methodology and Sara Ahmed’s cultural politics of emotions brought together through the notion of intentionality. Drawing from Foucault, I analyse the regularity of practices of subjectification, especially the production of an object (the *xenos* as ambiguous and threatening) and the articulation of a strategy (disambiguation). The ambiguous subject is produced as a threat to legitimise their disambiguation. Disambiguating the *xenos* means turning them into either a similar or a different subject, that is, forcing them into a binary frame of subjectification and differentiation. Drawing from Ahmed, I analyse how discursive practices of subjectification manage to attach the meaning “threat” to the *xenos*’ body to the point where it becomes its only legitimate meaning. Studying the intensification of fear entailed by xenophobia, I can explain the reification of the *xenos* as a cause of fear. This intensification of fear also legitimises the emergence of xenophobic knowledge, which itself legitimises the persecution of the *xenos* to disambiguate them.

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<sup>46</sup> Drawing from those, following Foucault’s archaeological methodology, who focused on emotions, like Arlette Farge (2013a; 2013b).

Chapter 4 analyses xenophobic knowledge and persecution as forming a xenophobic apparatus – approached through its intentional strategy. Indeed, xenophobic knowledge and persecution both take part in the subjectification of the *xenos* as an ambiguous threat to be disambiguated into either a similar or different subject. In the first part, I analyse xenophobic knowledge as a discursive practice triggered and legitimised by the fear allegedly caused by the *xenos*. The *xenos*' ambiguity is threatening because it is unknown and synonymous with chaotic undifferentiation. I introduce two practices of xenophobic knowledge: *reconnaissance*, which disambiguates the *xenos* into a similar subject, and *méconnaissance*, which disambiguates the *xenos* into a different subject. I read those practices through a historical epistemology of the pre-classical problematisation of similarity and of the classical problematisation of difference, from which I extrapolate a postcolonial problematisation of ambiguity. This epistemological endeavour echoes the more historico-political one undertaken in Chapter 2, and both introduce a postcolonial critique of Foucault's historicisation of the problematisation of difference as not acknowledging the role of coloniality. In the second part, I analyse xenophobic persecution as a violent non-discursive practice of subjectification legitimised by xenophobic knowledge. Because of its disambiguating strategy, persecution has to be approached as a positive and negative practice. Relying on the discursive production of the *xenos* as an ambiguous threat to be annihilated, it ends up producing a disambiguated subject. Therefore, xenophobic persecution reveals the coexistence of repression and productivity in a postcolonial time when an association of sovereign, disciplinary and biopowers operates. Xenophobic persecution is thus a practice to be differentiated from the normalisation of every subject because of the incomparable degree of violence used for the subjectification of the *xenos*.

Chapter 5 illustrates the workings of the xenophobic apparatus in contemporary France through an archaeology of the medical discourse on the intersex and of the juridical discourse on the foreigner, as they are taught in faculties of medicine and law. The first part introduces an archive made of the material produced by specialists of medical sub-disciplines for the examination took by students before their residency, of recommendations from the French authority that sets the rules of medical practice, and of two nosographic systems (the DSM-5 and the ICD-11). In conformity with Foucault's methodology, alongside the object of the discourse (here, the intersex), I

identify the different types of statements and positions of subjectivity involved, the various concepts disseminated (pathologies, symptoms, and treatments), and the strategy articulated. Whatever the statement, intervention is required because the intersex is produced as pathologically ambiguous, neither typically masculine nor typically feminine, and therefore threatening to the sexual and (bio)political order of a postcolonial society like France. While the pathologies are diverse in type, cause, and seriousness, mutilation is always part of the “treatment”. Finally, the medical discourse on the intersex is systematically oriented toward their disambiguation into a typical man or, more often, into a typical woman – a disambiguation that goes through a mutilating persecution. The second part introduces an archive made of handbooks that are specifically titled “law of foreigners”, a juridical sub-discipline that deals with the condition and the rights of any non-national that (intends to) enter(s) the French territory. The foreigner is an ambiguous subject because they are neither a national (French) nor a non-national who lives abroad. To begin, I reverse the so-called hierarchy of norms (from international conventions to administrative acts, through constitutions and laws) presented as the way foreigners can claim their rights, and I question the positivism at work in the juridical discourse on the foreigner. Doing so, I show that this discourse may produce diverse documents and corresponding statuses for different types of foreigners, but that it is their removability that makes them all ambiguous. Every foreigner can be removed from the national territory because they are produced, through policing, as a threat to public order. A form of persecution, this removability aims at their disambiguation into a different subject, that is, a non-national back abroad.

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# Chapter 1

## The *Xenos*: An Ambiguous Subject beside Poststructuralist Difference

### Introduction

This research starts with two hypotheses. First, some subjects are produced as ambiguous, that is, as *neither* one thing *nor* its opposite, but immanently to both. I refer to those subjects as *xenos* and their ambiguity is produced as a threat, which ultimately legitimises their persecution (cf. Chapter 4). This is because, second, their subjectification goes through xenophobia, a notion I rework away from its traditional meaning (cf. Chapter 3). This chapter clarifies the first hypothesis by resorting to the poststructuralist literature which focuses on subjectification and difference to retrieve the *xenos*. Neither a constitutive and conscious subjectivity nor a political identity, the *xenos* is an analytical tool useful for political theory insofar as it allows us to understand the production of specific subjects (as ambiguous, threatening, and persecuted) and, consequently, the workings of xenophobia.

The persecution of the *xenos* must awaken political theorists' attention and, informed by poststructuralism, this interest becomes political in itself. As Étienne Balibar explains, poststructuralism considers that "philosophy and 'theory,' rather than being self-isolating discourses, are as such ... 'interventions' whose end is to *disappear in the production of their own effects*" (Balibar, 2003, 6).<sup>47</sup> In that sense, the *xenos* has no pretension to "survive" the theoretical practice which constitutes this research; it only aims to serve the latter. Contrary to analytical notions that are also used as political identities (e.g., the queer), it is highly unlikely that ambiguous subjects like those analysed in this research (the intersex, the foreigner, the homosexual Arab) would spontaneously resort to the term "*xenos*" or the notion "xenophobia" to refer to their experiences and political struggles. Balibar also explains that poststructuralism is a "philosophy that seeks to find the effects of power at the heart of structures or ... to

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<sup>47</sup> If Balibar's text is mainly about structuralism, he makes clear that "poststructuralism (which acquired this name in the course of its international 'exportation,' 'reception,' or 'translation') is always still structuralism, and structuralism in its strongest sense is already poststructuralism (Balibar, 2003, 11).

pursue the stumbling block that can be interpreted as *resistance*” (Balibar, 2003, 16). In this chapter, I explore the paths traced by a specific literature to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos* to capture how those approaches intend to better understand the dynamics of power – especially those at work in domination – and to contribute to their subversion.

The poststructuralist literature studied here also focuses on difference because of this research’s focus on the subjectification of the *xenos* as ambiguous. The “affirmation of difference (over identity)”, which, as Gavin Rae writes, “is often understood to be the defining motif of poststructuralist thought” (Rae, 2020, 20) is useful to understand the production of subjects as ambiguous. The idea is to benefit from the poststructuralists’ findings on difference to extrapolate them toward an analysis of ambiguity, the *xenos*, and xenophobia. For Balibar, poststructuralism moves “from a ‘structuralism of structures,’ ... that seeks to discover structures and *invariants*, to a structuralism ‘without structures,’ ... that seeks their indeterminacy or *immanent negation*” (Balibar, 2003, 11, my emphases). Thus, the literature gathered here allows us to acknowledge the powerful binary relation between difference and identity (and to raise the issue of its “invariance” in poststructuralism). At the same time, drawing from those poststructuralists, we can ask whether or not the *xenos*’ ambiguity “negates” this binary relation.

Who is the *xenos*? How can poststructuralist literature that focuses on subjectification and difference help us to approach the production of this ambiguous subject? To answer those questions, this chapter is organised into four parts.

Firstly, I introduce the *xenos* according to the poststructuralist – and especially Foucaultian – interest in subjectification, rather than according to a more “traditional” (metaphysical or phenomenological) conception of the subject. While the latter’s sovereignty is essential, universalising, and unifying, subjectification entails what Foucault calls “dividing practices” operating either within the subject or between subjects. Furthermore, subjectification is explicitly involved in historical power relations. I thus historicise the possibility to conceptualise the *xenos* in relation to the poststructuralist affirmation of difference.

Secondly, I explore the subjectification of the *xenos* through dividing practices operating within the subject. I analyse Julia Kristeva's philosophical history of the stranger and Gilles Deleuze's conceptualisation of the nomad; both being potential embodiments of the *xenos*. Throughout this analysis, Kristeva's strangeness and Deleuze's nomadism reveal themselves as powerful instances of the poststructuralist affirmation of difference. Yet, because of their internal character, their inscription into historical power relations may not be explicit enough to understand the subjectification of the *xenos*.

Thirdly, I turn to analyses of subjectification as dividing practices operating between subjects and which, as a result, take explicitly part in historical power relations. Through Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory and Judith Butler's queer theory, subjectification does not only affirm difference over identity, but also produces difference as subversive while dominated. Yet, because of the binary frame that links difference and identity in poststructuralism, those theories do not acknowledge the *xenos*' ambiguity.

Fourthly, I draw from Katerina Kolozova to introduce the problematisation of binary differentiation as a poststructuralist issue. However, while Kolozova allegedly avoids this pitfall by resorting to a theoretical unity, I rather turn to the notion of ambiguity as developed by Aoileann Ní Mhurchú to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos* beside the binary opposition between identity and difference.

## **1 The *Xenos* through the Poststructuralist Interest in Subjectification and Difference**

In order to understand the production of the *xenos* as an ambiguous, threatening, and persecuted subject, I first need to unpack how subjectification happens through dividing practices, opposition, and domination. The poststructuralist literature gathered in this chapter allows me to explore the two forms of regimes of opposition that exist: within a subject or between subjects. It also helps me to assert from the beginning that the subjectification of the *xenos* is a historical (precisely, postcolonial) phenomenon, because it is linked to historical dividing practices and relations of

domination, like any form of subjectification (I explore for instance the subjectification of women, strangers, nomads, hybrid subjects, and queer subjects for their potential relation to xenophobia). Finally, the poststructuralist literature gathered here affirms difference over identity, which is useful to analysing the situation of the *xenos*, not so much as a different subject (one of the many figures of “the other” studied in this chapter), but as a subject who is neither similar nor different, i.e., ambiguous. This is because the dividing practices of subjectification and the regimes of opposition that support them (and, in a circular manner, which are produced by them) are not solely binary. The subjectification of the *xenos* in our postcolonial times is here to demonstrate this crucial point.

### 1.1 Subjectification as Dividing Practices within Historical Relations of Power

In “The Subject and Power”, Michel Foucault claims that he has not been interested in formulating a theory of power, but rather in analysing subjectification or, as he puts it, the “modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects” (Foucault, 1982, 777). According to him, those modes are three. First, “the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences [in] objectivizing the ... subject”, second, “the objectivizing of the subject in ... ‘dividing practices.’ The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others”, and third, “the way a human being turns himself into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, 777-778). Reflecting on a more general poststructuralist approach to the subject, Balibar writes that there is “*no subject without subjection*”, which he defines as “a differential of subordination ... and subjectivation, that is, of passivity and activity” (Balibar, 2003, 17).<sup>48</sup> He adds that, in poststructuralism,

subjectivity is ... characterized by a two-fold regime of opposition: on one hand, the opposition internal to persons ...; on the other, the opposition instituted by the different forms of the plural, which implies that for the individual subject *I*, sometimes the *We* installs within his consciousness a virtual representation of the whole of which he is an “indivisible part”..., sometimes the exclusive *They* creates a possibility of alienation. (Balibar, 2003, 12-13)

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<sup>48</sup> Gavin Rae explains that the poststructuralist decentred subject is “an *effect* of a prior process (social, historical, discursive and so on)”, which does not mean that “the subject is *determined* by those pre-subject processes”. Rather, this “embedded constituted subject ... is able to intentionally act, to varying degrees, *within* its conditioning environment” (Rae, 2020, 17-18).

Given the topic of this research – i.e., xenophobia – I do not focus on Foucault’s third mode of subjectification that Balibar calls “subjectivation”, but rather on the “subordination” part of the *xenos*’ subjectification, which does not mean that I consider them as an exclusively passive subject. In Chapters 4 and 5, I thus analyse Foucault’s first mode of subjectification through an archaeology of xenophobic knowledge, legitimised by fear and legitimising the persecution of the *xenos*. In this chapter, I explore the poststructuralist literature that focuses on (Foucault’s second mode of) subjectification and difference to find the *xenos* produced through the dividing practices (Balibar’s “regimes of opposition”) that operate within the subject (Part 2) and between subjects (Part 3).

Poststructuralists are not interested in the traditional conceptions of a sovereign subject, whether they come from metaphysics or phenomenology. For instance, Foucault does not identify the subject with the transcendental “position of a universal, totalizing, or neutral subject”, nor with a constitutive consciousness that can confer meaning and discover truth (Foucault, 2003, 52; Foucault in Raulet, 1983, 198). On the contrary, he claims that we should not focus on who is the sovereign and what he “looks like” but rather, on “bodies”, “forces”, and “thoughts” become subjects in a material way (Foucault, 2003, 28). In Étienne Balibar’s words, poststructuralism operates a “deconstruction of the subject as *arche* (cause, principle, origin) and [a] reconstruction of subjectivity as an *effect*, or ... a passage from constitutive to constituted subjectivity” (Balibar, 2003, 10). The focus has changed insofar as the subject is not the condition for the analysis to start, but the destination where the analysis should take us.<sup>49</sup>

For Foucault, the practices of subjectification are caught up in dynamics of power, political confrontation, and historical relations of domination. He thinks that “there is no such thing as a neutral subject” and this means that “we are all inevitably someone’s adversary”. In Foucault’s reasoning, this involves that “a binary structure runs through society” (Foucault, 2003, 51), which I think can be discussed with the introduction of an analysis of postcolonial xenophobia. But for now, following Foucault, we can at

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<sup>49</sup> Joan W. Scott argues the same about experience and adds: “This kind of approach does not undercut politics by denying the existence of subjects, it instead interrogates the process of their creation” (Scott, 1992, 38).

least state that power is no longer solely repressive but productive insofar as “relations of domination manufacture subjects”. Through archaeology, Foucault wants “to reveal relations of domination” and “identify the technical instruments that guarantee that they function” rather than “looking for a sort of sovereignty from which powers spring” (Foucault, 2003, 45-46). This is an endeavour I share to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos*.

One powerful implementation of this Foucaultian methodology can be found in poststructuralist feminism. Indeed, among all the “binary structures” that organise our Western societies, sexual difference seems one of the most productive and naturalised. Opposed to this conception, Joan W. Scott argues that “sexual difference is not ... the originary cause from which social organisation ultimately can be derived” (Scott, 1999, 189). In line with Foucault’s call to pay more attention to relations of domination than to “the source of sovereignty” (nature or naturalised sexual difference), Scott acknowledges the subjectification of women through domination. This is important for our analysis of the subjectification of the *xenos* through xenophobic persecution. However, she does not make this domination an ontological characteristic of women, an element without which they would not be women. This clarification is also important for the *xenos* whose ambiguity (for which they are persecuted) should not, as I explain in section 4.2 of this chapter, be understood as their ontological characteristic. While Scott notices that “there is a belief that without an ontologically grounded feminist subject there can be no politics” (Butler and Scott, 1992, xiv), she argues that essentialising domination – or for that matter, anything else – into the ontology of women “impl[ies] that sexual difference is a natural rather than a social phenomenon” because it “end[s] up endorsing the ideas of unalterable sexual difference that are used to justify discrimination” (Scott, 1999, 10-11). Rather, Scott argues that domination or discrimination are Foucaultian dividing practices of subjectification that have “consolidated the identity of women as a political constituency (of those who experience and perhaps also resist discrimination)” (Scott, 1999, 201). As such, those practices need to be historicised and problematised (Scott, 1999, 44).

This is precisely the political and epistemological role assigned to the notion of gender. Not only does gender denaturalise sexual difference by studying the relations of

domination between men and women as historical (therefore contingent and contestable), but it also reveals that whatever happens to women, it happens in relation to men (Scott, 1999, 13 and 24). Therefore, changing the meaning of women (away from “dominated”) implies changing the meaning of men (away from “dominant”). Through Scott’s feminism, gender itself can be analysed as a dividing practice of subjectification, one that reproduces Foucault’s “binary structure run[ning] through society”, only to subvert it. As Scott explains: “Contests about meaning involve the introduction of new oppositions, the reversal of hierarchies, the attempt to expose repressed terms, to challenge the natural status of seemingly dichotomous pairs, and to expose their interdependence and their internal instability” (Scott, 1999, 14). Scott follows Foucault in identifying the “technical instruments” of domination, which are all connected: the naturalisation of gender into sexual difference, the homogenisation of gendered identities, and the hierarchisation of the positions women and men occupy in social relations (Scott, 1999, 164).

Historicising gender therefore entails acknowledging the heterogeneity of every political identity, and of every subject, which is necessary to subvert the domination they endure. Thus, the critical analysis of the *xenos*’ persecution should also go through this type of anti-identitarian approach to, following Scott, “render *ambiguous* the meaning of any fixed binary opposition” (Scott, 1999, 166, my emphasis). In other words, those who “share” an identity, those who are produced as similar subjects, are not necessarily identical to each other. For Scott, it requires thinking about who is excluded from the subject “women” without being included in the subject “men”, like, e.g., Muslim veiled women in France (Scott, 2007).<sup>50</sup> Indeed, as she claims: “If one grants that meanings are constructed through exclusions, one must acknowledge and take responsibility for the exclusions involved in one’s own project” (Scott, 1999, 14).

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<sup>50</sup> Scott shows that, in France, particularly since the end of the 1980s, Muslim “veiled” women are excluded from the French sovereign, feminist struggles, and the collective subject “women” altogether. Indeed, the hijab sticks the meaning “Islam” (and therefore “backwardness”, “patriarchy”, “oppression of women”) to those subjects, who no longer mean “women” for universalist feminists. For the latter, it is not possible to be both a woman and Muslim/veiled; one has to choose (Scott, 2007). The fact that the women who refuse to comply with this Islamophobic injunction do not cease to be women to suddenly become men (as the only other category available in this discourse), and therefore continue to endure sexist violence, seems of no concern for universalist feminists.

## 1.2 The Poststructuralist Affirmation of Difference over Identity

Through historicisation, the hierarchy between opposing subjects is also denaturalised, which has two consequences. First, political theorists can acknowledge that the – contingently – dominated part of the relationship is, as Scott writes, not only “subordinate, secondary, and often absent or invisible” but is also “present and central because [it is] required for the definition” of the dominant part (Scott, 1999, 14). Once affirmed, this centrality empowers women and threatens the sexist social organisation of our societies as a merely contingent and therefore contestable reality. In other words, the difference of women (the “other(ed) sex”) is affirmed over the identity of men which, paradoxically, entails that the dominated part of the relationship can also be produced as a threat. Positioning the dominated element as central to the relation of power is also useful when it comes to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos*, as it allows us to understand how the latter is produced as a threat through xenophobia. Second, feminism opposes the hierarchy between men and women and fights toward their equality. Scott contests that equality can be achieved through, on the one hand, sameness or, on the other hand, infinite multiplicity. Indeed, sameness has been historically used at the advantage of men, which disqualifies it for the feminist fight (Scott, 1999, 163). Regarding infinite multiplicity, Scott argues that feminists refuse “a simple substitution of multiple for binary difference, for it is not a happy pluralism we ought to invoke” (Scott, 1999, 166). Endless plurality is considered depoliticising because the subjectification of men and women as equal cannot exist without their primary – and binary – differentiation through dividing practices (Scott, 1999, 162-164). Once again, this should help us to understand what is at stake with the *xenos*, who is neither announcing a return of the same (or undifferentiation), nor the symbol of infinite multiplicity, but a specific subject whose specificity is linked to the way they are produced.

Now, for Scott and the poststructuralists gathered in this chapter, difference is affirmed over identity in a binary way – which can be analysed critically when focusing on the *xenos*, as I show below. For Foucault particularly, this is directly linked to the historical emergence of the subject as a product of relations of domination because the subject that we know today has not always existed. Hence, subjectification is given more importance than an atemporal and universal sovereign subjectivity. Indeed, the



practices of subjectification can – and must – be historicised. In *History of Madness*, Foucault demonstrates that the rational subject of Cartesianism – the Western sovereign subject who still constitutes our reference today – needed the mad, that is, “his” other, to emerge. As I explain below, this is useful to understand how the *xenos* can help us to understand the production of other subjects, but not only a subject who would be opposed to them in a binary way. Indeed, the regime of opposition between, on the one hand, the *xenos* and, on the other hand, “the sovereign” and “the other” is more complex than the oppositional binary. Still, for Foucault, madness is the difference that reason needed to be identified and to identify with the sovereign subject (Foucault, 2006, 181-183).<sup>51</sup> This is why he refers to this book as “the history of difference”, a difference that emerges simultaneously to “the” subject in the classical age (Foucault, 1994a, 492). Precisely, he explains that “the history of madness would be the history of the Other – of that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness)” (Foucault, 2002b, xxvi). Foucault, therefore, uses archaeology to establish “that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. That difference ... is this dispersion that we are and make” (Foucault, 2002a, 147-148).

The affirmation of difference at work in the poststructuralist literature studied here should also be historicised alongside practices of subjectification and relations of domination. Indeed, it will help us understand how the oppositional binary has emerged and how it has prevented us from acknowledging that subjectification can occur beside it. I undertake this task through an epistemological analysis in Chapter 4, but, here, I narrow down its conditions of possibility to three contingently convergent movements that preceded the emergence of poststructuralist thinkers on the intellectual and political stage in postwar France: Martin Heidegger’s formulation of ontological difference, the aftermaths of the Holocaust, and the structuralist understanding of difference. First, Heidegger’s work has indeed been important for poststructuralist thinkers (cf. Howarth, 2013, 87-115). Heidegger makes difference a founding philosophical problem when he situates the difference between Being and

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<sup>51</sup> Lynne Huffer also mentions the historical “othering event” between reason and unreason out of which the constitutive subject emerged (Huffer, 2010, 114).

being on the ontological level (Heidegger, 2001). Through this gesture, not only is difference affirmed as primary and originary in the theoretical analysis, but the binary relation between identity and difference comes inevitably into play. Indeed, ontology itself works through a binary framework (being/nothing, or, in the Heideggerian case, Being/being).<sup>52</sup> Affirming difference as ontological automatically places identity in a dependent relation to difference and makes such relation seem permanent. Second, as mentioned in the Introduction, the Holocaust instanced an extreme political problematisation of difference. In the direct postwar period, some Western European intellectuals were wary that such a tragedy should never happen again. Like François Azouvi shows, affirming difference over identity meant affirming that difference was not a political problem and could no longer be used as a motive for persecution (Azouvi, 2015, 53-65). It also meant that the scrutiny of political theory should move to the study of identities as what could potentially become political problems.<sup>53</sup> Paradoxically, it can be said that the poststructuralists managed to do this partly through their readings of the work of a Nazi – i.e., Heidegger. Third, the poststructuralist affirmation of difference also fed on the movement that preceded it: structuralism. In structuralism, any meaning comes from a structure whose organisation is relational and differential, not referential. Identity, like the subject, is not essentialised, they both emerge from differentiation. Hence, Balibar’s definition of the subject as “a difference of differences” (Balibar, 2003, 15). Furthermore, the structures of meaning are universal and ahistoric since structuralism privileges a synchronic (rather than diachronic) approach. Thus, because difference is structural and structures are universal, difference cannot but be affirmed as central to make sense of anything and everything (Belsey, 2002, 17).

### **1.3 Historicising the *Xenos*: An Etymological Preliminary**

If the subjectification of the Western sovereign subject and the affirmation of difference should be historicised, so too should the *xenos*. From Chapter 3, I show that the *xenos* could only have emerged as such once the poststructuralists affirmed

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<sup>52</sup> Even if there is already a form of questioning of the binary in *Being and Time* with the introduction of *Dasein* as a third element in the enactment of ontological difference (Marion, 1987; Heidegger, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> One of the most telling legacies of this affirmation of difference over identity can be found in William E. Connolly’s *Identity/Difference* (2002).

difference over identity, and it is because ambiguity had only started to be problematised then. Before doing this, I need to explain the theoretical choice behind the term “*xenos*”.

Emile Benveniste – a precursor to structuralism – explains that the *xenos* referred both to the host and the guest in the ancient Greek practice of hospitality (the *xenia*) (Benveniste, 1969, 94-95). Although the practice of hospitality did involve distinct subjects, the ancient Greeks’ use of the same word to refer to both host and guest could have made their distinction impossible. However, it did not.<sup>54</sup> Foucault acknowledges this sort of absence-presence of difference (as we know it today) in the pre-classical discourse and refers to it as the “non-coincidence between the resemblances” (Foucault, 2002b, 33). This helps us to understand that the binary relation between identity and difference has not always been, which is useful to analyse the position occupied by the *xenos*. Now, the *xenos* – articulated as an analytical tool for today and retrieved through poststructuralism – is not the direct heir of the ancient *xenos*, who was *both* the host *and* the guest. Foucault’s archaeology indeed allows us to challenge “our continuities; it dissipates that temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history; it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies” (Foucault, 2002a, 147).

The *xenos* is therefore not the subject who transcends the host and the guest into a more complex being that would replace them by subverting their binary relation (if every host is always already a guest and every guest is always already a host, the host “loses” the advantage, and hospitality is truly reciprocal).<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the *xenos*’ ambiguity (host/guest) is not interesting because its confusing potential could lead to chaotic undifferentiation, sublation, or the return of the same. Rather, as an analytical tool, the *xenos* allows me to study subjectification through dividing practices that, whether they operate within the subject or between subjects, may or may not reproduce

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<sup>54</sup> This is confirmed by Gabriel Herman, who explains that “a *xenos* ... always had a group identity distinct from that of his partner. In other words, each individual in a *xenos*-dyad was an outsider with respect to his partner’s group. ... [N]o two people with the same group identity are ever referred to as *xenoi*” (Herman, 1987, 11). Philippe Gauthier also explains that the reciprocity at the core of hospitality explains why the *xenos* is both the host and the guest (Gauthier, 1973, 5), and David Whitehead talks about the *xenos*’ “inherent ambiguities” (Whitehead, 1977, 11).

<sup>55</sup> This is the remarkable project of Donatella Di Cesare in *Resident Foreigners*, notably through her analysis of the *ger*, the “resident foreigner” of Jerusalem in biblical times (Di Cesare, 2020, 153-158).

Foucault's "binary structure run[ning] through society". This eventually asks if subjectification and differentiation are limited to a binary opposition or not. The *xenos* of our postcolonial times is no longer the host *and* the guest (pre-classical discourse), or *either* the host *or* the guest (classical discourse), but *neither* the host *nor* the guest.

Additionally, if the ancient Greek *xenos* shared with its Latin equivalent (*hostis*) an incremental transformation of its meaning into "the stranger", it originally did not share the other meaning of *hostis*, i.e., "the enemy" (Benveniste, 1969, 92-96).<sup>56</sup> The practice that would have equated the host/guest with an enemy (xenophobia) was not even "a thing" in ancient Greece; it was indeed made marginal by the common practice of *xenia*. Pierre Villard even refers to "an impossible xenophobia" at that time (Villard, 1984, 194). However, as mentioned in the Introduction, the word "xenophobes" was first introduced in 1900 France, during the Dreyfus Affair, by the pro-Dreyfus writer Anatole France (1986). The historical event that made possible the emergence of the word "xenophobes" *and* the critical perspective of the individual who uttered it for the first time have not left the original neutral meaning of the ancient Greek *xenos* intact. Today, because their subjectification goes through *xenophobia* rather than through *xenia*, the *xenos* is produced as a threatening subject *and* this subjectification can be approached critically. Thus, despite the fact that I borrow the term *xenos* from Greek antiquity, it does not serve a purely diachronic reading that would look for the manifestations of the *xenos* throughout the history of humankind. Indeed, this is made impossible because the *xenos* meant something completely different in ancient Greece (host and guest, unproblematically) compared with what they meant at the turning point of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in France (the Jew, problematised through antisemitism). Rather, from Chapter 3, I historicise the subjectification of the *xenos* as a recent political practice intensified through postcolonial xenophobia.

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<sup>56</sup> Thus, my approach to the *xenos* differs from Jacopo Martire's. He sees the *xenos* as a more accurate term to talk about the enemy (but also the stranger, the scapegoat, or the other) in our contemporary "liquid societies". Furthermore, Martire argues that "we all are the *xenos*" because "in a social landscape where unifying categories have melted, every single individual is different from all other individuals" (Martire, 2015), whereas I argue that the notion of the *xenos* only refers to specific (ambiguous, threatening, and persecuted) subjects.

## 2 The *Xenos* through Internal Dividing Practices of Subjectification and the Affirmation of Difference

In this section, I study two representatives of the first generation of poststructuralists who analysed figures that can be associated with a reflexion on xenophobia.<sup>57</sup> First, Julia Kristeva who, in *Strangers to Ourselves*, offered a philosophical history of the stranger within the Western culture, and, second, Gilles Deleuze who conceptualised the nomad, with Felix Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>58</sup> I read the stranger and the nomad as potential embodiment of the *xenos*, whose specific subjectification would go through the dividing practices that Foucault locates within the subject. I also show that Kristeva and Deleuze articulate the notions of “strangeness” and “nomadism” that reveal their powerful affirmation of difference over identity but somehow make them leave the field of historical power relations. Indeed, because the opposition between identity and difference they focus on happens within every subject, it also leads them toward a universalising and depoliticising approach to this – exclusively – binary relation. Yet, I want to stress how important the postcolonial context has been in shaping the subjectification of the *xenos* and because I want to show that subjectification and differentiation are not exclusively binary. Therefore, I need to look somewhere else to understand how, today, the *xenos* is produced as ambiguous and threatening – and eventually persecuted.

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<sup>57</sup> Giorgio Agamben, on the one hand, and Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen, on the other, categorise Kristeva and Deleuze in different poststructuralist philosophical practices: as articulating a philosophy of transcendence through an ontology of lack for Kristeva, while Deleuze puts together a philosophy of immanence through an ontology of abundance (Agamben, 1999; Tønder and Thomassen, 2005). Despite those differences, their interest in figures that potentially embody the subject of xenophobia, their focus on the dividing practices of subjectification operating within the subject, and their affirmation of difference over identity allow me to bring them together.

<sup>58</sup> I leave purposefully Jacques Derrida out of this discussion, despite (maybe because of) his concept of *différance* – his principle of alterity and singularity without presence, that which both differs and defers (Derrida, 1993, 37). I take Derrida’s approach to *différance* seriously as what is never present, never manifest, never exposed (Derrida, 2006, 6), while here I want to discuss the potential embodiment of the *xenos* by the nomad or the stranger. Additionally, as Rae argues, Derrida does not affirm difference over identity, because it would “merely invert[] the privileged term within the identity-difference economy that has dominated Western thinking” (Rae, 2020, 65).

## 2.1 Julia Kristeva: From the “Stranger Within” to Strangeness

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva introduces “the historical figures of strangeness”, i.e. the stranger herself (Kristeva, 1988, 139).<sup>59</sup> Through her “transhistorical” perspective, Kristeva analyses the stranger in ancient Greece, biblical times, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and today. Through all these historical periods, Kristeva identifies the dividing practice of subjectification of the stranger as what differentiates her from the citizen. While this endeavour is useful because it allows us to focus on the dominated element of a given relation of power – a methodology I follow to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos* – it also only makes room for a binary relation and situates it as eternal and universal as I discuss below. Indeed, regardless of the period, the stranger is “the citizen’s other”, that is, the “person who is not a citizen of the country in which [s]he resides” (1991, 63 and 41). Moreover, in Kristeva’s philosophical history, the regime of opposition of this subjectification is not neutral. Rather, it organises domination through negativity and hierarchy. Indeed, Kristeva argues that the stranger “can only be defined in negative fashion” (Kristeva, 1991, 95).

She also acknowledges the relationality of this domination: it happens between the stranger and the citizen. Within power relations, the stranger’s identity seems to be constituted of the citizen’s difference, from the citizen’s perspective, which in a way “naturalises” xenophobia. Kristeva notices “How can one possibly be a stranger? We seldom think of asking such a question, we are so convinced of being naturally citizens, necessary products of the nation-state” (Kristeva, 1991, 41). Like Scott, Kristeva considers that exclusion is inevitable in the process of meaning attribution and she extends it to the constitution of a political group (Kristeva, 1988, 143). And, like Scott, Kristeva considers that it is therefore necessary to be “aware of that infernal dynamics of estrangement at the core of each entity, individual, or group” (Kristeva, 1991, 153). Estrangement is therefore synonymous with the stranger’s domination and entails her exclusion (xenophobia in its traditional sense).

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<sup>59</sup> I use the original French version of the book to bring something different than the English translation. In the latter, the translator uses “foreigner(s)” and “stranger(s)” indifferently to translate the French “*étranger(s)*”. While it is correct, in this research I differentiate the stranger (in this chapter and the following) from the foreigner (Chapter 5), so I also take the liberty to uniformise the translation with “stranger(s)” to avoid confusion.

Among the technical instruments of the domination of the stranger, Kristeva notices the hierarchy between the citizen and the stranger, the turning of the stranger into an enemy, the abjection she provokes, and even the apparent possibility to assimilate her into a citizen. For instance, she explains that the ancient Greeks used the word “Barbarian” to describe strangers. The term was apparently coined “on the basis of such onomatopoeia as *bla-bla, bara-bara*”, that is, “inarticulate or incomprehensible mumblings” (Kristeva, 1991, 51). Through the very word used to identify her, the stranger is thus inferiorised. This is, as Kristeva argues, the “counterpart to the remarkable development of Greek philosophy, founded on the *logos* seen both as the Greeks’ idiom and as the intelligible principle in the order of things”. In other words, if the stranger is the other of the Greek, not only does she not speak his language, but she cannot think as well as him (Kristeva, 1991, 51). Barbarians are not only inferiors, they also are enemies, like the Median wars proved it to the Greeks (Kristeva, 1991, 51). Because the stranger “is the other of the family, the clan, the tribe”, she also “blends with the enemy” (Kristeva, 1991, 95). In this way, Kristeva demonstrates how xenophobia can be articulated: through a simultaneous establishment of a hierarchy and conflictuality which produces the stranger as excluded and dominated. This is also true of the reworked version of xenophobia I articulate in this research.

Kristeva also argues that “the stranger concentrates upon herself the fascination and abjection that alterity gives rise to” (Kristeva, 1988, 140). Abjection is a concept formulated by Kristeva, which would allow the citizen to identify himself through the rejection of “something else”: the abject (*neither* a subject *nor* an object). This something else is the stranger who, through abjection, provokes phobia and must therefore be excluded to bring back peace in the community. Indeed, Kristeva explains that the abject is both an “imaginary strangeness and [a] real threat” (Kristeva, 1980, 12). Therefore, the *xenos* could be embodied by Kristeva’s abject stranger. Indeed, both the *xenos* and the abject occupy a *neither... nor...* position, and they are linked to (xeno)phobia. This can have obvious political consequences, but it is also worth noting that, for Kristeva, abjection and the phobia it entails come first and foremost from the fact that the abject reveals to the sovereign subject that his own identity is unstable, that his subjectivity is never constitutive (Kristeva, 1980, 9). Therefore, abjection leads us primarily to a dividing practice operating within the subject and secondarily to dividing practices between subjects. Furthermore, according to

Kristeva, it is the abject that provokes the phobia, and not the other way around (the abject produced through abjection). I come back to this below, but here suffice to say that the abject is a fundamental lack that can never be assimilated by the subject who is fundamentally incomplete (Kristeva, 1980, 10).

Indeed, as Kristeva shows, even in the most universalist discourses, the stranger cannot be assimilated – that is, she cannot *not* be excluded – without at once ceasing to be a stranger. For instance, Kristeva reads Montaigne’s colonial humanism as an “acceptance of ‘others’” that is not so much a “recognition of [the] particularities” of “the natives distinctive features”, but, on the contrary, “a levelling absorption” of the latter “to the benefit of a humanism capable of swallowing everything surprising and unknowable” (Kristeva, 1991, 122). This actually happens throughout history, according to Kristeva. Indeed, despite the fact that “biblical monotheism had included the stranger in the divine Alliance”, she notices that, “for the Christian, ... the stranger was not excluded if he was a Christian, but the non-Christian is a stranger Christian hospitality cared little about” (Kristeva, 1991, 63 and 86). Thus, the division between the stranger and her opposite is always maintained. Even in the Torah, which “ceaselessly dwells on the duties of Jews toward strangers”, there is a permanent exclusive relationship between the stranger and her other. Indeed, if Jewish citizens must respect the “*ger*” (the stranger) it is because they, too, are strangers. As Kristeva reminds us, we can read in the Torah: “You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt” (Kristeva, 1991, 67-68). Affirming, like Kristeva, that domination and exclusion are what makes the stranger who she is proves useful when analysing persecution as part of the subjectification of the *xenos* in Chapter 4.

Through Kristeva’s analysis of the subjectification of the stranger, we can see that something has changed. We are no longer looking at the “problem of the stranger” from the perspective of the citizen, but we are invited to look at it from the perspective of the stranger. Like Scott with women and men, Kristeva affirms the vantage point of the stranger over the citizen. In other words, Kristeva rejects an approach according to which the stranger’s identity is the citizen’s difference. Rather, she articulates a discourse where the stranger’s difference is affirmed over the citizen’s identity. For instance, she abandons the great myths traditionally used in the genealogies of Western



culture for decentred ones, like the Danaids and Io – whose story is one of “a madness that leads a woman not on a journey back to the self, as with Ulysses (who, in spite of meanderings, came back to his homeland), but toward a land of exile, accursed from the start.” (Kristeva, 1991, 43). While Ulysses is the archetype of the Greek citizen, the Danaids are “the first strangers to emerge at the dawn of our civilisation” (Kristeva, 1991, 42).

By affirming the difference that prevents the stranger from being identical to the citizen, Kristeva also acknowledges the former’s power through the potential threat that she poses to the structure that, nevertheless, relies on her domination. If the stranger’s position changes, so does the citizen’s, and the order of things collapses for a new one to emerge. “Strangeness” is both what “underlie[s] elementary civilisation, ... its necessary lining” and “the political facet of violence” (Kristeva, 1991, 46). Kristeva writes that “by explicitly... occupying the place of the difference, the stranger challenges both the identity of the group and his own .... In all that there is a mixture of humility and arrogance, suffering and domination, a feeling of having been wounded and being all-powerful” (Kristeva, 1991, 42). Likewise, even if persecuted, the *xenos* is considered a threat. Furthermore, even though she considers that the eighteenth-century version of a “human, trans-historical *dignity*” is “naïve”, she thinks that the stranger can make it a reality by solving the tension between Man and the citizen (Kristeva, 1991, 153). Indeed, she wants to see the stranger, this “scar” that lives between Man and the citizen, as a subject who would transcend their binary and inextricable relation (Kristeva, 1988, 142). Contrary to what I am trying to articulate with the *xenos* (produced immanently to the sovereign and the other), Kristeva sometimes offers the stranger a transcendental ability to sublimate binary oppositions.

By articulating a transcendental and transhistorical analysis of the stranger, Kristeva thus gets to the point where “this position as a different being might appear to be the goal of human autonomy ... and thus as a major illustration of the most intrinsic, most essential part of civilization” (Kristeva, 1991, 41-42). While she starts with the dividing practices of subjectification of the stranger, Kristeva ends up affirming difference (over identity) as the core of her analysis. As Kelly Oliver argues, if Kristeva considers “difference as a necessary element of identity”, it is because she wants us “to recognize the difference in us as the condition of our being with others”

(Oliver, 1993, 106-109). Indeed, Kristeva asks “How could one tolerate a stranger if one did not know one was a stranger to oneself?” (Kristeva, 1991, 182). This is a typical formulation of the acknowledgement of an internal regime of opposition, of a dividing practice of subjectification that occurs within the subject and which determinates a dividing practice of subjectification that happens between subjects. This formulation can be fruitful to understand the *xenos*. Indeed, in antiquity, the *xenos* was both the host and the guest. Therefore, whether host or guest, the *xenos* knows that they are always a stranger and hospitality (the *xenia*) is this practice that treats every stranger, host and guest, with respect. Acknowledging that, host or guest, we are someone else’s stranger can lead to approaching the other in a hospitable way rather than as a threat.

However, prioritising the internal regime of opposition over the acknowledgement of the dividing practices of subjectification that occur between subjects can have a downside. To be sure, Kristeva is right when she critically reads the legacy of the Enlightenment as “the obliteration of the very notion of ‘stranger’” which would have “paradoxically encourage[d] one to guarantee a long life to the notion of... ‘strangeness’”(Kristeva, 1991, 132). Yet, the same thing could be argued about her own analysis. “Strangeness” is her own conceptualisation of the affirmation of difference over identity, and Kristeva searches it within the subject, as the “immanence of the strange within the familiar” (Kristeva, 1991, 183), what Freud before her calls the “*Unheimliche*”. In English, it has been translated into the Uncanny and, in French, into “the frightening strangeness” (“*l’inquiétante étrangeté*”). Thus, because of her transhistorical conception of the stranger and because she prioritises the internal regime of opposition, her notion of strangeness leads Kristeva away from historical power relations.

Strangeness takes the form of an ahistorical and universal “inner journey” happening inside every subject between the latter’s difference and her identity. It is universal because, according to Kristeva, it is common to every civilisation, from “the European man” to “the strange people from the antipodes” (Kristeva, 1991, 114 and 205). It is ahistorical because it adopts the same configuration throughout humankind’s history. From antiquity to today, it is always an “inner exile” (26), the “same heterogeneity that divides [strangers] within themselves” (82), the “self’s splitting” (120), the

“heterogeneous, wandering self” (205), or again “the ‘other scene’ within us” (Kristeva, 1991, 181). It has always been the case in Christianity (Kristeva, 1991, 79-81), and it was the same in the Renaissance (Kristeva, 1991, 122) and the Enlightenment (Kristeva, 1991, 133). In our times, psychoanalysis also allows Kristeva to show that “strangeness is within us; we are our own strangers, we are divided”. Indeed, she reminds us that “with the Freudian notion of the unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and integrates within the assumed unity of human beings an *otherness* that is both biological *and* symbolic and becomes an integral part of the *same*” (Kristeva, 1991, 181).

This has led Fiona Barclay to argue that Kristeva’s “depiction of the foreigner is strangely ahistorical. Her appeal to psychoanalysis, which illuminates the otherness within each of us and so transforms us all into strangers, neglects the lives and realities of today’s migrants, exiles and refugees” (Barclay, 2010, 10). In truth, the stranger often only appears as an opportunity to state that “the self knows it is other” (Kristeva, 1991, 120). It goes to the point of making (the specificity of) the stranger disappear: “the strange is within me, hence we are all strangers. If I am a stranger, there are no strangers” (Kristeva, 1988, 284). To be sure, focusing on the stranger within, Kristeva does not only affirm difference over identity, she also works toward the poststructuralist deconstruction-reconstruction of the constitutive subject into a constituted subject. Acknowledging the power of strangeness allows Kristeva to “depersonalise” all subjects (Kristeva, 1991, 189). Nonetheless, focusing as she does on the dividing practices of subjectification that operate within the subject, she de facto evacuates xenophobia, or any historical power relations between subjects, from what really constitutes her “stranger within”. On the contrary, xenophobia seems to be provoked by the stranger when she explains that “many analysts have stressed the frequency of the *Unheimliche* affect in phobia” (Kristeva, 1991, 188). She even adds that encountering the stranger is “violent” and “catastrophic”, that our “fear of the other” is “infantile” (meaning that it emerges before socialisation), and that “we cannot suppress the symptom that the stranger provokes; but we simply must come back to it, clear it up, give it the resources our own essential depersonalizations provide, and only thus soothe it” (Kristeva, 1991, 190-191). This makes Kristeva’s analysis of the stranger – rather, of strangeness – less appropriate than it first appeared to understand the subjectification of the *xenos*, who is produced as a threat. Acknowledging this

requires prioritising external regimes of opposition to make clear that the *xenos* is not inherently threatening.

Moreover, rather than articulating a properly political strategy against xenophobic discourses, Kristeva entrusts psychoanalysis with organising “a journey ... toward an *ethics* of respect for the irreconcilable” (Kristeva, 1991, 182, my emphasis).<sup>60</sup> Arguably, this puts a lot of expectations on the individuals themselves that have to extrapolate from their inner strangeness to welcome actual strangers – and it leaves the strangers at the mercy of the citizens’ ethical common sense (that we have trouble to witness in history). Kristeva indeed calls for “a paradoxical community” to emerge. This community would be “made up of strangers who are reconciled with themselves to the extent that they recognize themselves as strangers” (Kristeva, 1991, 195). The change should therefore come from subjects who are at peace with their own internal strangeness, rather than from action upon the wider relations of domination and the production of xenophobic discourses that structure the workings of power. Yet, as Kristeva concedes, “there is no uncanny strangeness for the person enjoying an acknowledged power and a resplendent image. ... Strangeness is for the ‘subjects,’ the sovereign ignores it, knowing how to have it administered” (Kristeva, 1991, 190). In front of this relative stalemate, it might be useful to look for another analysis of internal dividing practices of subjectification: i.e., Deleuze’s nomadism.

## 2.2 Gilles Deleuze’s Nomad as “Pure Difference”

Despite the fact that Deleuze dedicated so much effort with Guattari to question the foundations of psychoanalysis (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983; 1987), when he analyses the subjectification of the nomad, he also focuses mainly on the dividing practices that operate within the subject, on what he identifies as the ontological level (that of Being). It is there that difference is affirmed over identity, and this is why I read Deleuze’s “nomadism” in light of his seminal book *Difference and Repetition* (2011).<sup>61</sup> Deleuze’s immanent approach to difference fits better with my articulation of the subjectification of the *xenos* (happening beside the subjectifications of the sovereign and the other)

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<sup>60</sup> Although Kristeva does not separate the ethics and the politics involved in psychoanalysis (Kristeva, 1991, 192), I do not think that she manages to show that the latter follows from the former.

<sup>61</sup> Hence the fact that I only refer to Deleuze in what follows, even when citing *A Thousand Plateaus*, which he wrote with Guattari.

than Kristeva's transcendental take on the stranger. Yet, as I explain below, I find Deleuze's prioritising of internal regimes of opposition to understand subjectification also limiting to understand *xenophobic* subjectification.

It is true that Deleuze introduces the nomad as a "war machine" who is in a constant struggle against a strong state power. This state could be approached as xenophobic insofar as Deleuze explains that it writes history from the sedentary's perspective (those who won the war against the nomads) and it continually "bars", "inhibits", "bans", "represses", "appropriates", "delegitimizes", and "opposes" the nomad (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 23 and 362-394). Moreover, the nomad-state war seems to take place in a space typically crossed by xenophobic dynamics: "the borderline" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 362) where the nomad opposes not only the "sedentary", but also the "philosopher-king", the "man as legislator and subject", the sovereign representative of the state, and the "universal thinking subject" founded on an "all-encompassing totality" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 34-36 and 449-469). An important aspect of why Deleuze's perspective also falls short in helping us to understand the subjectification of the *xenos* is that, even at that stage of opposition which indeed happens outside the subject, the nomad always opposes the figures cited above in a binary fashion.

Contrary to Kristeva, Deleuze does not introduce his nomad as an actual stranger. He insists that "the nomad is not at all the same as the migrant". To be sure, "nomads and migrants can mix in many ways, or form a common aggregate", but "the migrant leaves behind a milieu that has become amorphous or hostile" whereas "the nomad ... does not depart ... and ... invents nomadism as a response to this challenge" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 380-381). Additionally, Deleuze argues that the nomad can actually be anyone because she is "an abstraction, an Idea, something real and nonactual" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 420). In his theory, the nomad very quickly goes from being a substantive to becoming an adjective to qualify a life (471), a spatiality ("deterritorialisation" (71)), a science (opposed to one that would be "royal" (448)), or a discipline – the so-called "nomadology" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 23). To say that the nomad can be anyone and that she is nonactual does not mean that she does not exist – that she is not real. In contrast, it means that the nomad is approached through the poststructuralist process that aims to deconstruct the constitutive subject.

In Deleuze's words, nomadism is the movement of "desubjectivation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 159).<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Deleuze links nomadism with his theorisation of Being as what is always already "becoming", that is, "the different, the dissimilar, the unequal" (Deleuze, 2011, 167). When Deleuze's Being and thus his nomad go through desubjectivation, they therefore explicitly differentiate from their own selves, in a movement that Deleuze describes as a "deterritorialisation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 54), which orientates them against any sense of territorial belonging, possession, or legitimacy. More precisely, he explains that, in nomadic desubjectivation, there is a constant shift between deterritorialisation and "complementary, sedentary reterritorializations" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 54).

This is important regarding our search for the *xenos*. Indeed, Deleuze's nomad is deterritorialised *and* reterritorialised. Consequently, Deleuze explains that "the life of the nomad is the intermezzo" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 380). Contrary to the migrant, whom Deleuze thinks is defined by both the place she leaves and the places she heads to, what matters to understand the nomad is what happens in-between – i.e., the journey (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 380). This way, the nomad escapes every identity in the sense that she is never identical to anyone: neither the subject of Platonism – the paradigm of the sovereign subject – nor the Other. On the one hand, if Platonism organises "the subordination of difference to the powers of the One, the Analogous, the Similar and even the Negative" (Deleuze, 2011, 82-83), the nomad does "not ally [her]self with a universal thinking subject but, on the contrary, with a singular race; and [she] does not ground [her]self in an all-encompassing totality but is on the contrary deployed in a horizonless milieu" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 379). Furthermore, for Deleuze, "the task of modern philosophy has been ... to overturn Platonism" (Deleuze, 2011, 82). On the other hand, the nomad should be differentiated from the Other. If the Other is not an identity (she is not "identical"), she is nevertheless "No-one", or what Deleuze calls "a structure", and this structure does not

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<sup>62</sup> Rosi Braidotti also opens up the possibilities of embodiment of the nomad. She can be a "feminist" or a "critical intellectual", she is even close to Donna Haraway's "cyborg" or Deleuze's "rhizome", but she is "neither migrant nor exile" (Braidotti, 1994, 21-25). Braidotti's nomad is actually "a form of resisting assimilation or homologation into dominant ways of representing the self", that is, an ethical dividing practice of (de)subjectification operating within the subject. For Braidotti, as for Deleuze, the nomad does not matter as an actual "othered" subject, produced through xenophobia, in opposition to the sovereign subject. Rather, she matters for her potential of conceptualisation, i.e., nomadism: "*Just like real nomads* – who are an endangered species today, threatened with extinction – nomadic thinking is a minority position" (Braidotti, 1994, 29, my emphasis).

comprehend the nomad's difference (Deleuze, 2011, 361). Indeed, unless it is "mediated", Deleuze argues that "the Idea no more implies an identity than its process of actualisation is explicated by resemblance. An entire multiplicity rumbles underneath the 'sameness' of the Idea" (Deleuze, 2011, 352). Therefore, as an idea, the nomad is *neither* the Platonic sovereign subject *nor* the Other. She is in between them because "the only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 277). Yet, because both the subject of Platonism and the Other-structure are not themselves actual subjects, the dividing practice of the nomad's subjectification does not operate between her and those non-subjects, but within herself.

Away from xenophobia, the stranger, the citizen, and the state, the nomad can therefore be approached as the embodiment of Deleuze's *ontological* affirmation of difference over identity. Since Deleuze argues that "in its essence, difference is the object of affirmation or affirmation itself" (Deleuze, 2011, 74), the "nomadology" he calls for should be read in light of his "philosophy of difference" and ontology. Indeed, both are fundamentally linked to each other since, as he writes, "Being is Difference itself" (Deleuze, 2011, 89). This eventually takes us away from historical relations of power and away from a contextualised analysis of the specificity of xenophobic subjectification. Thus, Deleuze is interested in the dividing practices of subjectification which operate within the nomad. While the nomad's in-betweenness allows her to "get outside the dualism", Deleuze explains that it is "division" – the method of "the dialectic of difference" – which overcomes duality (Deleuze, 2011, 86). If the nomad can be anyone (not necessarily a stranger or a migrant produced through xenophobia), it does not mean that her subjectification does not entail dividing practices, simply that they occur on the ontological level rather than through historical relations of domination. It is in that sense that Deleuze actually understands the borderline. For him, it is only a "borderline phenomenon" rather than a tangible space (Deleuze, 2011, 342).

Below the nomad (who, in theory, can or cannot be a subject produced through historical relations of domination), what Deleuze is really after is "*a pure difference*" (Deleuze, 2011, 2). This pure difference is not spoiled by relations of domination or, in Deleuze's terms, by representation and negation. Deleuze wants to "think difference

in itself independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same, and the relation of different to different independently of those forms which make them pass through the negative” (Deleuze, 2011, 1-2). In this sense, the nomad is truly an instance of the poststructuralist subject, that Balibar describes as “a difference of differences” (Balibar, 2003, 15). However, if Deleuze and Kristeva are both interested in the dividing practices of subjectification that operate within the subject, they differ in their ontological approach to them. Just as we saw above, Kristeva argues that the stranger “can only be defined in a negative fashion”, while Deleuze would argue that the nomad’s “affirmed and distributed differences ... cannot be reduced to the banality of the negative” (Deleuze, 2011, 72). This typically Deleuzian approach, inherited from his reading of Nietzsche’s “active/reactive forces” (Deleuze, 2006), reveals a tension between his singular metaphysical effort and the very principle of dividing practices of subjectification – even those operating within the subject. Contrary to Hegel, for instance, Deleuze does not want to see “difference as the only problem” which is to be solved through contradiction and sublation (Deleuze, 2011, 64). He explains: “History progresses not by negation and the negation of negation, but by deciding problems and affirming differences. It is no less bloody and cruel as a result” (Deleuze, 2011, 344).<sup>63</sup>

While Kristeva articulates a transcendental and transhistorical approach to the stranger and strangeness, Deleuze introduces difference as fundamentally immanent. Deleuze links, on the one hand, immanence to affirmation and, on the other hand, transcendence to negation. He actually critically considers negation as “difference seen from its underside” (Deleuze, 2011, 78). An immanent view of difference implies that the latter is thought in relation to differences, not in relation to identity,<sup>64</sup> not even a relation to identity in which difference would take the upper hand. Deleuze explains that an immanent difference “is this depth itself which develops itself for itself” (Deleuze, 2011, 367). This is what Daniel W. Smith means when he argues that Deleuze deploys “an immanent analysis of the ontological difference in which the *different is related to the different through difference itself*” (Smith, 2003, 51). Compared with Kristeva’s

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<sup>63</sup> This can be approached as a similarity between Deleuze and Foucault, for whom the very phenomenon of subjectification shows how much power can be productive and not only repressive.

<sup>64</sup> Agamben shows that this attention to immanence also implies that Deleuze does not think difference in relation to consciousness or the subject (Agamben, 1999) which, again, distinguishes his thought from Kristeva’s psychoanalytical and transcendental approach.



transcendental approach (in which “two” becomes “one”), Deleuze’s perspective allows us to imagine that more than two subjects can be produced at the same time.

By affirming it, Deleuze makes sure that difference cannot be apprehended as a reaction to something that would be anterior and therefore truer. Difference cannot be negative if it is essentially positive – it is the utmost productive force because it is made on the ontological level, within the subject: “Everywhere, the depth of difference is primary” (Deleuze, 2011, 72). If the nomad is at war with the sedentary – himself supported by the state – it is possible to argue that the nomad *was there first*. This is how Deleuze manages to make difference the origin of identity itself. He writes that “difference is thought ... in terms of the principle of sameness and the condition of resemblance”, which itself “results from the functioning of the system, like an ‘effect’ which we would be wrong to take for a cause or condition” (Deleuze, 2011, 349-355). Against the traditional conception of the sovereign subject, Deleuze subordinates representation and sameness to an immanent and unmediated difference (Deleuze, 2011, 337). Thus, Deleuze calls for “a generalised anti-Hegelianism” through which “difference and repetition have taken the place of the identical and the negative, of identity and contradiction” (Deleuze, 2011, 1). Through his philosophy of difference and his nomadology, Deleuze “overturns” Platonism, which leads him to “deny the primacy of original over copy, of model over image”, notably through the acknowledgement of the power of repetition (Deleuze, 2011, 92). What becomes problematic is no longer acknowledging difference, but assuming identity. In other words, what needs to be questioned, put in perspective, and criticised, is the whole set of identities in the name of which people oppose each other – not their differences. Add to this that virtually anyone can be a nomad, and you have, without any doubt, a powerful approach with tremendous ethical potential. However, because it does not implicate xenophobia as a condition for the possibility of the dividing practices of subjectification of the nomad, it overlooks the *xenos* who must now be understood through the dividing practices of subjectification operating between subjects and elaborated by Homi K. Bhabha and Judith Butler.

### **3 The *Xenos* through External Dividing Practices of Subjectification and Subversive Difference**

This part discusses two attempts to analyse the external dividing practices of subjectification, influenced by poststructuralism: Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory and Judith Butler's queer theory. There, I intend to find reflections taking into account historical relations of power and domination to help me to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos* through xenophobia, that I understand as a historical (precisely postcolonial) phenomenon. While the methodologies of Bhabha and, especially, Butler are useful to analysing how the historical context is determining in the production and domination of a given subject, I still find that they are limiting to account for a subjectification that occurs beside a binary regime of opposition. Therefore, I need another methodology to analyse the production of the *xenos* as ambiguous.

#### **3.1 Homi K. Bhabha's Hybridity**

Compared with Kristeva's strangeness and Deleuze's nomadism, Bhabha's theory of hybridity starts from an explicit acknowledgement of historical relation of domination (colonialism), it initially prioritises the dividing practices of subjectification that occur between subjects to analyse the subjectification of the hybrid subject, and it claims to challenge the fixity of binary regimes of opposition. Therefore, the *xenos* could have been better understood thanks to Bhabha's work. Yet, as I show below, Bhabha ends up articulating a concept of hybridity which is less and less connected to the historical context and becomes more and more a universal characteristic, something shared by every subject and which is located within every subject. While Bhabha's "neither... nor..." construction of the hybrid subject could have been useful to analyse the position of *xenos* beside the sovereign and the other, his conceptualisation of hybridity is misleading when it comes to understand what is at stake in postcolonial xenophobic subjectification, partly because it reintroduces the binary regime of opposition it yet wishes to disrupt.

Bhabha's theory of hybridity is constructed through his postcolonial reading of poststructuralism (cf. Mignolo, 2011, xxiii-xxxi). Along with poststructuralists, he approaches the subject through subjectification rather than from a metaphysical origin (Bhabha, 1994, 56). His way of affirming difference, shared by poststructuralist

authors, comes nevertheless from another perspective – that of the former colonised (Bhabha, 1994, 175). Still, European poststructuralism and Bhabha’s postcolonial critique both question the self-evidence of the (Hegelian) dialectics between difference and identity: “Postcolonial critical discourses require forms of dialectical thinking that do not disavow or sublimate the otherness (alterity)” (Bhabha, 1994, 173). And like European poststructuralists, Bhabha links this affirmation of difference over identity to dividing practices of subjectification, where difference is affirmed through repetition or, as he puts it, doubling:

The reference of discrimination is always a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid. (Bhabha, 1994, 111)

For Bhabha, the doubling entailed by hybridity “displays and displaces the binary logic through which identities of difference are often constructed – Black/White, Self/Other” (Bhabha, 1994, 3). In that sense, Bhabha’s concept has been read as a critique of Edward Said’s theorisation of Orientalism which, if it contests Eurocentric dualisms (West/East), does not get rid of a clear-cut, twofold dividing practice of subjectification between subjects (Bhabha, 1994, 71; Young, 2004, 181; Acheraïou, 2011, 90). Bhabha contests a reading of colonisation with the unified colonised neatly identified (and differentiated) from the unified coloniser. Hybridity is meant to bring more complexity and accuracy, less caricature, into the analyses of the other (the different subject, the colonised) and the sovereign (the identical subject, the coloniser). For Bhabha, the hybrid is “neither the one thing nor the other” (Bhabha, 1994, 33), a useful prerequisite to analyse the *xenos*. Bhabha refuses to approach “the Other text” available from his hybridity theory as “the exegetical horizon of difference” because it would equate the colonised to the passive and submissive element in a clear opposition to an active, sovereign coloniser (Bhabha, 1994, 111). He also contests “the very idea of a pure, ‘ethnically cleansed’ national identity” which only denies history’s complexities, contingencies, and intersections (Bhabha, 1994, 5). As above, identity – rather than difference – is the (political) problem.

To understand the production of the colonised and the coloniser, Bhabha introduces hybridity as “a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification that occurs precisely in the elliptical *in-between*” (Bhabha, 1994, 60). Hybridity’s ambivalence

operates a permanent movement between the two poles, being neither fully one nor fully the other, to the point where their fixed identification becomes impossible.<sup>65</sup> I explain why ambivalence is not the most accurate notion to understand the subjectification of the *xenos* in the next section, but here it is clear that it is more adequate than “difference” alone (understood in its binary opposition to identity). Indeed, as Amar Acheraïou explains, “Bhabha redefines culture, discourse, and identity as fluid and ambivalent, rather than fixed and one-dimensional” (Bhabha, 2011, 90). This reminds us of the ancient Greek version of the *xenos*. Indeed, in the *xenia* like in Bhabha’s theory, the subjects are distinct, but their identification is complexified by, in one case, the *xenos*’ semantical ambiguity, and, in the other, ambivalent hybridity. Acheraïou approaches this complexification entailed by hybridity critically, and, rather, calls for acknowledging the political power of a “resistive binarism as an anticolonial tool” (Bhabha, 2011, 7 and 151).

Incidentally, challenging a rigid structure of subjectification and its fixed identifying power, Bhabha does not favour an approach to resistance that reverses hierarchies like the one elaborated by Scott, which “only” works from the notion of difference (Bhabha, 1994, 113). Thus, on the one hand, Bhabha discards an interpretation of hybridity as “a third term” because he does not want us to understand it as the “term that resolves the tension between two cultures ... in a dialectical play of ‘recognition’” (Bhabha, 1994, 113-114). On the other hand, he defines hybridity as a “third space” from where cultural difference can emerge (Bhabha in Rutherford, 1998, 211; Acheraïou, 2011, 90). The hybrid subject seems close to Deleuze’s nomad who makes “the relation of different to different” and Balibar’s subject who is “a difference of differences” but she takes the relation a step further.

More explicitly than Deleuze’s nomadism or Kristeva’s strangeness, Bhabha’s hybridity first seems to help us to think of subjectification through a political and historical lens. Indeed, hybridity is a notion taken from the colonial and racist lexicon. As Acheraïou explains, “Bhabha adopted the term ‘hybridity’ and divested it of its colonial connotations of ontological and racial degeneration” (Acheraïou, 2011, 5). The term must therefore be understood as emerging from the historical power relations

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<sup>65</sup> On ambivalence in postcolonial theory, see also Achille Mbembe (2017, 119).

that operated during colonisation, which intended to divide people into two groups (colonised/coloniser; Black/White), before its appropriation by Bhabha. In that sense, hybridity should not be approached primarily as the result of a dividing practice that operates within the subject and that would allow us to apprehend her in a more universal or atemporal way. Hybridity tells us about historical relations of domination because it is itself a contested historical term (Acheraiou, 2011, 2). It is clear that Bhabha insists that hybridity must be approached through “the question of the effects of power, the inscription of strategies of individuation and domination in those ‘dividing practices’ which construct the colonial space” and therefore in “opposition to the ontology of [the] white world – to its assumed hierarchical forms of rationality and universality” (Bhabha, 1994, 108 and 237). In principle, hybridity cannot be understood out of the historical context of colonisation and its contemporary consequences. Furthermore, it is elaborated from the dominated side of the conflict. Thus, hybridity resists the fixity of identities produced by the European tradition. In other words, if Bhabha contests what he regards as a caricatural binary division between the colonised and the coloniser, he still analyses dividing practices of subjectification that operate between subjects produced through colonisation – even in the case where those subjects are approached as theoretical tools (the fixed sovereign subject of European metaphysics versus the ambivalent hybrid subject of postcolonialism).<sup>66</sup> This is obviously very useful to approach the *xenos* as produced beside (and not transcending) the sovereign and the other, being neither one nor the other.

For this reason, Bhabha also insists that hybridity should not be understood as a “postmodern celebration of pluralistic identities” nor as “the proliferation of ‘alternative histories of the excluded’ producing ... a pluralist anarchy” (Bhabha, 1994, 238 and 6). The importance given to “the repertoire of conflictual positions that constitute the subject in colonial discourse” (Bhabha, 1983, 294), whether it is the hybrid coloniser or the hybrid colonised, reminds us of Scott’s crucial refusal of “happy pluralism”. Therefore, hybridity, like the *xenos*, does not lead to the denial of political conflict nor to pre-political undifferentiation. On the contrary, hybridity poses

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<sup>66</sup> Thus, as Acheraiou notes, even if Bhabha claims to do away with a Western and colonial binary, he rather tends “to frame a new centre-periphery binary by privileging diaspora-centric narratives of culture and identity” (Acheraiou, 2011, 109).

a potential threat to the order inherited from colonisation. Hence, what Bhabha refers to as “the anxiety provoked by ... hybridisation”, which could be used to analyse *xenophobia* in a more accurate way than strangeness or nomadism (Bhabha, 1994, 59). Hybridity also acknowledges the heterogeneity at work in a difference affirmed over the fixed identities of European metaphysics. Indeed, Bhabha argues that “it is only by understanding the ambivalence and the antagonism of the desire of the Other that we can avoid the increasingly facile adoption of the notion of a homogenised Other, for a celebratory, opposition politics of the margins or minorities” (Bhabha, 1994, 52). Bhabha articulates hybridity as a “liminal space in-between the designations of identity” that forms any subject as “the sum of the ‘parts’ of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender)” (Bhabha, 1994, 238 and 2-4). This conception of hybridity, articulated from the minority standpoint, is aware of historical relationships of domination and resists the technical instruments that make them function, like homogenisation.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, Bhabha’s hybridity subverts identities through doubling insofar as it “is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” and “the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Bhabha, 1994, 112). Because of the complexification entailed by hybridity, this sort of “resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the ‘content’ of another culture, as a difference once perceived”, but it does “provide a process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience” (Bhabha, 1994, 110 and 178). As Robert Young explains, resisting the colonial discourse by subversively doubling it, hybridity “undermines colonial authority because it repeats it differently” (Young, 2004, 189).

However, the emphasis put on subversion can make using hybridity a challenging method for analysing the *xenos* as the product of something as oppressive as xenophobia. The nearly exclusive approach to hybridity through the perspective of, as Acheraiou writes, “a subversive, counter-hegemonic agency” skips too quickly an approach to the relations of domination because of Bhabha’s “purging ... of its previous racist content” (Acheraiou, 2011, 7). Furthermore, if the purpose is to think of a subject that is neither identical nor different, who is neither the sovereign nor the

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<sup>67</sup> Robert Young notes that, in a colonial society, “although there may be surveillance, fixity is not achieved” thanks to hybridity (Young, 2004, 185).

other, but a subject truly in-between, then Bhabha's hybridity is limiting because it introduces us to a hybrid sovereign/coloniser and a hybrid other/colonised. It must therefore be noticed that hybridity ends up introducing dividing practices of subjectification that operate within any subject, which brings hybridity closer to nomadism and strangeness than it first seemed to. Bhabha indeed describes hybridity as "a difference 'within'" the subject, as a way to "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha, 1994, 13 and 39). He also argues that hybridity entails "a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point the agency of identification – the subject – is itself always ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness" (Bhabha in Rutherford, 1998, 211). Bhabha even undertakes the same journey as Deleuze – from the dividing practice of subjectification that operates within the subject toward a primary difference – when he explains that "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity ... is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (Rutherford, 1998, 211).

It is relevant for this research to discard the possibility for hybridity to be the result of intermingling difference and identity (this is the racist and colonial definition) since the *xenos* are produced as *neither* identical *nor* different (not as *both*). However, making hybridity an origin effectively turns it into the positive force of creation through differentiation that would characterise all individuals, societies, and cultures. As a matter of fact, Bhabha ends up arguing that "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (Rutherford, 1998, 211). As a result, the initial careful historical and political contextualisation of hybridity is undermined. Young notices this tension: "Bhabha's ... ambivalent constitution of the subject effectively disallows the claim for such ambivalence being specific to the colonial situation. To suggest otherwise would have to imply that, outside it, subjects are not ambivalent" (Young, 2004, 194). Bhabha's hybrid subject may well be "colonial", *he* is also, according to Young, "neutralised male, out of time and space" (Young, 2004, 192). This is why Acheraiou argues that Bhabha's "hybridity and ... third space are usually insufficiently contextualised, if not completely decontextualised", which in turn makes the latter's theory "a totalising discursive practice" (Acheraiou, 2011, 106-107). This lowers the operation of hybridity to a more ontological, and maybe less political, level. Consequently, Acheraiou can write that "the fact that in practice hybridity discourse

conceives of difference as a monolithic meta-narrative; that it is deeply ‘normative’; ... that it disregards the material context obviously undermines its critical effectiveness” (Acheraïou, 2011, 107).<sup>68</sup> In the end, Bhabha’s hybridity theory leaves the field of dividing practices of subjectification between subjects to focus on those operating within the subject and it reinstalls a binary division between the hybrid subject and the mistakenly-understood-as “pure” subject. Consequently, hybridity theory might not allow us to analyse the *xenos* as a product of historical relations of domination and of external dividing practices of subjectification that are not limited to a binary opposition.

### 3.2 Judith Butler’s Queer

This is arguably different for queer theory. Indeed, it manages to remain closely tied to its initial context of enunciation, which allows it to avoid dehistoricisation. At the same time, it frontally challenges binary oppositions. Those two elements make queer theory very useful to approach the *xenos*. Yet, despite and sometimes because of those efforts, the subjectification of the queer subject is often only perceived in opposition to the subjectification of the straight subject. Furthermore, and this is crucial, the very notion of “queer” should stay connected to a specific context of emergence – to be too rapid before elaborating below: that of the politics of sexuality and the 1980s-1990s HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States. Both facts make it complicated to stick with queer theory to understand fully what is at stake with the subjectification of the *xenos*.

It is true, all queer theory’s so-called founders – Gayle S. Rubin ([1984] 2006), Judith Butler ([1989] 2006), Eve K. Sedgwick (1990), and Teresa de Lauretis (1991) – articulated it from a feminist perspective, and therefore from a strategy that struggled against the sexist dividing practices of subjectification of women and men. Of course, they disrupted feminism to its core, but they did so to further its endeavour rather than to oppose it. As Butler writes, they did not want “to establish a point of view outside

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<sup>68</sup> That said, Acheraïou’s diachronic conceptualisation of hybridity is itself decontextualised because he considers that hybridity can be used to analyse a phenomenon that would stay invariant despite the diverse historical periods when it would have spanned: from ancient Greece to our postcolonial time (2011, 2). Acheraïou may well argue that “ancient societies ... were obviously not as self-consciously aware of this process of hybridisation as we are today”, by stating that “hybridity has been a key feature of civilisations since time immemorial” (Acheraïou, 2011, 87), he reproduces Bhabha’s decontextualisation. His approach to hybridity is thus close to Kristeva’s approach to the stranger.



of constructed identities” because “that conceit is the construction of an epistemological model that would disavow its own cultural location and, hence, promote itself as a global subject, a position that deploys precisely the imperialist strategies that feminism ought to criticise” (Butler, 2006, 205). The queer subject is produced through dividing practices that operate between subjects, more than through a regime of opposition operating within the subject, because she never leaves the field of (heterosexist) relations of domination. Thus, the queer does not aim to replace identities (sovereign/other) with a more refined form of difference, like hybridity. This is also how the *xenos* can be apprehended – i.e., as a subject who, to be sure, is produced as neither identical nor different, but *beside* the subjects who are produced as identical or different.

Yet, while it does not hide the workings of dividing practices that operate between subjects, “queer” represents the very “possibility ... for the disruption of *the oppositional binary* itself”, as Butler states (Butler, 2006, 71, my emphasis), and this has been confirmed as one of the major traits of queer theory since its emergence (Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz, 2005; Browne and Nash, 2010; Ghaziani and Brim, 2019). The two main forms of dividing practices that are challenged by Butler’s early queer theory are, on the one hand, sexual difference – especially when conditioned through compulsory heterosexuality – and, on the other hand, the opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Butler deconstructs those binary forms of dividing practices in two stages. First, she criticises a feminism that assumes “the primacy of gender hierarchy to the production of gender”, like the one articulated by, e.g., Catharine A. MacKinnon, which “accepts a presumptively heterosexual model for thinking about sexuality” (Butler, 2006, 17). Butler rejects a feminism that understands “the masculine/feminine binary” as “the exclusive framework in which [the feminine] specificity can be recognised” and that decontextualises and separates off “analytically and politically” that specificity “from the constitution of class, race, ethnicity, and other axes of relations that both constitute ‘identity’ and make the singular notion of identity a misnomer” (Butler, 2006, 41). Butler also criticises Scott’s poststructuralist feminism. Even if the latter intends to “upset normative accounts of gender and to question the restriction of binary thinking on our conceptualisation of gender”, her conception of “sexual difference [is] itself normative within feminism” and works “to install heterosexuality as the presumptive mode of conceptualising difference” (Butler,

2011, 21). If, the universalist discourse can act upon the workings of sexual difference and entail the exclusion of Muslim veiled women by mainstream feminism in France, Butler notices that compulsory heterosexuality also conditions the meaning of women and men, especially because sexual difference conflates with a so-called sexual complementarity for the prospect of reproduction. Butler worries that, because of the unquestioned assumption that sexual difference operates within a heteronormative background, Scott's challenge to one binary form of dividing practices (sexual difference) conditioned by relations of domination (heterosexism) falls short of transforming all women's condition. Indeed, it misses another critical binary regime of opposition – compulsory heterosexuality – because it considers it less signifying (Butler, 2006, 16). Thus, compulsory heterosexuality wrongly turns men into the obvious, permanent, and exclusive opposite partners of women, even in sexuality, and even when the latter are lesbians.

It is well known that Butler's queer theory intends both to acknowledge the power of identity politics and to challenge it. This is why her own conceptualisation of queer is useful for my articulation of the *xenos* as a subject who is produced as a threat for being neither the sovereign nor the other. Indeed, by being "neither... nor...", the *xenos* challenges the certainty around the sovereign's and the other's positions and, at the same time, they show that those positions (which, to be sure, are constructed and not inherent) have real political consequences. In the case of feminism, Butler argues that gender hierarchies are not atemporal, but conditioned by dividing practices that influence sexual difference. Drawing from Foucault and Rubin, Butler writes that "the category of sex is ... inevitably regulative", notably of the categories of gender and desire, and that "any analysis which makes that category presuppositional uncritically extends and further legitimates that regulative strategy as a power/knowledge regime" (Butler, 2006, 147). It is in that sense that she first follows Monique Wittig in her critique of "the straight mind" (Wittig, 1980a). Read by Butler, Wittig's feminism indeed does not aim "to prefer the feminine side of the binary to the masculine, but to displace the binary as such through a specifically lesbian disintegration of its constitutive categories" (Butler, 2006, 181). For Wittig, a lesbian "*is not* a woman" (Wittig, 1980b, 83) because, as Butler explains, a woman "only exists as a term that stabilises and consolidates a binary and oppositional relation to a man; that relation [being] heterosexuality". By refusing heterosexuality, the lesbian properly "transcends

the binary opposition between woman and man”. Therefore, “a lesbian is neither a woman nor a man” (Butler, 2006, 166-167). For Wittig, as Butler shows, it does not mean that the lesbian represents “the figure of the androgyne nor some hypothetical ‘third gender’”, rather, she operates “an internal subversion in which the binary is both presupposed and proliferated to the point it no longer makes sense” (Butler, 2006, 182). But, as Butler notes (and this is the second stage of her early queer challenge to binary dividing practices of subjectification), “Wittig’s practice of ‘inversion’ [is] committed to the very model of normalisation that she seeks to dismantle” (Butler, 2006, 71). Indeed, the purifying role that Wittig forces upon homosexuality – which “is conceived as radically unconditioned by heterosexual norms” (Butler, 2006, 176) – actually shows how much her “lesbianism would then *require* heterosexuality” while, by systematically denying any relationship to it, it effectively “deprives itself of the capacity of resignify[ing] the very heterosexual constructs by which it is partially and inevitably constituted” (Butler, 2006, 183).

Rather than understanding homosexuality in an inaccurate rupture from heterosexuality, Butler’s queer perspective challenges “the oppositional binary” by affirming difference through the repetitive character of performativity. Homosexuality repeats heterosexuality in a parodic way more than it opposes it. This entails two things. On one side, as Butler writes, “gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy”. Asserting that heterosexuality is not “the original” reveals it “to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original” (Butler, 2006, 76). If both heterosexuality and homosexuality are copies of an *idea*, then the dividing practice that enhances the former at the expense of the latter is truly challenged. This reminds us of Deleuze’s denial of “the primacy of original over copy” through repetition and of Bhabha’s hybrid doubling. It also leads me to suggest a change from the common poststructuralist binary “identity/difference” to another one, i.e., “similarity/difference”. Not only is this binary more accurate because it acknowledges that absolute identity is impossible,<sup>69</sup> but it also proves useful in the analysis of the successive epistemes I undertake in Chapter 4, drawing from Foucault (2002b): the pre-classical episteme which problematises similarity, the classical

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<sup>69</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, who argued that “the predominant disposition ... to treat the similar as identical – an illogical disposition, for there is nothing identical as such – is what first supplied all the foundations for logic”, a logic he wanted to dismantle (Nietzsche, 2001, §111).

episteme which problematises difference, and the postcolonial episteme – or, at least, period – which problematises ambiguity. On the other side, Butler’s challenge to this binary regime of opposition does not deny its productivity – it only but powerfully denaturalises it: “The presence of these norms not only constitute a site of power that cannot be refused, but they can and do become the site of parodic contest and display that robs compulsory heterosexuality of its claims to naturalness and originality” (Butler, 2006, 179). The queer subject does not replace men and women, she deploys herself immanently to them (like the *xenos*).

Paradigmatically queer in that sense is Butler’s reading of Herculine Barbin’s case as first introduced by Foucault (Barbin, 2010). Herculine is an intersex person who lived in nineteenth-century France, who was assigned as a girl when she was born and later reassigned as a man, which caused them so much distress that they eventually committed suicide. At that time and throughout the twentieth century, intersex people were rather called “hermaphrodites”, but this term is today considered oppressive and inaccurate by them (Guillot, 2008). Oppressive, because it tends to turn them into “monsters” and, inaccurate, because it identifies them as *both* men *and* women, whereas they – unless they are forcibly assigned to, or willingly transition toward, one of those genders – are *neither* typically the one *nor* typically the other. From Chapter 3, I argue that this shift in naming – and meaning – is a sign of an historical (both political and epistemological) shift. Butler writes that “Herculine deploys and redistributes the terms of a binary system, but that very distribution disrupts and proliferates those terms outside the binary itself” (Butler, 2006, 67). Indeed, Herculine does not erase the dividing practice that differentiates men and women in a binary way, they repeat it, and, through this repetition-redistribution, they challenge its naturalised power. While Foucault considers Herculine’s “anomalous body as the cause of h/er desire, h/er trouble, h/er affairs and confession”, Butler rather claims to “read this body, here fully textualized, as a sign of an irresolvable ambivalence produced by the juridical discourse on univocal sex” (Butler, 2006, 151).

Queerness is therefore synonymous with ambivalence, a word also used by Bhabha to describe hybridity. For Butler and Bhabha, ambivalence means the possibility to be one thing *and* its opposite (simultaneously or in turn). Therefore, queer and hybridity theories both consider dividing practices whose result is still an exclusively binary

relation. I argue that it should be distinguished from the situation of the *xenos* who is *neither ... nor ...*, but a subject in-between, with an immanent and singular position. Yet, while Bhabha's hybrid subject must be any subject for his theory to hold together (like Kristeva's stranger or Deleuze's nomad), the queer always forces us to acknowledge the historical relations of domination that constituted the dividing practices of subjectification from where she emerged. As Butler reminds us, "queer" is also "stolen" from an oppressive, this time homophobic and "shaming", lexicon, and it is only thanks to a subsequent repetitive appropriation that "the very term that would annihilate us becomes the site of resistance" (Butler, 1993, 18-22). At the core of queer theory, there is a vivid awareness, inherited from Foucault, that "repression may be understood to produce the object that it comes to deny" (Butler, 2006, 144). Moreover, queer theory emerges, in de Lauretis' words, as "a common front or political alliance of gay men and lesbians ... made possible, and indeed necessary" in a specific context: that of the 1980s and 1990s United States when and where "the AIDS national emergency and the pervasive institutional backlash against queers of all sexes" were so salient (Lauretis, 1991, v). As Kadji Amin argues, "the politicality of *queer* is a product of historical conditions" and, he adds, "under different circumstances, *queer* might become a term unsuited for the aspirations with which history, in the US moment of the early 1990s, had freighted it" (Amin, 2019, 279). This means that the historical context of the emergence of "queer" conditioned its meaning as "a set of theoretical interventions around relations between sexuality, normativity, and the political" (Amin, 2019, 279). This politicality (or conflictuality) combined to historicity is always acknowledged as central to understanding "queer" (Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz, 2005; Butler, 2006; Browne and Nash, 2010; Ghaziani and Brim, 2019).

This is remarkably captured by David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam, and José E. Muñoz who borrow from Walter Benjamin the notion of "historical emergencies" to understand from where "queer" emerges and upon what "it" acts (Eng et al., 2005, 2). What is interesting in their argument is that they do not limit those historical emergencies to those which made possible the appearance of queer theory fifteen years before their text – AIDS and homophobia in the US – but they do make historicisation and politicisation the pre-requisites of "queer" (which is also the case for the *xenos*). It is through this politicisation-historicisation that the dividing practices of

subjectification can be analysed. This is what allows Butler to analyse Herculine's case through her queer perspective. The ambivalence that she sees in Herculine is not a pre-political, happy, or undifferentiated multiplicity, but a political, conflictual, and differentiating "fatal ambivalence, produced by the prohibitive law, which ... culminates in Herculine's suicide" (Butler, 2006, 151). Like when Scott refuses "happy pluralism" and Bhabha dismisses "pluralist anarchy", Butler is suspicious about "the limitless proliferation of sexes" because it "entails the negation of sex as such" since "sex would no longer have any general application as a term" (Butler, 2006, 173). Like difference and hybridity, queer is not used to overcome the possibility to differentiate. I apprehend the *xenos* through the same perspective, but I do not see the introduction of the *xenos*' specific position beside the binary opposition between the sovereign and the other as a source of depoliticised and undifferentiating pluralism.<sup>70</sup>

Queer theory also cultivates an openness that, at times, can stretch the queer position to a point where it becomes too wide. This is linked to the original anti-identitarian critique of queer theory against forms of feminism and of gay and lesbian politics that reproduce uncritical binary exclusions. Butler and many queer theorists have thus been cautious not to turn "queer" into an identity of its own. Indeed, "the critique of the queer subject is crucial to the continuing *democratisation* of queer politics" which mandatorily entails "a critique of the exclusionary operations" of identity and subjectification (Butler, 1993, 19). This democratisation of "queer" takes Butler as far as to consider it suitable for "straights for whom the term expresses an affiliation with anti-homophobic politics" and allows them to "expose, and rework [its] specific historicity" (Butler, 1993, 21).<sup>71</sup> This queer openness or democratisation intends to make sure that, according to Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz, "the operations of queer critique ... can neither be decided on in advance nor be depended on in the future" (Eng et al., 2005, 3). It introduces queer politics as "subjectless" – following the poststructuralist deconstruction of the constitutive subject. Consequently, queer critique "disallows any positing of a proper subject *of* or object *for* the field by insisting

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<sup>70</sup> According to Foucault, this rejection of unlimitedness is historical. While, until the Renaissance, "the interplay of similitudes was ... infinite", in the classical age "a complete enumeration" becomes "possible" (Foucault, 2002b, 61).

<sup>71</sup> The crucial point here is that those straights only are queer insofar as they reenact the queer politicality and historicity.

that queer has no fixed political referent” (Eng et al., 2005, 3). By “keeping queer permanently unclear, unstable and ‘unfit’ to represent any particular sexual identity”, most queer theorists reject the positivism proper to identity politics and the normative positions that come with it (Eng et al., 2005, 7-8). This is how Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz can point at historical emergencies that are of interest for queer theory despite their apparent distance from those identified above by de Lauretis in 1991: “the triumph of neoliberalism and the collapse of the welfare state; ... the pathologizing of immigrant communities as ‘terrorist’ and racialized populations as ‘criminal’; the shifting forms of citizenship and migration in a putatively ‘postidentity’ and ‘postracial’ age” (Eng et al., 2005, 2). This seemingly unlimited openness is both queer’s strength and weakness: as Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz acknowledge: “the reinvention of the term is contingent on its potential obsolescence” (Eng et al., 2005, 3).

This is what worries Amin, who reminds us that “*queer* is not endlessly open-ended, polyvalent, and reattachable. Instead, it is a term *sticky* with history” and it “remains haunted by the electric 1990s convergence ... of same-sex sexuality, political urgency, and radical transgression” (Amin, 2019, 284-285). This is somehow forgotten in a significant part of the contemporary literature that equates “queer” with rather inoffensive and pinkwashed “‘playful’, ‘fluid’ and transgressive practices and behaviours”, as Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash regret (2010, 6).<sup>72</sup> It is then interesting to read Amin, who argues that “instead of continuing to celebrate queer mobility and indefiniteness, we [should] ground *queer* in its various contexts, histories, genealogies, and inheritances” (Amin, 2019, 283). This implies that the necessary democratisation of “queer” needs to be balanced by an attention “that *only certain* forms of nonnormativity, *only particular* sex acts seem to attach to it” (Amin, 2019, 283).<sup>73</sup> Hence, the necessity to approach the *xenos* through another path, since their subjectification is not limited to this context. It is also important to understand that the first iteration of “queer” is a homophobic one, and this homophobic utterance should not be forgotten when we consider the more open, subversive, and emancipatory

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<sup>72</sup> Think about the many article or book titles that claim to, e.g., “queer” management, science, or nations.

<sup>73</sup> This is also why I need another methodology than the one offered by queer theory to approach the *xenos* – who does not only belong to the field of sexuality.

contemporary iterations. Coming back to Butler: “The subject who is ‘queered’ into public discourse” is so “through homophobic interpellations of various kinds” and only then “*takes up or cites* that very term as the discursive basis for an opposition” (Butler, 1993, 23). It is in that sense that I approach the *xenos*: as the subject first produced and problematised through xenophobia. The need to put the relations of domination at the centre of the analysis is thus crucial.

Yet, despite this invariant attention to historicity and politicality in queer theory, the affirmation of difference over identity – or similarity – can go as far as encompassing the in-between position of the queer into a larger subversive difference. Certainly, it is a more accurate and complex difference than the one produced through the uncritical oppositional binary Butler and other queer theorists criticise. Yet, it does not help us to think distinctly and simultaneously of the sovereign (the similar subject), the other (the different subject), and the *xenos* (the ambiguous subject). Incidentally, Butler defines the queer as “a difference that must be multiple” (Butler, 2011, 19). It is not surprising then that she ends up analysing Herculine’s “apparently multiplicitous pleasures” through “the mark of the feminine”. Clearly, Butler introduces this mark “in its polyvalence and in its refusal to submit to the reductive efforts of univocal signification” (2006, 155-156). That said, the feminine is the mark of difference rather than the mark of similarity (which would then be the masculine) or even the mark of something which is *neither* difference *nor* similarity while being immanent to them (like for the *xenos*). Of course, bearing this mark of difference, Herculine transgresses what is expected from the feminine by becoming “a ‘usurper’ of a masculine prerogative”, yet this only shows an ambivalence between masculinity-similarity and femininity-difference and not the introduction of a non-dialectical and immanent third element beside them. Furthermore, from the beginning, queer is articulated as an alternative “way of exploring (mainly gender and sexual) difference”, as Browne and Nash simply put it (2010, 9). As de Lauretis argues, differences are “elided in most of the contexts” and “simply taken for granted or even covered over” especially in “the” gay and lesbian community (Lauretis, 1991, v-vi). Queer politics must therefore make us think more critically about “racial, as well as gender differences”, even if not in an abstract, “otherworldly”, or “utopian” way. Those are differences that are “already here” and contribute to queer politics (Lauretis, 1991, xvi). It can even be said that “queer” is made of those differences. This means that the critiques of queer liberalism,



homonormativity, homonationalism, racism, transphobia, and misogyny in/from the gay and lesbian community are inherent to queer politics (Butler, 1993; Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz, 2005; Browne and Nash, 2010).

Finally, through its refined understanding of difference, queer theory ends up producing strong binary dividing practices of subjectification, like between the queer and the straight. Lynne Huffer criticises Butler's performative vision of queerness mostly for relying "on a dialectical logic of reversal and sublation" where "performativity replaces 'bad' family values with 'good' queer ones, thereby engaging in a process of remoralisation" (Huffer, 2010, 134-136).<sup>74</sup> As Huffer explains, "to describe performativity as dialectical is not to diminish it or to deny its tremendous power" since "reversing nature-culture causality and reconfiguring subjectivity beyond that reversal is no small feat", but it does send queerness back to the "atemporal" and "binary structures" it first aims to challenge (Huffer, 2010, 134-138). Through her reading of Foucault, Huffer challenges a tendency in queer literature to slide from the politically useful affirmation of difference over identity to a more problematic binary inversion of fixed (moral) values. For Huffer, like for me, the poststructuralist and the queer affirmations of difference over identity are simply means to analyse and change society, not the end goal of theory and politics. Other binary regimes of opposition introduced through the articulation of queerness include the one between queerness and homonormativity and that between white gays and queer people of colour (Lauretis, 1991; Butler, 1993; Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz, 2005; Browne and Nash, 2010). As valid as those critiques of internal oppressions are, they sometimes "problematically neglect how we are all complicit in the reproduction of power relations", Browne and Nash remind us (2010, 6); this neglect turns those critiques into moral rather than political discourses.

If hybridity and queer theories have delivered useful tools to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos*, it seems that the ambivalence between similarity and difference, which characterises the hybrid and queer subjects, falls short in accounting for the specificity of the *xenos* – the ambiguous subject produced beside the sovereign and the other. In the last part of this chapter, I first analyse the oppositional binary as

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<sup>74</sup> Butler does resorts to the term "transvaluation" when she describes what queer does (Butler, 1993, 22; 2006, 180).

what the *xenos* challenges before presenting the notion of ambiguity that characterises this subject.

## **4 The Oppositional Binary in Poststructuralism and the *Xenos*' Ambiguity**

In order to understand why the subjectification of the *xenos* as ambiguous has not been properly dealt with in the poststructuralist literature gathered in this chapter, I approach the binary relation between identity – or, rather, similarity – and difference as a philosophical invariant. Indeed, the oppositional binary is present everywhere in the work discussed above as the only element that does not seem to be historicised. Therefore, when a subject like the *xenos* emerges beside it, they are brought back to a position already occupied by the other and analysed according to an affirmed difference rather than according to their own characteristics (e.g., ambiguity). While Katarina Kolozova brings a useful tool to criticise this tendency in poststructuralism, her solution consisting in reintroducing a form of unity to challenge the oppositional binary does not help me to account for the “in-between” position of the *xenos*. Indeed, by simply criticising the oppositional binary, she ends up denying its productivity. On the contrary, Aoileann Ní Mhurchú’s concept of ambiguity reduces the blind spot in poststructuralism which consists in analysing differentiation only through the oppositional binary. It allows us to approach the subjectification of the *xenos* as occurring beside (and not in place of) the subjectifications of the sovereign and the other – which are indeed constituted through the oppositional binary. At the same time, ambiguity is constructed by Ní Mhurchú as a tool to understand the specificity of the postcolonial context for the production, through domination, of the *xenos*.

### **4.1 The Oppositional Binary in Poststructuralism**

Analysing the subjectification of the *xenos* does not mean discarding dividing practices of subjectification whose result is binary (sovereign/other) as irrelevant. On the contrary, the *xenos* is produced beside the similar and the different subjects, which implies that they (and their opposition inherited from the classical age) have not disappeared. That said, the subjectification of the *xenos* escapes the poststructuralist approaches that focus on subjectification and difference reviewed so far because it

cannot be understood exclusively within a binary regime of opposition. This is because this binary regime appears, in those thoughts, as a philosophical invariant. To be precise, the poststructuralist literature gathered here tends to approach the Western binary regime of opposition *and* the contingent political foundation enhancing similarity at the expense of difference as one philosophical invariant. For the sake of conciseness, I call this poststructuralist invariant, drawing from Butler, “the oppositional binary” (Butler, 2006, 71).

This is Katarina Kolozova’s argument – developed with a singular approach to sexual difference. Kolozova starts her reflection from the feminist poststructuralist perspective, that is, from the critique of the subject “women” understood as the metaphysical origin of feminist politics (Kolozova, 2014, 18). Despite this, she is unsatisfied with the findings of this approach to the issue of the binary, and she turns to the conceptualisation of “the One” articulated by François Laruelle.

In his book *Philosophies of Difference*, Laruelle explains that poststructuralist thoughts have contributed to make difference a philosophical “invariant”, like “*contradiction* (‘dialectic’), *existence*, *structure*” in other theories (Laruelle, 2010, 2). Because they affirm difference over identity, the poststructuralists have turned the former into a “principle” – a primary, ahistorical, and “unengendered” force (Laruelle, 2010, 2). For Laruelle, this has two consequences. First, difference is a “syntax” rather than a “reality” in poststructuralism (Laruelle, 2010, 3-6), which leaves the other – the different subject – out of the analysis while she should be what guides it (Laruelle, 2010, 58). If we want to acknowledge the other – like the sovereign who emerged on her back – as the product of historical relations of domination, we must discuss the philosophical gesture that affirms difference to the point of turning it into an invariant. Second, turning difference into a philosophical invariant makes the oppositional relationship between difference and identity inevitable and necessary (Laruelle, 2010, 8). Through repetition, the oppositional binary is thus naturalised and plays the same role as the metaphysical constitutive subject: an always-already-there reference (Laruelle, 2010, 15). If the poststructuralist affirmation of difference is not a Hegelian dialectic (Laruelle, 2010, 23), Laruelle considers that the ineluctability of the oppositional binary in poststructuralism entails a “recourse to the One as the Without-division” (Laruelle, 2010, 7).

Similarly, Kolozova criticises poststructuralist feminism for reinforcing the oppositional binary when articulating the dividing practices of subjectification. She writes that, in poststructuralism, “there seems to be a consensus concerning several binaries of asymmetrical opposing terms. One of the two elements of the binary is always negative and excluded (as meaningless) from the explanatory apparatus” (Kolozova, 2014, 7). While poststructuralists criticise the exclusionary tendency of binary regimes of opposition, Kolozova notices that they all end up validating the inescapability of binary opposition – especially one between “the unitary and stable subject” (the subject of metaphysics) and “the nonunitary and unstable subject” (the subject of poststructuralism) (Kolozova, 2014, 17-18). Subsequently, Kolozova presents what she considers the true and only way out of the binary: “the One”. She asserts that there is no other possibility because what characterises the binary is its relationality (Kolozova, 2014, 30). Kolozova circumvents the main characteristic of the binary to think and act beyond it: “thinking ... beyond relation and relationism is thinking in terms of singularity”, which she interprets as a “situation of non-relatedness”, that in turn defines “the One” (Kolozova, 2014, 30-31).

Originally, then, Kolozova suggests overcoming the binary through the “unity of oneness and singularity, not of differences” (Kolozova, 2014, 19). Drawn from Laruelle, this oneness is allegedly not metaphysical, but necessary to ground thinking and action in “the real” – of which the subject is “a cut”, for Kolozova. Since she accepts the poststructuralist critique of the constitutive subject, Kolozova argues for “a paradigm of unity that is not totalitarian, a subject of auto-transformative oneness, of identitarian mobility”, because she thinks “that there might be ... a ‘good unity’, namely, one that does not necessarily have to exclude the multiplicity” (Kolozova, 2014, 20-30). There is something stimulating in this return to oneness insofar as it is informed by the poststructuralist critique of metaphysics. It incites us to imagine a subject (e.g., women) that, because she is neither dispersed nor fragmented, would be strong enough for the political struggle ahead. Furthermore, as we have already mentioned, Scott, Bhabha, and Butler do not think that unlimited dispersion is a credible way out against the limits of the binary (a requirement I share to approach the *xenos*’ situation). In spite of this, Scott introduces “happy pluralism” as an option against the binary that eventually stays her main framework of reference. Indeed,

contrary to Kolozova, she absolutely rejects the return to unity because she equates it with sameness and does not consider that gender equality can be achieved through that since “equality ... rests on differences ... that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition” (Scott, 1992, 166). Moreover, Kolozova’s argument against relationality as the biggest issue of the binary seems flawed. First, because it is impossible to think of, as Kolozova claims to do, “women’s subjugation and gendered violence” as instances of the real (Kolozova, 2014, 9) without thinking of and acting upon the very relationships between women and men. Second, because the problem with the oppositional binary is not relationality, but oppressive duality. Differentiation is not necessarily binary and oppressive. It already challenges the oppositional binary in two ways: through a – poststructuralist – subversive form of difference *and* through the subjectification of the *xenos* as ambiguous – i.e., neither similar nor different.

#### **4.2 Aoileann Ní Mhurchú’s Ambiguity and the *Xenos***

Such conception of ambiguity has been introduced by Aoileann Ní Mhurchú, who challenges the “dualistic framework” according to which “the relationship between citizenship and migration is usually seen in terms of sharp distinctions between insiders and outsiders” (Ní Mhurchú, 2014, 1-2). Indeed, the dividing practices of subjectification between citizens and migrants “prevent[] us from seeing how experiences of political subjectivity could be and are already being experienced other than (only) through the dualistic time and space of modern territorial sovereignty” (Ní Mhurchú, 2014, 21). What Ní Mhurchú calls ambiguity does not, therefore, cover those “experiences of being included or excluded from the state; but rather experiences of being caught somewhere between inclusion and exclusion, citizenship and immigration” (Ní Mhurchú, 2014, 6). What is useful in Ní Mhurchú’s work is that it starts with the poststructuralist subversion, or “breakdown”, of the “categories” of citizenship and migration “as useful terms of meaning” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 160). Acknowledging the consequences of the poststructuralist problematisation of difference (the affirmation of difference over identity has an impact on how we approach both) is also my point of departure. At the same time, Ní Mhurchú does not consider that, because they are made more complex and fluid, those categories no longer operate politically (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 163), which makes her approach to

ambiguous subjects very nuanced and inspiring to my own. Finally, through ambiguity, Ní Mhurchú analyses “alternative forms of subjectivity – neither citizen nor non-citizen, neither fully nationals nor fully non-nationals”, that is, neither similar nor different – as I attempt to do with the *xenos*. While she focuses especially on intergenerational migration (Ní Mhurchú, 2014, 17), her approach also helps us to understand the condition of intersex people today, as I show below.

Now, Ní Mhurchú’s insistence on considering her ambiguous subject as “irregular” might at times reinstall an oppositional binary between the “regular” subject – who is always the citizen – and the irregular subject. The latter encompasses the non-citizen and the ambiguous citizen/migrant altogether (Ní Mhurchú, 2014, 12; 2015, 163), which limits the possibility to differentiate them. Yet, this is only marginal in an otherwise brilliant contribution to poststructuralist literature, which helps us to think beside the oppositional binary. This is also rather inevitable when attending to, for instance, the context of postcolonial France and its actual dynamics of domination between, on the one hand, the regular (dominant) subject – i.e., the white French national – and, on the other hand, the non-French national and the racialised and postcolonial French national who are both dominated, even though in specific ways. Ní Mhurchú indeed studies postcolonial France, where she analyses French Arabs as challenging forms of “subjectivity encompassed in either being French *or* being Arab”. She argues that “this is not only a question of various competing positions which add up to French-Arab, or which produce inconsistent combinations of French and Arab, but results in feelings of being *neither* French nor Arab”. According to Ní Mhurchú, this “constant ambiguity (in-between-ness)” which “underlies certain experiences of political subjectivity” has “thus far been less well theorised” than, say, the hybrid or queer ambivalences described above (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 159).

Ní Mhurchú’s ambiguity is thus explicitly historicised as a notion whose intelligibility and problematising is linked to our postcolonial times. She resorts to this notion to “theorise the way(s) in which political subjectivity is experienced in a postcolonial world other than through a liberal national/universal dualistic framework” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 163). It is also highly politicised insofar as it does not deny that conflictuality and exclusion condition its very possibility (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 164). In fact, Ní Mhurchú argues that “we cannot transcend this logic – because attempts to

widen the scope of who is to be included (as citizens) always leads to the creation of other people who are to be excluded” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 166).

Interestingly, Ní Mhurchú’s tackles ambiguity not primarily from “postcolonial sites of resistance”, but rather “from within the centre(s) of this postcolonial world” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 163). Contrary to “hybridity” and “queer”, Ní Mhurchú’s ambiguity is therefore not approached as a transgressive reappropriation but as the effect of dividing practices of subjectification which reveal an “obsession with legibility and ... the act of classification” that are used “to govern populations” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 166). Ní Mhurchú argues that ambiguity is not synonymous with “liberation and freedom” from “domination and exploitation”, even if, of course, ambiguity can implicitly be linked to resistance because of the absence of complete determination (Ní Mhurchú, 2014, 8). Thus, ambiguity is not inherently transgressive. Nor is it a more refined difference than the one articulated through the oppositional binary. The ambiguous subject is not Bhabha’s hybrid, as Ní Mhurchú warns. She analyses the French Arabs’ position “to interrupt stable understandings regarding hybridity as the idea of someone straddling several worlds – a sophisticated, cosmopolitan migrant who is clearly at home in many places” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 167). Furthermore, she argues that the French Arabs’ “problematic situation cannot be resolved by widening the scope of ‘citizen’” because, even if ambiguity “undermines the omnipresent logic of exclusion and inclusion by opening up other possibilities for political subjectivity”, it “can never transcend the logic ... of classification” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 166). In other words, ambiguity does not lead to undifferentiation and the *xenos* is immanent to the different positions already existing. To be sure, Ní Mhurchú acknowledges that ambiguous citizenship “undermines the simplified understanding of ‘citizen’ as a coherent identity” but it does so “through the experience of people who get caught between citizenship and migration” and “not by simply demonstrating how citizenship is inconsistent and dislocated and thus how people are connected to both here and there (to citizenship *and* migration)” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 162). There is no reintroduction of the poststructuralist invariant binary between the nonunitary and the unitary subjects.

Ní Mhurchú’s ambiguity is therefore distinct from the queer and hybrid ambivalence because it points to a third position, separate from but immanent to those which have

been produced in binary opposition. Ambiguity therefore explicitly makes intelligible what already existed before, but was either associated with (a prepolitical) undifferentiation or with a refined form of difference, still caught up in an exclusively binary relation. Ní Mhurchú indeed writes that “an ambiguous subjectivity is experienced as *never having been or never being* because they remain retrospectively undefined – falling in-between” (Ní Mhurchú, 2015, 161). Her work alleviates this theoretical blind spot. Also, the acknowledgement – and naming – of this in-between position does not entail that the previous positions are transcended or made irrelevant. Indeed, the concepts of citizenship and migration, inclusion and exclusion, “continue to be taken as analytical categories in their own right” because “a refusal to engage in an analytical framework that automatically supposes the logic of an inside/outside binary in relation to the question of citizenship” does not mean “to ignore moments when this type of logic does come into play”, as Ní Mhurchú writes (2014, 4 and 20).

Men and women do not disappear simply because we acknowledge the singular ambiguity of the intersex. Therefore, Ní Mhurchú’s ambiguity is the most appropriate notion to analyse the situation of the *xenos* because it does more work toward the *xenos* than hybridity and queerness. Coming back to Herculine’s case, Ní Mhurchú’s ambiguity allows me to offer a third reading next to those of Foucault and Butler. As Butler argues, Foucault situates Herculine’s ambiguity out of the intelligible: they are not problematised, in the sense that they are “without a definite sex” and live in “the happy limbo of non-identity” (Foucault in Barbin, 2010, xiii). Butler considers that, by making Herculine’s ambiguity unintelligible, pre-discursive, and non-signified by power relations, Foucault “appears to romanticise h/er world of pleasures” as “a world that exceeds the categories of sex and identity” (Butler, 2006, 145). She aptly adds that this “romanticised appropriation and refusal of [Herculine’s] text” by Foucault goes against his own methodology which consists of providing “a way to criticise those Lacanian and neo-Lacanian theories that cast culturally marginal forms of sexuality as culturally unintelligible” (Butler, 2006, 145-146). Butler, then, acknowledges Herculine’s position as intelligible, as already signified by power relations *and* dynamics of resistance. By offering a queer reading of the case, she can argue that “Herculine is not an ‘identity’, but the sexual impossibility of an identity”, which does not mean that Herculine’s ambiguity locates them out of the plays of power as Foucault implies. Herculine dies because of those plays, but before this, they manage to



occasion “a convergence and disorganisation of the rules that govern sex/gender/desire” (Butler, 2006, 67). This is how Butler can read Herculine’s ambiguity as a refined, ambivalent, queer “femininity”, that is, a difference.

Rather, I read Herculine’s ambiguity as a singular position, that is, in-between similarity and difference, and immanent to them. Herculine is neither a man (the sovereign) nor a woman (the other), they are an intersex person (the *xenos*).<sup>75</sup> Here, I follow Butler’s important methodological rule according to which “the task here is not to celebrate each and every new possibility *qua* possibility, but to redescribe those possibilities that *already* exist, but which exist within cultural domains designated as culturally unintelligible and impossible” (Butler, 2006, 207). However, I argue that Herculine’s ambiguity is no longer unintelligible or impossible. But – and this is important – this reading can only be articulated through an epistemological shift that produces ambiguity as distinct from similarity and difference. Herculine’s ambiguity is intelligible – is a discursive effect of signifying relations of power – because of the (non-binary) dividing practices of subjectification that have emerged in our postcolonial times. Those practices are intensified by postcolonial xenophobia which problematises ambiguity, as I show from Chapter 3.

## Conclusion

This chapter explores who is the *xenos* thanks to poststructuralist literature focusing on the dividing practices of subjectification and affirming difference over identity. Thanks to the figures of the stranger (Kristeva), the nomad (Deleuze), the hybrid (Bhabha), and the queer (Butler), it shows that the *xenos* needs to be approached as a subject produced through historical modes of differentiation (division) that are conditioned by relations of domination.

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<sup>75</sup> This implies to acknowledge that I read Herculine Barbin’s subjectification with analytical tools (the *xenos*, ambiguity) that did not make sense in the discourse of their time. In that sense, using the pronoun “they” to talk about Herculine only makes sense today insofar as the ambiguity of the intersex (and of the *xenos*) has only become intelligible as such recently. This can explain why Butler, for instance, uses the pronoun “s/he” in her own analysis. Yet, it also shows the ambivalence (rather than ambiguity) of Butler’s queer subject.

It also shows that the literature gathered here share in common an acknowledgement, a critique, and an eventual (subversive) repetition of what I call, after Butler, the oppositional binary. This contingent, but nevertheless terribly productive, political foundation enhances similarity at the expense of difference. Yet, to understand the subjectification of the *xenos*, there is a need to pay attention to what happens beside the practices conditioned by the oppositional binary.

This is why I finally turn to a recent formulation of the notion of ambiguity to analyse the specific in-between position of the *xenos*, produced as ambiguous and immanent to the sovereign (the similar subject) and the other (the different subject). Rather than ambivalence (which would imply that the *xenos* is both similar and different), ambiguity introduces a third position (neither similar nor different).

In the next chapter, I analyse xenophobia in its traditional sense, which I suggest renaming “racialising xenophobia”. Racialising xenophobia typically contributes to the oppositional binary and is conditioned by it insofar as it produces, in my study, the French sovereign on the back of the stranger (as the other). This is why I argue for the notion of xenophobia to be reworked, from Chapter 3, to account for the specificity of the subjectification of the *xenos*.

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## Chapter 2

# **Racialising Xenophobia: The Subjectification of the Stranger in France since the Classical Age**

### **Introduction**

If, from Chapter 3, I need to rework the notion of xenophobia, it is because its traditional understanding cannot apprehend the subjectification of the *xenos* introduced in Chapter 1. Rather, “traditional” xenophobia is linked to the subjectification of the stranger and its opposite, whose name depends on the context of the analysis. Since I focus on France, let us narrow the perspective and state that, in its traditional meaning, xenophobia is linked to the subjectification of the stranger and the French. We can thus refocus on the opposing subjects introduced in Chapter 1: the stranger as a paradigmatic figure of the other (the different subject), and the French as the sovereign (the similar subject in the French context). Because of the binary and oppositional structure of traditional xenophobia, I analyse it with a notion elaborated by Michel Foucault: the discourse on the “race war” (Foucault, 2003, 60). This is a specific form of “historico-political discourse” that Foucault sees emerging, in Western Europe and especially in France, in the seventeenth century (Foucault, 2003, 49-60). I argue that this discourse allows us to analyse and historicise the subjectifications of the stranger and the French, which have developed since this period, and, as a result, the workings of traditional xenophobia. Because I focus on French history since what Foucault calls “the classical age” (which spans from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century),<sup>76</sup> and because of the importance of the notion of “race war” in my analysis, I refer to xenophobia in its traditional meaning as “racialising xenophobia” to differentiate it from the reworked notion of xenophobia that I articulate from Chapter 3 as “postcolonial xenophobia”.

This chapter aims to clarify what racialising xenophobia does and how the stranger has been produced in France since the classical age. This is a necessary step before turning

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<sup>76</sup> French history is indeed linked to racism through colonisation and slavery, cf. Slaouti and Le Cour Grandmaison (2020, 10).

to the subjectification of the *xenos* and the workings of postcolonial xenophobia, also in France, in the following chapters. Indeed, it shows how a dominated subject can be produced as a threat, and it introduces the techniques of killing and deceitful assimilation as “ancestors” to the postcolonial xenophobic disambiguation. Furthermore, analysing the stranger’s subjectification and racialising xenophobia through Foucault’s discourse on the race war allows me to introduce a methodological foundation for this research: discourses are historical, contingent, and productive practices whose regularity can be analysed through the objects they produce, the positions of subjectivity they involve, the concepts they disseminate, and the strategies they articulate (Foucault, 2002a, 81). This regularity is shaped by political intensities, such as racialising or postcolonial xenophobia.

This chapter is organised into three parts. Firstly, I introduce the Foucaultian discourse on the race war and argue for its relevance to analyse racialising xenophobia in France since the classical age. I focus on the latter’s manifestations in the seventeenth century and on the stranger it produced back then. Because of this situated focus, I also approach Foucault’s race war through a postcolonial perspective to discuss his apparent “short-circuiting” of “Europe’s imperial ventures” in the very constitution of this notion (Stoler, 1995, 7 and 60). Analysing both the stranger and racialising xenophobia in France requires taking colonisation into account.

Secondly, I analyse the workings of racialising xenophobia in the nineteenth century<sup>77</sup> and the first half of the twentieth century. I study two cases of subjectification of the stranger that I analyse through the perspective of race war: the stranger during the French revolution and the case of the indigenous during colonisation. Through this, I show the shared regularity of the discourses at work during *the* event which has made French people eternally proud, and those operating within the apparatus which they would prefer to forget.

Thirdly, I analyse the workings of racialising xenophobia since the independences and the decolonisation of the former French colonies followed by the beginning of postcolonial immigration in France. I resort to two notions, both approached through

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<sup>77</sup> The “long nineteenth century” of Eric Hobsbawm, which starts in 1789 and ends in 1914 (Hobsbawm, 1995).

the discourse of race war, to study the postcolonial forms of racialising xenophobia and the postcolonial figures of the stranger: Étienne Balibar's "neo-racism" and Rogers Brubaker's "civilisationism".<sup>78</sup>

The figures of the stranger in France, throughout this short history, are not exhaustively analysed.<sup>79</sup> That said, the chapter shows that, if the stranger changes,<sup>80</sup> the binary structure of racialising xenophobia that positions the stranger as opposite to the French remains strong. Analysing this structure through the Foucaultian discourse of race war allows us to historicise racialising xenophobia and the subjectification of the stranger. Historicising them does not mean that they belong to the past, that they are now replaced by postcolonial xenophobia and the subjectification of the *xenos*. On the contrary, racialising xenophobia and the stranger, on the one hand, postcolonial xenophobia and the *xenos*, on the other, coexist in today's France. Yet, historicised, the contingency of their emergence and workings are made explicit, which is crucial to distinguishing and analysing them.

## **1 Racialising Xenophobia and Race War: The Emergence of the Stranger/French Opposition in the Seventeenth Century**

In this part, I first introduce Foucault's "discourse on the race war" for its relevance to analyse the workings of racialising xenophobia in France since the classical age. I approach this discourse through its binary and oppositional structure, its inscription within what Foucault calls a "theory of relations of domination", its productivity as a practice of subjectification, and its ability to turn dominated subjects into inherent threats. This is decisive to understanding not only racialising xenophobia but also postcolonial xenophobia. Second, I tackle Foucault's short-circuiting of Western

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<sup>78</sup> This last notion being conceived as characterising Northern and Western European countries (Brubaker, 2017, 1191), some of the findings of this chapter on France can find cognate and parallel expressions in other post-imperial European contexts.

<sup>79</sup> Through modern French antisemitism, Jews were targeted as members of the "anti-France" and, during the Vichy regime, they were effectively stripped of their citizenship. Since I refer to antisemitism as a possible genealogy for *postcolonial* xenophobia in the Introduction to the thesis, I do not study it in this chapter to avoid confusion.

<sup>80</sup> My endeavour thus differs from Julia Kristeva's. First, because "my" stranger (that is, the subject produced in a binary opposition to the French sovereign) only emerges contingently in the classical age, when she starts her philosophical history in the antiquity. Second, because, even during the comparatively short period that spans from the classical age to today, the stranger does not remain the same.

European colonisation in the constitution of this discourse on the race war. Given French (colonial) history, such bypassing is incompatible with an analysis of racialising xenophobia and the subjectification of the stranger in France since the seventeenth century. Third, I study two instances of the subjectification of the stranger in seventeenth-century France that can be analysed, through the discourse on the race war, as effects of racialising xenophobia: the slave and the German.

### **1.1 Between the Historico-Political Discourse and the Discourse on the Race War: Racialising Xenophobia**

Around the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, Foucault sees the emergence of a new discourse whose purpose is to make society intelligible (which, for Foucault, equates to producing society). He calls it a “historico-political discourse” and he argues that it competes with an older “philosophico-juridical discourse” that has been making sense of society since the ancient Greeks. The latter discourse “has always worked with the assumption of a pacified universality” and it has been articulated from “the position of a universal, totalizing, or neutral subject” (Foucault, 2003, 52-53). According to this discourse, “political power” can only begin and be interpreted as such once “war ends” because, before, there is only chaos (Foucault, 2003, 50). The law, which organises politics and makes it intelligible, is born from peace and maintains it against pre-political chaos. As such, the law is strictly “a true and just discourse” (Foucault, 2003, 58) and it is the only one that can make sense of politics and society. Thus, the philosophico-juridical discourse produces a “theory of sovereignty” that is universal and universalising since it only tolerates one true interpretation of politics (Foucault, 2003, 34). This interpretation comes from a subject that existed prior to the theory, who produced the discourse, and who founded “the essential unity of power” (Foucault, 2003, 44). This subject is “a sort of sovereignty from which powers spring” (Foucault, 2003, 45), “he” is embodied not only by “the jurist or the philosopher” but by the king or the emperor (Foucault, 2003, 71). For this reason, I refer to “him” as the sovereign. An example of the productivity of this theory of sovereignty is given by Foucault: the way Europeans saw themselves before the classical age and the emergence of the historico-political discourse. According to Foucault, Europeans did not primarily see themselves according to a, as of yet, non-existent Europeanness, but according to the universal and universalising

notion of Christianity, which, “by definition, by vocation, aimed to cover the entire world” (Foucault, 2009b, 297). In other words, before the classical age, Europeans – who were Christian before being European – saw the world as divided between Christians and non-Christians. To be more precise, because of the universal vocation of Christianity, non-Christians were actually not-yet-Christian,<sup>81</sup> which made the distinction between them and Christians less determining.<sup>82</sup>

The classical age starts with the emergence of the historico-political discourse that offers a different reading of society. According to this discourse, war “is a permanent social relationship” which means that it is not possible to wait for its (never-coming) end for politics to arise and us to make sense of it (Foucault, 2003, 49). On the contrary, for Foucault, “politics is the continuation of war by other means” and “it is war that makes society intelligible” (Foucault, 2003, 15 and 163). Therefore, the historico-political discourse is “both a statement of fact, a proclamation, and a practice of social warfare” (Foucault, 2003, 58), which shows the productivity of discourse in Foucault’s theory. Discourse not only allows us to express reality, but it is an integral part of this reality. It can even produce this reality. Thus, the centrality of war is essential because it involves a conception of social relations, of our possibilities to make them intelligible, and of our ways to act upon them that go through conflict, violence, domination, and adversariness. It also means that the political analysis of xenophobia that I undertake in this research, like any political analysis according to Foucault, is particularly interested in strategies (Foucault, 1980d, 123), as I develop from Chapter 3. For Foucault, the historico-political discourse tells us about the war that opposes the English monarchy to the English bourgeoisie and the war that opposes the French monarchy to the French aristocrats (Foucault, 2003, 49). Therefore, there is no neutral

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<sup>81</sup> Thinking through the universalism of the Roman empire (to which Europe is the self-proclaimed heir) gives a similar result. As Donatella Di Cesare reminds us, the stranger was not considered as a non-Roman but “as a not-yet-Roman” (Di Cesare, 2020, 149).

<sup>82</sup> This supposes to distinguish, like Santiago Castro-Gómez does, the pre-classical (mainly Spanish and Portuguese) colonisation from the (French, English, and Dutch) colonisation starting or intensifying in the classical age (Castro-Gómez, 2007, 169-170). That said, the “early” colonisation (like the early experiences of slavery) was productive in the emergences of racialising xenophobia and the stranger in the classical age. Additionally, Walter Mignolo questions the conceptual distinction between the early and late colonisations. If he acknowledges the turning point of the “commercial Atlantic circuit in the sixteenth century”, he argues that the Spanish and Portuguese projects of “conversion” of the colonised population can be linked to the French and English “civilising missions” that started in the nineteenth century, when the attention of Western European countries shifted from nationalism to colonialism (Mignolo, 2002, 61).

subject, not even the king, who used to embody the theory of sovereignty. The subjects produced by this discourse are “inevitably on one side or the other” (Foucault, 2003, 52). There is no more neutral truth – no more unity. Coming back to how Europeans perceive themselves, Foucault argues that, with the emergence of the historico-political discourse, Europe becomes a limited “geographical region of multiple states, without unity” (Foucault, 2009b, 298). Furthermore, at that time, the unifying legacy of Rome wears off and intra-European war-like events like the Frankish and Norman invasions start becoming meaningful, give Europe its intelligibility, and “constitute Europe’s real ... bloody beginnings” (Foucault, 2003, 75).

Foucault also thinks that, since its emergence, the war has been binary. From the statement “we are all inevitably someone’s adversary”, he jumps to: “a binary structure runs through society” (Foucault, 2003, 51). Indeed, the historico-political discourse allows an “analysis ... made in binary terms: the social body is ... composed of two groups, and they are ... in conflict” (Foucault, 2003, 88). Yet, the subjectification of the *xenos* escapes this binary which allegedly structures all social and power relations (cf. Chapter 1). Because it is a discourse on war, the historico-political discourse acknowledges relations of domination as providing more structure than sovereignty for the purpose of making society intelligible. Indeed, war involves a provisional winner and a provisional loser, the latter being dominated by the former who can impose his rules and norms by force. This allows Foucault to offer a theory of relations of domination against the traditional theory of sovereignty to analyse politics (Foucault, 2003, 111). This has two consequences: first, the positions of subjectivity involved in the war are produced by the discourse on war (rather than the other way around). Indeed, for Foucault, while the subject is an effect of power, power always “passes through the individuals it has constituted” (Foucault, 2003, 30). Second, subjects are produced through relations of domination, so there is one dominant subject and the other who is dominated. Foucault thinks that what matters is neither how and why subjects “agree to being subjugated”, nor to looking for “the source of sovereignty”. Rather, he wants to show “how actual relations of subjugation manufacture subjects” and therefore “reveal relations of domination” and “how the various operators of domination ... relate to one another” – i.e., how they support or oppose one another (Foucault, 2003, 45-46). This is indeed crucial to understanding



how the stranger is a product of racialising xenophobia and how the stranger and the *xenos* can coexist in postcolonial times.

Thus, on the one hand, we have the dominant subject that has temporarily won the war. We can call him “the sovereign”. The confusion between the sovereign who *pre-exists* the *philosophico-juridical* discourse and the sovereign *produced by* the *historico-political* discourse is intended. Indeed, throughout the thesis, I show that the sovereign from the historico-political discourse always pretends to make its vantage point universal. Then, on the other hand, we have the subject that is dominated by the sovereign. We can call her “the other”. In the context of a discourse framed through warfare (which involves an enemy) and, especially, in the context of xenophobia in France, the stranger can make a paradigmatic other while her adversary, the French, can be apprehended as a paradigmatic sovereign.

Another important characteristic of the historico-political discourse is, according to Foucault, that if it produces both the positions of the dominant sovereign and the dominated other, it has historically served, primarily, the strategy of the other.<sup>83</sup> In contrast to the sovereign, the other has an interest in revealing that the social order of things is the product of a war that has – temporarily – ended with the victory of the sovereign. That way, the other shows that this order can be changed. This “decentred position”, according to Foucault, “makes it possible to interpret the truth, to denounce the illusions and errors that are being used – by your adversaries – to make you believe we are living in a world in which order and peace have been restored” whereas war, and therefore, domination, are still operating (Foucault, 2003, 53). Through this discourse, the other “inverts the values, the equilibrium, and the traditional polarities of intelligibility”, and she discovers, “beneath the stability of the law or the truth, the indefiniteness of history” (Foucault, 2003, 54-56). This history is made through war and, for this reason, its outcome can be changed. History is not the peaceful tale told by the sovereign and made unequivocally true and necessary by the law. Therefore, through the historico-political discourse, the other can produce a truth which “functions exclusively as a weapon that is used to win an exclusively partisan victory” (Foucault, 2003, 57). For the sovereign, this truth “is obviously an external, *strange*

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<sup>83</sup> Foucault’s attention to the perspective of the other/stranger reminds us of the poststructuralist affirmation of difference.

discourse. ... It is a discourse that is inevitably disqualified, that can and must be kept in the margins, precisely because its negation is the precondition for ... law” (Foucault, 2003, 57-58, my emphasis). This *strange* discourse of the other is therefore the stranger’s discourse.

Then, Foucault notices a transformation early after the emergence of the historico-political discourse: “From the seventeenth century onward, ... the idea that war is the uninterrupted frame of history takes a specific form: the war that is going on beneath order and peace, the war that undermines our society and divides it in a binary mode is, basically, a race war” (Foucault, 2003, 59). He therefore aptly differentiates the historico-political discourse from the discourse on the race war, or rather, he makes the latter a specific version of the former. Although Foucault never uses the term, I think that racialising xenophobia helps us to understand how we have gone from one to the other. While Foucault notices that the historico-political discourse is “ambiguous” in the sense that the positions of the sovereign and, above all, of the other, can be occupied by anyone (bourgeois in England, aristocrats in France), it is no longer the case with the discourse on the race war (Foucault, 2003, 59-60). Foucault notices that, in this discourse, “the word ‘race’ itself is not pinned to a stable biological meaning” but that it is nevertheless “not completely free-floating. Ultimately, it designates a certain historico-political divide” (Foucault, 2003, 77). More than simply binary, this divide is made less “free-floating” through “basic elements” that Foucault lists as follows: “ethnic differences, differences between languages, different degrees of force, vigour, energy, and violence; the differences between savagery and barbarism; the conquest and subjugation of one race by another” (Foucault, 2003, 60). Moreover, Foucault considers that, “although they coexist”, opposite races “have not become mixed because of the differences, dissymmetries, and barriers created by privileges, customs and rights, the distribution of wealth, or the way in which power is exercised” (Foucault, 2003, 77). Whether Foucault’s list is accurate or incomplete matters less than the fact that the positions of the sovereign and the other are made less free-floating, more fixed, through a racialising process of differentiation. Consequently, through the discourse on the race war, the challenge that the other sets to the sovereign is more explicitly identified as an inherent threat to him (and his allegedly pacified society) than it was through the historico-political discourse. From

the historico-political discourse to the discourse on the race war, the dominated other has paradoxically become an *inherent* threat.

The historico-political discourse involved an “enemy” who, from the perspective of the sovereign, was a “political adversary” because she lost the war, and as a result, the possibility to impose her perspective. The discourse on the race war now involves a dominated stranger who is always already a “threat” that can be identified through a racialising process (Foucault, 2003, 256). Between the two, something like racialising xenophobia has acted. Moreover, between the two, the binary structuring of power relations has persisted. If the possibility to turn a dominated subject into an inherent threat also operates in postcolonial xenophobia, the persistence of the binary structure is the reason why the subjectification of the *xenos* – produced beside the sovereign and the other – escapes racialising xenophobia. Hence my reworking of xenophobia from Chapter 3. That said, it is important to understand that the discourse on the race war gives us a theoretical framework to analyse the stranger as we know her today (the position of subjectivity opposite to, and dominated by, the French sovereign, to whom she is a threat) and to historicise her subjectification as emerging in the seventeenth century (alongside the discourse on the race war). I use the same historicising process with the *xenos* who emerged in the second half of the twentieth century.

## **1.2 Michel Foucault’s “Racism” and Racialising Xenophobia**

According to Foucault, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the discourse on the race war divides into two opposite discourses. On the one hand, a revolutionary discourse which turns the race war into a class struggle. On the other hand, what Foucault considers as racism in its most significant form, that is, state racism (Foucault, 2003, 81). Those are inverted forms of the same discourse because, as Foucault argues, the former furthers the other’s *opposition to* the sovereign into a revolutionary perspective, while the latter reconstructs the decentred perspective into an anti-revolutionary strategy articulated *for* the sovereign (Foucault, 2003, 80-81). This dating of racism by Foucault has posed problems for his commentators. If unquestioned, it prevents us from talking about racism regarding what happens before the nineteenth century, which is inaccurate. Yet, Foucault thinks that “we should reserve the expression ‘racism’ or ‘racist discourse’ for something that was basically

no more than a particular and localized episode in the great discourse of race war” (Foucault, 2003, 63).<sup>84</sup> It also minimises practices like slavery and colonisation – which both start much earlier than the nineteenth century – as conditions of possibility for racism. Finally, it sometimes relies on a conception of Europe that would have generated itself from within.

Like Foucault in the *History of Madness* (2006), Ann Laura Stoler identifies the “defining features of the bourgeois selves” as “civility, self-control, self-discipline, and self-determination”, that is, as conforming to the European, rational subject emerging in the “age of reason”. That said, according to her, “the discourses” on those features have been “productive of racial distinctions, of clarified notions of ‘whiteness’ and what it meant to be truly European”. Additionally, “the racial configurations of [the] imperial world” have constituted “the cultivation of the nineteenth-century bourgeois self” – i.e., the European subject (Stoler, 1995, 8). Indeed, as Stoler reminds us, “bourgeois identity has been tied to notions of being ‘European’ and being ‘white’”, and this is “distinct from Foucault’s self-referential conception of bourgeois identity” (Stoler, 1995, 11-12). It means that the European subject is produced on the back of the colonised subject and that those subjects are respectively racialised as white and black. In fact, *racialisation* is a process much older than Foucault’s understanding of *racism*. As Stoler contends, in “short-circuiting empire” and “the impact of colonial culture”, Foucault has “confined his vision to a specific range of racism” – that he refers to as state racism (Stoler, 1995, 7 and 60). Furthermore, Stoler understands that, for Foucault, “racial discourse consolidates not because of Europe’s imperial ventures ... but because of internal conquest and invasions within the borders of Europe itself”. Therefore, Foucault’s “racism is not based on the confrontation of alien races, but on the bifurcation within Europe’s social fabric” (Stoler, 1995, 60). Foucault does emphasise the intra-European mutual invasions that started in the eleventh century, and later events, like the Peace of Westphalia (1648) – much more than on Europe’s colonisation of the “rest of the world” – as defining forces for Europe (Foucault, 2003, 2009b). As Stoler argues after Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), those “axes” of analysis “are *sui generis* to Europe” and produce “a self-contained

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<sup>84</sup> Foucault nevertheless makes clear that he does not think “that racism was invented at this time. It had already been in existence for a very long time. But I think it functioned elsewhere. It is indeed the emergence of this biopower that inscribes it in the mechanisms of the State” (Foucault, 2003, 254).

version of history, only about the West” (Stoler, 1995, 14). Indeed, the first “barbarians”, i.e., the first racialised subjects that Europeans meet, according to Foucault, are themselves Europeans (Stoler, 1995, 78; Foucault, 2003, 149).

This is because, for Foucault, “colonialism is an *intra-European* phenomenon” as Santiago Castro-Gómez reminds us. Therefore, Foucault only considers extra-European colonisation as relevant from “the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, i.e., when the hegemony of a few European nation-states (France, England and, to a lesser extent, Germany) is fully consolidated” (Castro-Gómez, 2007, 164). Quite logically then, for Foucault, “modern racism is not a discourse that emerged with the European colonial experience and then spread to other areas of social life inside and outside Europe”, as Castro-Gómez explains. Instead, in this view, “racism is a discursive formation that is linked to various contexts of social warfare and circulates through different chains of power” or, in other words, “colonial racism is *one* specific form of racism” (Castro-Gómez, 2007, 159). As argued with Stoler, this is not satisfactory because the weight of European slavery and colonisation in the process of racialisation is more important than what Foucault acknowledges.<sup>85</sup> But, rather than trying to expect Foucault to produce an accurate study on race and racism which is doomed to be frustrating and unsatisfactory,<sup>86</sup> there is more to be done with racialising xenophobia. Foucault actually explained that he never intended “to trace the history of racism in the general and traditional sense of the term”. Rather, he looked “at the emergence in the West of a certain analysis ... of the state, its institutions, and its power mechanisms. This analysis was made in binary terms” (Foucault, 2003, 87). As Stoler notices, Foucault articulates “a ‘eulogy’ to the war of races”, i.e., “to that discourse that neither justified nor glorified sovereign power but loudly narrated opposition” to the sovereign (Stoler, 1995, 70). Therefore, he is only interested in racism as state racism, that is, as the sovereign’s response to the other’s opposition.<sup>87</sup> By recentring the discourse on the race war, the state-sovereign

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<sup>85</sup> See Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (2005). Those books were available – and no longer censored – when Foucault (2003) gave his 1975-1976 lectures at the Collège de France and introduced the “race war”.

<sup>86</sup> See David Macey (2009), Kim Su Rasmussen (2011), Chloë Taylor (2011), and Alex Feldman (2018).

<sup>87</sup> This prevents us from analysing the significance of contemporary forms of racism directed *against* the state, which is accused to be complicit with a so-called “Islamic invasion” of the West (cf. Camus and Labour, 2017, 98-119). This is the core of the French-born conspiracy theory of “the great replacement” endorsed by white supremacist terrorists around the world. Furthermore, the importance

arrogates (but is also entrusted with) the responsibility of the existence of society. Slowly, warlike approaches to history are replaced with a “biologico-medical” approach to the population’s survival (Foucault, 2003, 80). This is why Foucault links (state) racism with biopower because it is, according to him, from the nineteenth century that the inherent threat constituted by the racialised enemy – i.e., the stranger – must be killed for society to maintain itself or, more precisely, for *the race* to survive (Foucault, 2003, 256).

Foucault now talks about “the race” and no longer about “two races” because, according to the racist version of the discourse on the race war, the threat is no longer external but internal to society, and *the race*, therefore, risks degeneration from within. For Foucault in the nineteenth century, “the theme of the binary society” is “replaced by that of a society that is, in contrast, biologically monist” (Foucault, 2003, 80). Consequently, “we see the emergence of the idea of an internal war that defends society against threats born of and in its own body” (Foucault, 2003, 216). He adds: “Hence the idea that *strangers* have infiltrated this society” (Foucault, 2003, 81, my emphasis). Opportunely, Stoler contests the fact that this “internal threat” would be a product of an intra-European shift to state racism. She argues that discourses intensifying the fear of internal enemies first aimed, in the empires, “those who were ‘white but not quite’ – mixed-blood children, European-educated colonised elites, and even *déclassé* European colonials themselves”. They were therefore targeted “for ‘internal purification’” (Stoler, 1995, 93).

This is important to helping us to switch from Foucault’s unsatisfactory periodisation of racism to an understanding of how racialising xenophobia works (and for how long it has). This is because, if Foucault’s racist discourse (state racism) is a product of the discourse on the race war, we have already suggested that racialising xenophobia might have been what has turned the historico-political discourse into the discourse on the race war. Therefore, Foucault’s racism and its changes (recentring of decentred perspective and passage from external to internal threats) are not so determining for us. What matters is, internal or external, the stranger is produced and identified through a racialising process and is always an inherent threat. This is the mark of racialising

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given to *state* racism over other forms of racism is counter-intuitive with Foucault’s own theory according to which the state is not the sole operator of power (Foucault, 1978; 2003).

xenophobia. However, against Foucault, this implies that we maintain a binary perspective (even in a so-called monist society) and that we acknowledge the productivity of the colonial discourse in the definition of the stranger. To be sure, Foucault at times recognises the importance – even though not the decisiveness – of the “non-West” to constitute the West. In the first preface to *History of Madness*, he even puts the history of the divide between the West and the East on the same level as the history of the divide between reason and unreason/madness (Foucault, 2006, xxx). Additionally, when he describes the emergence of Europe in the seventeenth century, he sees it, from the beginning, as “having a relationship of utilization, colonization, and domination with the rest of the world” (Foucault, 2009b, 298). He also argues that “racism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide” (Foucault, 2003, 257). He even acknowledges the “boomerang effect” of colonisation in Europe: “A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself” (Foucault, 2003, 102).

Such is the case of the killing of the stranger because of the inherent threat that she poses to the sovereign. Contrary to what Foucault suggests, the acceptable killing of the threat does not appear in the nineteenth century alongside “the biopower system”, above all since he defines killing as not “simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death ..., or ... political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (Foucault, 2003, 256). Killing takes part in the subjectification of the stranger. Below, I show its presence, e.g., in the Black Code promulgated in 1685 and applied only in the colonies where slavery was practiced.<sup>88</sup> Thus, much more than the internalisation of the threat by state racism, the most significant feature that the discourse on the race war produces (through racialising xenophobia, that is) is territoriality. This acts to differentiate the stranger from the French: the former emerges from “abroad” – the slave plantations, the

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<sup>88</sup> Alongside Foucault’s biopower, Achille Mbembe articulates the concept of “necropower” which operates in slave plantations and colonies. It allows him “to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” and “the various ways in which ... weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*” (Mbembe, 2003, 39-40).

colonies, and the neighbouring nascent nation-states that establish frontiers and sovereignty.

### **1.3 Opposing the French in the Seventeenth Century: The Slave and the German as Figures of the Stranger**

If the killing of the stranger takes part in her subjectification, we should be able to apprehend it through specific practices of subjectification. In *History of Madness* (2006), Foucault analyses the subjectification of the mad through the emergence of a discursive practice (Cartesianism) and a non-discursive practice (the “great confinement”).<sup>89</sup> This association of discursive and non-discursive practices (of subjectification) form an “apparatus” which consists in “strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge. ... The *episteme* is a specifically *discursive* apparatus, whereas the apparatus in its general form is both discursive and non-discursive, its elements being much more heterogeneous” (Foucault, 1980c, 196-197). Together, Cartesianism and the great confinement produce the mad and the rational subject through the killing-exclusion of the former, first, from existence (for Descartes, “I think therefore I am” implies that mad people cannot think and therefore cannot be) and, second, from society (the great confinement makes the mad disappear). Both produce the mad as a threat through what Foucault calls her alienation (the mad is a threat to thought, the thinking sovereign subject, and society) which could be compared to racialising xenophobia (Foucault, 2006, 44-77).<sup>90</sup> In this section, I approach two official texts as significant discursive practices of subjectification of the stranger through racialising xenophobia: the Black Code and the Peace of Westphalia. They both reveal the production of the stranger as a (dominated) threat to be “killed”.

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<sup>89</sup> A non-discursive practice entails systematic means and effects which are more institutionalised and material than a discursive practice. Moreover, it does not only operate through discourse.

<sup>90</sup> I explore the seventeenth-century joint emergence of the mad and the stranger as two figures of the other because, today, this analogy still makes sense. In 2019 France, 81,000 mentally ill people have been hospitalised without their consent (ATIH, 2020) while about 70,000 strangers (16,398 in prisons and 53,273 in administrative retention centres) have been locked up (Cimade, 2020; Ministère de la Justice, 2020). All were deprived of their freedom because they allegedly threaten French society. Jean-Claude Polack also gathers “the stranger” and “the mad” as “alleged threats to the physical and moral integrity of the Nation” because, “despite their diversity”, they stand as “*figures of alterity*” which “are invasive and contagious”, because “they carry death”, and because “the forms of struggle that intend to fight them have several analogous characteristics” (Polack, 2010, 173).



*The Black Code (1685)*

While slavery became common in the French Caribbean from 1625, it was officially forbidden until 1642, when King Louis XIII made it legal to control it. Slavery, a non-discursive practice, emerges in territories ruled by France which differentiates two groups: slaves and free people. Yet, at the same time, the principle of “free soil” forbids slavery on French land (cf. Peabody, 2011). This apparent contradiction, therefore, makes slavery the practice that founds a binary differentiation that operates through the domination of one subject, i.e., the slave. The contradiction was “rationalised” when King Louis XIV signed the Black Code in 1685 to regulate slavery in French colonies. It operated until slavery’s definitive abolition in 1848 and it influenced pro-slavery legislations elsewhere (cf. Le Cour Grandmaison, 2005). Despite the fact that those colonies where slavery was practiced were French, the principle of free soil did not apply to all subjects by law. If the French subject was free and the slave was not, then the slave was not French. Slavery and its discursive formalisation (the Black Code) therefore contributed to the emergence of both the stranger (non-French) and the French, especially through the relation to territoriality that accompanied it. The distinction between France and “abroad” (from where the stranger came and lived) was materialised through the possibility to enslave the stranger.

In French history, from the classical age, the fate of the stranger is consequently linked to racialising through slavery. Indeed, the name of the text is the *Black Code* and, in it, slaves are equated with “Negroes” (article 2). Thus, the French is not only free, he is also white while the stranger is enslavable because she is black. Furthermore, this racialisation is never a neutral differentiation, but an explicit domination, since the slaves are declared the “personal property” of the “masters” (article 44). This domination is also naturalised, since “children born from marriages between slaves shall be slaves” (article 12). The possibility to free slaves – entrusted to their “masters” only (article 55) – officially puts the slave on equal foot with any “freeborn person” (article 59) which makes even clearer the binary opposition between slaves (who are implicitly non-French since the principle of free soil does not apply to them *by birth*) and freeborn people (who are implicitly French since the principle of the free soil applies to them *by birth*) (CHNM, 2021).

The Black Code also shows that the beginning of the classical age is a time of tension between an emerging oppositional binary and the remaining universalising grid of intelligibility inherited from the philosophico-juridical discourse.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the text “forbid[s] any religion other than the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic faith from being practiced in public” (article 3) in the colonies as in France, where Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, also in 1685, putting an official end to the so-called tolerance toward Protestantism. Therefore, slaves can and even must be baptised, get married and be buried under the Catholic sacraments (articles 7 and 14) (CHNM, 2021). That said, the non-Christians are no longer “not-yet-Christian”. Instead, they are “rebels” and “seditious” (article 3) and, in the case of the Jews whose deportation out of French colonies is a priority, they are “enemies of Christianity” (article 1). The war is explicit between Christianity and its adversarial others, and Louis XIV – the *French* king – is entrusted with the defence of Christianity. This is significant to understanding how the grid of intelligibility that emerges then is de-universalised and makes room for war between the sovereign and the other. Furthermore, the stranger is not only dominated but also inherently threatening. The slaves are indeed forbidden “from gathering, during the day or at night” (article 16) and are associated with criminal acts throughout the text (CHNM, 2021). For this reason, their killing is acceptable and even sometimes necessary. They are de facto excluded from the condition of French subject and deprived of the rights attached to it. As a result, they can be tortured (articles 16, 36-38, 42) or slaughtered (articles 16, 33-35, 38).

#### *The Peace of Westphalia (1648)*

With the two treaties signed in 1648 between the United Provinces, the Spanish kingdom, the kingdom of France, and the Holy Roman Empire (with the involvement of Sweden), a new grid of intelligibility emerges within Europe. As Foucault argues, before Westphalia, “Empire and Church, the two great forms of universality ... still retained their power of focalization, attraction, and intelligibility”, while, from 1648, “these two great forms of universality ... lost their vocation and meaning” (Foucault, 2009b, 291). In the treaty like with the Black Code, we can see a lasting tension with the former grid of intelligibility. The parties lament that “Christian blood” flowed and

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<sup>91</sup> Vernon V. Palmer explains that slavery practiced under the Roman empire and slavery practiced under European colonisation are essentially different (Palmer, 1996). Therefore, slavery cannot be approached as an element of continuity between the two periods.

call for a “Christian and universal peace”. To reach it, they advocate for “a perpetual oblivion, amnesty, or pardon”, that is, for a covering of the war and of the binary opposition (between the United Provinces and Spain on one side, between France and Germany on the other). They officially want to restore the unity of their “Christian world” (Yale Law School, 2008). Actually, Louis XIV claims – as one of the winning parties to the conflict – this pretension to universality. Indeed, he is called “the most Christian king” without the need to specify further. More importantly, while Foucault thinks that the treaty sanctions “the principle that we exist within a politically open and multiple state space” (Foucault, 2009b, 291), the French king is expected, by article 77, “to preserve ... the Catholick religion ... and to abolish all innovations crept in during the war” (Yale Law School, 2008). This tension between (the king of) France and Christianity also appears in the Black Code, as mentioned above.<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, since half of the Peace of Westphalia specifically deals with the French-German conflict (the Thirty Years’ War),<sup>93</sup> we can look at it as a discursive practice of subjectification of the French (the sovereign) and the German (the stranger). While the Black Code draws the French and his European neighbours closer because they are white, the Peace of Westphalia differentiates the French from the other Europeans, and especially from the German. The ambassadors who signed in Westphalia did so on behalf of the French King, the German Emperor, the Austrian Archduke, and the Spanish King. All can be separated thanks to a crucial notion: their “sovereignty”. This absolute “right and power” is linked to a “country” delineated by “frontiers” and should never be disputed to a party by another signatory of the treaty (Yale Law School, 2008). But of all the sovereignties present, the German is the one that puts France under constant threat. Not only did the “troubles”, “discord”, and “divisions” happening in the Holy Roman Empire provoke a “cruel war” and lead to this treaty, but their persistence is expected, and therefore regulated by the same text. Furthermore, the Empire is expected to challenge France’s sovereignty (through “incorporation” or “usurpation” of territories). For those reasons, France is allowed to

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<sup>92</sup> With the 1789 Revolution, an equivalence between Frenchness and “humaneness” replaces the equivalence between Frenchness and Christianity (cf. Part 2). This shows the sovereign’s universalising pretension used against the other, and the French universalising pretension.

<sup>93</sup> This war shows that acknowledging the productivity of the discourse on the race war as emerging in the seventeenth century does not mean that there was no war before. Rather, Foucault’s “discovery” of this discourse makes us understand that the possibility to make politics intelligible through war has appeared during the classical age.

“keep a garrison” at the border with the Empire whose role is to kill the stranger if – rather, when – she attacks or, at least, to keep her at bay and excluded from the French territory (Yale Law School, 2008). Thus, Westphalia must prevent what is referred to as “another’s dominion” (the German dominion) from spreading over the territories France wrested from the Empire (Yale Law School, 2008). The threat that is produced through the Peace of Westphalia is also the dominated party of the treaty. The Empire loses many territories to the benefit of France – the temporary winner of the war. Nevertheless, the Empire, even dominated, still poses a threat to France, which shows how racialising xenophobia operates in the subjectification of the German as the racialised, dominated, and threatening stranger (Yale Law School, 2008).

To conclude this part, thanks to the frame of analysis provided by the Foucaultian discourse on the race war, I can grasp the workings of racialising xenophobia in the subjectification of the stranger in seventeenth-century France. The historico-political discourse that emerges in the classical age reveals war as the social relation that allows us to make sense of politics and society. It divides the latter into two irreconcilable camps, and it acknowledges the domination of the French sovereign over the other-stranger, two positions of subjectivity that are produced through endless war. Intensified by what I refer to as racialising xenophobia, the historico-political discourse turns into the discourse on the race war. The latter produces the stranger, through racialisation, as an inherent threat despite its dominated position. It also makes the killing-exclusion of this stranger acceptable.

## **2 Racialising Xenophobia and the Stranger through the French Revolution and Colonisation**

In this part, I first study the subjectification of the stranger through the revolutionary discourse during the French Revolution. A typical discourse on the race war, the revolutionary discourse produces the counter-revolutionary and, later, the English as strangers, i.e., inherent threats to the French sovereign, revolution, and humanness. I also study how racialising xenophobia produces the indigenous – in the colonies and the metropole – as another paradigmatic stranger through the colonial discourse (another typical discourse on the race war). In between, I unpack a technique of power

that contributes to the domination of the stranger and that emerges in the nineteenth century alongside killing: deceitful assimilation.

### **2.1 The Stranger during the French Revolution: From the Counter-Revolutionary to the English through Racialising Xenophobia**

Sophie Wahnich's study of the discourse on the stranger during the French Revolution gives us an account of how racialising xenophobia operates and conditions the subjectification of the stranger. In the early revolutionary discourse, the stranger is produced as explicitly counter-revolutionary – she is a “political stranger” who opposes the revolutionary project (Wahnich, 2010, 237-238). As such, she opposes the French who is explicitly revolutionary; there is one revolution and it is French in the French revolutionaries' discourse (Wahnich, 2010, 65). At this early stage, “French” does not refer to what we mean today by nationality because the national is not yet enclosed. If it is delineated, it is only by the political revolutionary project (Wahnich, 2010, 129). At that time, the word “nationality” does not even exist in French, according to Wahnich (2010, 370). Rather, it covers something that is not yet actualised, especially not by citizenship – which is the most structuring political status in the revolutionary discourse (Wahnich, 2010, 73). This is so true that many individuals who would have had the French nationality if it existed (through their birth, that is) were nevertheless produced as strangers because they were “enemies to the revolution”. We can think about “the first” of all French – King Louis XVI – but also about aristocrats, idle people, or corrupted speakers, as Wahnich lists them (2010, 218). Whoever the stranger refers to, she is always counter-revolutionary and she is always produced in binary opposition to the French (Wahnich, 2010, 218). We see here the power of a historico-political discourse that produces two opposite subjects whose meanings are exclusive. Indeed, “ambivalence is unbearable to the revolutionaries”, as Wahnich explains (2010, 293). If the French is revolutionary, civilised, good, and a defender of liberty, the stranger betrays the revolution, is savage, bad, and a defender of tyranny. In fact, the revolutionary discourse “establishes a perfect adequation between the two terms, *stranger* and tyranny” (Wahnich, 2010, 207).

The historico-political revolutionary discourse also produces the stranger through domination. Indeed, she first appears through discursive and non-discursive practices like a “law of general police” which aims to control her politically and repress her alleged treason against the revolution. The domination of the stranger as counter-revolutionary takes part in the foundation of the revolutionary society, and her exclusion is constitutive of it (Wahnich, 2010, 12). Furthermore, as Wahnich argues, the many figures that the stranger takes through the revolutionary discourse show that she has to be understood through the perspective of her subjectification rather than through her individuality (Wahnich, 2010, 189). Here again, there is a tendency on the sovereign’s side to claim that his perspective is universal. This is significant in the exclusion of the stranger from the National Convention which must “represent” the French people in a “transparent” and “homogeneous” way (Wahnich, 2010, 184). Moreover, the revolutionary discourse equates Frenchness not only with revolution, but also with humanness. The French citizen and the human being (in French, “*l’homme*”, or “Man”), merge because “the law of the French people is the law of every Man” (Wahnich, 2010, 65).<sup>94</sup> Through the alleged “monopole” that the French sovereign<sup>95</sup> grants himself over revolution, he “annexes humanness to France, assimilates it to France”. The stranger, because she is counter-revolutionary, “prevents humanness from constituting itself as such” (Wahnich, 2010, 173 and 216). The tension between an “unlimited political society” and the “closure of the national sovereignty” (Wahnich, 2010, 11) results in what Wahnich calls “a practice of universalism eminently ethnocentric and dominating” (Wahnich, 2010, 174). The ethnocentric (racialising) pretension of the sovereign to universality is as important as its dominating character.

Because of racialising xenophobia, the revolutionary discourse is a paradigmatic case of discourse on the race war rather than a plain historico-political discourse. The

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<sup>94</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, humanness (the political revolutionary project) and humankind (which does not make sense because Man only exists in his “political dimension”: free or enslaved) are not synonymous – even though there is only one word in French, which maintains confusion: “*humanité*” (Wahnich, 2010, 272).

<sup>95</sup> The National Convention, which calls itself the sovereign, has to write a new constitution. The latter is in line with the philosophical-juridical discourse and the theory of sovereignty rather than with a typical historico-political discourse. Indeed, it founds the political order by asserting its (legal) necessity, notably through the forgetting of the race war that leads to this new regime. As Wahnich explains, it is about “erasing the trace of dissent, advocating forgetting against memory, preventing any possibility of slack in the claimed ‘unbreakable’ union” (Wahnich, 2010, 63).

stranger is produced and identified as an inherent threat through a racialising process that has several conditions of possibility. First, because of the confiscation of humanness by the French sovereign, the stranger is dehumanised, which means that she is excluded from humanness and humankind (Wahnich, 2010, 18). It reminds us of the slave who, at the same time, is racialised as black and made the “personal property” of her master. Second, the political production of the stranger is soon legally and administratively doubled, which allows the sovereign – through the state apparatus – to clearly identify the stranger through fixed criteria (Wahnich, 2010, 34). One of the criteria that becomes quickly the most determining is the place of birth, which indeed favours an ethnocentric vision of Frenchness and makes it straightforward to identify strangers. As Wahnich puts it, “origin founds identity” (Wahnich, 2010, 44), which has historically contributed to the racialising xenophobia operating in France until now. We see again the productivity of racialising xenophobia not only in terms of the subjectification of the stranger, but also in terms of territoriality. The stranger comes from a delineated place where revolution and humanness are betrayed and from where they are threatened (this is typically England, so the English is a stranger) but she can also be found on territories where the revolution and its law are allegedly “unknown”, like the colonies for instance (Wahnich, 2010, 243 and 344).<sup>96</sup> Third, as Wahnich writes, the political sphere enters a process of “nationalisation” (Wahnich, 2010, 71). This is how the English becomes the first case of correspondence between the political stranger (the counter-revolutionary) and the national stranger. With the rise of nationalism, citizenship and nationality start merging in France. A good instance of the structuring racialising process in the definition of the stranger is Thomas Paine. Despite his participation in the revolution and his election to the Convention, he quickly becomes more English than revolutionary, and is therefore produced as counter-revolutionary and stranger. Racialised as a stranger because of his place of birth, Paine is imprisoned by its pairs, despite his loyalty to their project. As Wahnich argues, he is “not listened to from the place where he speaks, he is perceived from the place where he comes” (Wahnich, 2010, 190). Wahnich talks about “Anglophobia” to describe what is at stake with the specific case of the production of

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<sup>96</sup> Moreover, by regulating the circulation of the strangers when the revolutionary wars start against its European neighbours, the French sovereign “gives a tangible character to the frontier of the national territory. The territorial limits allow [the sovereign] to define the limits of the rights of the stranger” (Wahnich, 2010, 42).

the English as a stranger, that is, as a threat (Wahnich, 2010, 281). I come back to this below. Fourth, quickly, the revolutionaries go to war against their European neighbours who, in the eyes of the French sovereign, want to stop the revolutionary momentum. If Wahnich is right not to make war *the* condition of possibility for the production and identification of the stranger in the revolutionary discourse (since it is possible to see her emergence before the beginning of the war), it nevertheless plays an important role (Wahnich, 2010, 351). Indeed, it makes it urgent for the revolutionaries to go through racialisation to produce and identify the strangers, and thus officially protect the revolution against their conspiracy. The “urgency” created by the war, which is sustained by “the emotions that invade the public”, make fluid and undecidable identities unbearable. The revolutionaries force the attribution of fixed identities (through law) to watch, classify, and eventually exclude (Wahnich, 2010, 99). Emotion, and especially fear, play an important role here.<sup>97</sup>

This fear is, as Wahnich explains, provoked through the revolutionary discourse, that is, through a discourse on the race war that has been intensified by racialising xenophobia. Because of the latter, the stranger is produced as an inherent threat, a threat that is consubstantially associated with racialised identities (Wahnich, 2010, 99). If, officially, the threat comes from the “belligerent alterity” of the stranger, in practice, it is associated with her “national alterity” (Wahnich, 2010, 348). Anglophobia comes from this process. The English is the paradigmatic “dangerous individual” (Wahnich, 2010, 38) because she wants the failure of the Revolution but also because of an “old hatred” that is “not always political” (Wahnich, 2010, 317-318). Wahnich explains: “the ‘uncanny’ of the revolution, i.e., what remains unthought and unthinkable by the revolutionaries, is thus named as the stranger’s conspiracy” (Wahnich, 2010, 157). The stranger threatens France and the sovereign with disorder, tyranny, violence, and treason simply because of her racialised alterity (Wahnich, 2010, 63). The stranger is a suspect a priori, because of her race and regardless of her actions (Wahnich, 2010, 118). Yet, in France, this almighty threat is “fundamentally dominated” (Wahnich, 2010, 37).

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<sup>97</sup> The “Terror” was not only organised against the alleged opponents to the revolution; it was also deeply felt by the revolutionaries.



Despite this, the killing of the stranger is not only acceptable but necessary to defend the revolution – because she constantly threatens it (Wahnich, 2010, 124). Killing is acceptable because, in the revolutionary discourse, the law that normally forbids killing a fellow human being is inherently linked to the revolution – which is the only just way to ground the law. So, if the revolution and humanness are attacked by people who would rather install tyranny, the law that forbids killing does not apply to those people who, moreover, are dehumanised by the French confiscation of humanness (Wahnich, 2010, 257). Wahnich explains that “the political stranger deserves to die” because she “refused liberty and the value of law”. There is even a “categorical imperative” on the killing of the English because she has “declared war to humanness” (Wahnich, 2010, 233 and 266).<sup>98</sup> Thus, her death “must have a political value” (Wahnich, 2010, 237). Not only does it preserve the French against “a crime of lese-humanity”, but the killing-exclusion of the stranger is necessary for the national sovereign to constitute itself as homogenous, atemporal, and natural – no longer as the contingent product of historical power relations (Wahnich, 2010, 64).

What I have analysed in this section falls in line with Foucault’s conceptualisation of the discourse on the race war. Now, rather than Foucault’s emphasis on the shift from the external to the internal threat as what characterised the nexus racism-biopower and the nineteenth century, I argue that if racialising xenophobia has known a significant evolution in this time it is rather with the emergence of the deceitful assimilation of the stranger alongside her – still effective – killing. Understanding the importance of the killing and the deceitful assimilation of the stranger in racialising xenophobia will allow me to better understand, from Chapter 3, the strategy of “disambiguation” at work in postcolonial xenophobia.

## **2.2 Racialising Xenophobia and Deceitful Assimilation**

As an effect of the sovereign’s tendency to universalise his position, Foucault sees the emergence of an “internal dialecticalisation, a self-dialecticalisation of historical discourse” that manifests itself in the “displacement (if not decline) of the role of war

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<sup>98</sup> The unforgivable fault of the English people is to have willingly turned their back on liberty, revolution, and therefore humanness after they experienced them. The English revolution happened in the seventeenth century and, for the French revolutionaries, the English people let a new dynasty of tyrants come back to power (Wahnich, 2010, 351).

within historical discourse” (Foucault, 2003, 216). He explains that “war, which actually constituted historical intelligibility in the eighteenth century, was from the revolution onward ... reduced, restricted, colonized, settled, scattered, civilized if you like, and up to a point pacified” to conjure up the “great threat” according to which “we would be caught up in a war without end” (Foucault, 2003, 215). A similar phenomenon is analysed by Foucault in *History of Madness*. While Cartesianism and the great confinement produced the mad and the rational sovereign subject through the killing-exclusion of the former, Foucault notices that, from the nineteenth century onward, “the space that was exclusively the domain of social division was to become a dialectical domain where the mad and the non-mad came to exchange their secret truths” (Foucault, 2006, 434-435). This is because the confinement of the mad, which used to be organised through “a law that excluded all dialectics and all reconciliation” with reason, is “reorganised” notably through the medical discourse that starts operating an almost absolute power over the subjectification of the mad (Foucault, 2006, 244 and 434). Indeed, supported by confinement (the mad’s killing-exclusion), Foucault sees the constitution of “the movement that brought madness back to reason”. Psychiatry is the medical (thus rational) assimilation of the mad’s alterity by the sovereign (Foucault, 2006, 434).

This assimilation should neither be considered as effective nor as synonymous with the end of the sovereign’s dominion over the other. If Lynne Huffer writes that Foucault finds in Hegel’s dialectic the technique to explain how the mad has been included to reason – against Descartes’ primary exclusion – “as a necessary stage in the development of consciousness”, she aptly adds that this inclusion is “hardly a freeing of the mad” (Huffer, 2010, 214). If Cartesianism instantiates both a condition of possibility of the historico-political discourse and the enactment of the exclusion entailed by such discourse, Hegelianism allows and reveals the evolution that the discourse on the race war takes in the nineteenth century. Hence the importance of Foucault’s critique of dialectics as a prime example of the recentring of the decentred discourse on the race war (Foucault, 2003, 61). He thinks that “dialectic codifies ... war... into a ...so-called logic of contradiction” which serves a totalising and irreversible project of rationalisation and “ensures the historical constitution of a universal subject, a reconciled truth, and a right in which all particularities have their ordained place” (Foucault, 2003, 58). This recentring deceitfully assimilates the

stranger and occurs twice during nineteenth-century France. During the Revolution, the case of the “foreign patriot”, also called the “adopted stranger”, is telling. Later, after the 1848 abolition of slavery, the case of the former slaves accessing citizenship in the “old colonies” is also significant.

Wahnich introduces us to two foreign patriots at the time of the French Revolution: Anacharsis Cloots and Thomas Paine. The former was born in Prussia and the latter in England. Early in the process, they join the revolutionaries, commit to the cause, fight with their words, and often prove much more radical than other revolutionaries that were born in France. Yet, Cloots ends beheaded and Paine has to leave France after being imprisoned (Wahnich, 2010, 185-200). Their journeys through the revolutionary discourse, first produced as French (to the point where they sit at the Convention and vote the first constitution France ever had), and then produced as killable strangers, shows the workings of racialising xenophobia not only through killing, but also through deceitful assimilation. Indeed, they are, shortly, “integrated” to the sovereign because they claim to be similar to him. Indeed, the “patriot community” – which can include people who were not born in France – is actualised through “friendship and *imitation*”. Wahnich explains: “it is about recognising and adopting the model of French liberty, in some extent pledging allegiance to the revolutionary nation by stating this *mimetic* desire” (Wahnich, 2010, 93-94, my emphases). Doing so, the foreign patriot *becomes* French – which means that she was not in the first place – through “national adoption” (Wahnich, 2010, 129). It is therefore the sovereign who turns the stranger into an “adopted stranger”. Indeed, “adoption” comes from the Latin “*ad-optare*” (to choose to) and implies that the choice is made by the subject who adopts, not by the adopted. Wahnich explains that “the stranger adopted by the Convention” is “this friend of liberty who becomes an ally and a brother, eventually naturalised, and who concretely realises the promised universality” (Wahnich, 2010, 177). A universality that, as mentioned above, is actually ethnocentric and dominating. Thus, if the discourse can trick the stranger into making her believe that she has been assimilated to the sovereign, this is just deceitful. Despite their commitment to the revolution, Cloots and Paine are brought back to their strangeness. Obviously, this means that they are no longer French, but Prussian and English. Moreover, they are produced as inherent and particularly vicious threats to the revolution because they would plot against it within the sacred space of the Convention. They must therefore

be killed to defend the latter's political project (Wahnich, 2010, 198-199). Once again, the stranger is produced as an inherent threat not because of her actions, but because of her racialised origin. Once again, this alleged threat does not have to be real (Cloots and Paine want, more than anything, the success of the revolution) to be felt and to lead to the killing – post-assimilation – of the stranger. After the falling of Cloots and Paine, the revolutionaries make sure that no strangers are members of the Convention and make the importance of similarity explicit in their relations to the stranger: from then on, “hospitality acknowledges what is socially and culturally identical in the other”, the stranger is asked to obey the law rather than to concur with it, and “the members of the sovereign must have lived, at least for twenty years, the same historical acculturation” (Wahnich, 2010, 37-39 and 351).

The end of slavery in the “old colonies”<sup>99</sup> also shows a typical instance of deceitful assimilation of the stranger. Those deceitfully assimilated strangers are the former slaves who, through the 1848 abolition of slavery enacted by the nascent Second French Republic, officially access French citizenship. In the colonies, the slave – racialised as black – was produced as a stranger because she was not free and therefore not French. This was possible because the principle of free soil did not apply in those territories. Racialising xenophobia, through slavery, produced a stranger who was opposed to the French (free and white) and who was a threat to the sovereign. It also produced the colonies as an excluded territory, ruled under a different principle (slavery). This territory was the “abroad” from where the stranger came, according to racialising xenophobia. Silyane Larcher furthers this reasoning by reminding us that, before the abolition of slavery, even if free people (French and “free people of colour”) lived in those colonies, “the existence of slavery on the colonies’ soil forbid ... their representation in parliament” because it contradicts the revolutionary ideal of democracy (Larcher, 2015, 143-144). With the abolition of slavery in 1848 and the official access of the “new free people of colour” to citizenship, we attend to what Foucault calls the “self-dialecticalisation of historical discourse”, mentioned above. The fact that the paradigmatic dialectical relation is, according to Hegel, between a master and a slave, is to be noted (Hegel, 2013). Indeed, the sublation that operates in dialectics can be observed in this historical instance as the deceitful assimilation of the

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<sup>99</sup> The Antilles, Guyana, and Réunion (Larcher, 2015, 137).

stranger, itself supported by her past exclusion (slavery). It also reorganises it into another form of domination, i.e., the status of the indigenous from the colonies (as explained below).

Even if the former slaves can vote alongside the rest of the French people, even if they are officially considered French citizens, Larcher explains how appearances can deceive. First, the so-called “universal suffrage” is not introduced as a right in the colonies, but rather as a “concession” from the Hexagon,<sup>100</sup> that is, “a generous gift from the executive power” (Larcher, 2015, 150). This reminds us of the short-lived revolutionary adoption granted by the sovereign to the adopted stranger. This apparent citizenship (and therefore equality) “offered” to the former slaves can be seized back by the true members of the sovereign. Second, even if “the ‘new free people’ ... are represented in the parliament in Paris by sovereignly elected representatives, the position of the latter is nonetheless paradoxical: they vote laws that are not applied to the constituencies from whom they get their political legitimacy” (Larcher, 2015, 137). Indeed, the colonies – even after the abolition of slavery – are ruled under a specific juridical status. Through racialising xenophobia and deceitful assimilation, “the production of a difference between equals becomes a political issue, a question of domination” (Larcher, 2015, 149). Furthermore, the citizens of the old colonies can no longer send their elected representatives to Paris after the establishment of the Second Empire in 1852.

What we see here is the persistence of a strong binary conception of society. Through racialising xenophobia, which intensified practices of subjectification and territoriality, the “constitutional distinction between two legislative spheres ... is ... decisive for a colonial differentialism to operate under civic equality”. With this episode, Larcher shows well that racialising xenophobia has made it “impossible ... to have the same citizenship for two societies” (Larcher, 2015, 153-154). When Wahnich calls the stranger during the revolution “the impossible citizen” (Wahnich, 2010), Larcher calls the former slave “the other citizen” (Larcher, 2014). Impossible or othered, those non-citizens are strangers, and this results from racialisation (Larcher, 2015, 157). Thus, the former enslaved condition of the black “French”, which has been

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<sup>100</sup> The European part of France.

imposed on her by the white French, is used against the former to deny her the ability to be an informed, rational, sovereign – i.e., white – citizen. The racialising vicious circle is powerful: the slave was enslaved because she was racialised as black; as a slave, she has not been able to live under “the same historical acculturation” as the French; therefore, she cannot be an informed citizen; therefore, she must stay a stranger; therefore, her strangeness becomes her permanent racialised identity; therefore, she is racialised as black. Larcher writes: “the colonial racial problem ... is seen by the metropolitan rulers as a supplementary reason for the political externalisation of the former slaves, eventually as what ethnicises them, which doubles their assignation to alterity” (Larcher, 2015, 151). Moreover, as a paradigmatic stranger, the former slave is not only excluded from citizenship (while she was officially but deceitfully assimilated to it), she is also produced as a threat to the sovereign. Larcher has found traces of this fear, intensified by racialising xenophobia, which produces the former slaves as “true dangers” in the event of a colonial conflict through which “violence would be exacerbated” (Larcher, 2015, 152-154). Even “offering” the so-called universal suffrage in the colonies makes the metropolitan rulers fear “a new social order and destroyed governmental institutions”, that is, “a situation full of perils” (Larcher, 2015, 149). Yet, those former slaves who seem to represent the biggest threat to the French sovereign are the most dominated people in the post-slavery society.

This instance of deceitful assimilation of the former slave into an official – but not effective – French citizen shows the workings of racialising xenophobia and its role in the subjectification of the stranger intertwined with a colonial territoriality. Indeed, while the former slaves from the old colonies thought they were integrating the sovereign, thus leaving the position of the stranger, they were actually preparing the subjectification of the indigenous, this paradigmatic stranger emerging in the colonies in the nineteenth century. Larcher reminds us that the evolution of the status of the free people of colour in the old colonies at that time has to be thought together with what is happening in the territories later colonised by France. For instance, the “conquest” of Algeria occurs in 1830 (Larcher, 2015, 140). Incidentally, in 1852, the same decree-law states that neither Algeria nor the old colonies can send elected representatives to parliament (Larcher, 2015, 152). Through racialising xenophobia, the deceitful

assimilation of one stranger – the former slave – has paved the way for the killing-exclusion of another one – the indigenous.

### **2.3 The Indigenous and Racialising Xenophobia: The Stranger in and from the French Colonies**

Among the approaches which can feed an analysis of the indigenous produced as a stranger through racialising xenophobia in France,<sup>101</sup> I focus on Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison's work for its explicit Foucaultian interest in the productivity of discourses, and attention to the role of the colonial medical and juridical discourses in the subjectification of the indigenous (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010). I share his interest in those specific legitimised and legitimising practices that I also study through a Foucaultian archaeological methodology to analyse the xenophobic medical and juridical discourses on the intersex and the foreigner in Chapter 5. Like the revolutionary discourse, the colonial discourse can be approached as a form of discourse on the race war which has been intensified by racialising xenophobia. Le Cour Grandmaison actually draws from Foucault to analyse "state xenophobia and racism" (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 25) and states that the colonial discourse produces two races that confront each other: the French (citizen) and the indigenous, sometimes officially called the "French subject" or "French protégé" (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 15). Since the colonial order results from "conquests" and "massacres", the framework of war helps us to understand the positions its subjects occupy: one dominates the other. The institutionalisation of colonial law – which enacts the differentiation and domination of the indigenous from and by the French – is even justified by those wars (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 19). In fact, the notion of war completely frames the "imperial experience" of France, since it starts with colonial wars, is made intelligible by the discourse on the race war, and ends with the wars of independence in the second half of the twentieth century.

The French empire dramatically expanded with the Third Republic, which was founded in 1870. Before it collapsed, it was the second largest in the world (13 million

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<sup>101</sup> See, e.g., Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Françoise Vergès (2006); Frantz Fanon (2008); Elsa Dorlin (2009); Emmanuelle Saada (2011); Norman Ajari (2019); Hamid Dabashi (2019); Seloua Luste Boulbina (2019).

km<sup>2</sup>) and thus *subjugated* 70 million indigenous people (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 11). Indeed, the colonial juridical discourse, or colonial law – formalised with the adoption of the Indigenous Code in 1875<sup>102</sup> – makes clear that indigenous are “subjugated”, as opposed to the French people, “who fully enjoy their civic and political rights” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 15). In fact, in the colonies, the indigenous is governed by a “permanent state of exception” while the French lives under the normal law: “on the same territory, there coexist not only two different laws but also two regimes designed for distinct populations” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 9-14). The same situation results from the colonial medical discourse, which calls for (and implements) a separation of the French (and other Europeans) from the indigenous, from the hospitals where they are cured, to the cities where they live – mainly “to preserve the colonisers’ health” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 26). Urbanism and public health are organised, in the colonies, “on racial grounds” in the name of “hygienist politics” that produce the indigenous in opposition to the French (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 27-28). In 1932, Georges Mauco, a specialist of immigration, whose “science” relies on the colonial medical discourse, publishes *Strangers in France: Their Role in the Economic Activity*. There, Le Cour Grandmaison shows that Mauco conflates strangers and colonised people who come to the Hexagon to work – thus revealing that the latter are the only strangers that matter for him (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 23-24). Therefore, not only does racialising xenophobia contribute to the subjectification of the indigenous as a stranger (a non-French), but it also produces a territoriality (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 14). Slavery constituted the old colonies’ territories as what was “abroad” to France, as those places from where the stranger (the slave) came because opposite regimes operated here and there. The colonial apparatus also produces the colonies as foreign since, there, “exception is the rule” as Le Cour Grandmaison writes (2010, 12).

This non-implementation of the regular French law in the colonies constitutes both the indigenous as a stranger and the colony as an “abroad”. It results from the relations of domination that oppose the stranger to the French, which are centralised by the French sovereign. It also aims to preserve and naturalise this domination. As Le Cour Grandmaison explains, the extraordinary characterisation of colonial law seems

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<sup>102</sup> About twenty-five years after the Black Code was made obsolete by the second abolition of slavery.



“necessary to ensure the continuity of French domination” that is, “the perfect domination of the colonisers over the autochthones as required by public security, which is indispensable to the imperial stability and prosperity” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 7-15). On the medical side, the chief doctor of the colonial troops in Algeria can argue that “‘the separation of the European and indigenous ill people’ is an ‘unquestionable measure’ which is ‘made necessary for a thousand details of hospitalisation as much as for the coloniser’s prestige’”. For Le Cour Grandmaison, “beside the medical motivation, this last precision shows that political and symbolical considerations take part in the colonial domination and ground the singular system” which excludes the indigenous from the French sovereign (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 27).

Now, because the colonial discourse is not any historico-political discourse but has been intensified by racialising xenophobia into a discourse on the race war, the exclusion of the indigenous-stranger goes through a racialising process. Through colonial law, “the generic and modern concept of person is ruined” because the indigenous is dehumanised. She is considered as “inferior” to the French, even “as politically underaged, unable to enjoy the Europeans’ civic prerogatives” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 17 and 59). Therefore, if the indigenous is not French by law, she must be a stranger. Through the medical discourse, racialisation is most striking in the approach to interbreeding. While “inter-racial graft” is said to “function” between Europeans, it would simply not give the same “satisfying” results between white and indigenous subjects. Le Cour Grandmaison analyses an influential work written by Doctor Martial on the issue which argues that a “racial antagonism” prevents “inter-racial graft” between French and indigenous. Not only does the graft not take, but it endangers “public health” and “French people’s integrity” since it leads to “racial bastardising” because of “mental degeneration” or diseases that were supposed to have been eradicated – all of which would risk the “future of the [French] race” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 23-24). Through racialising xenophobia, the indigenous becomes an inherently threatening stranger – notably through her pathologising and criminalising. Besides being a pathological hazard, she is also a factor of insecurity, moral disorder (prostitution), and crime (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 25). The indigenous also contests “white hegemony” and risks forming a “rising tide” against

the colonial order of things that must be preserved through colonial law (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 19 and 30).

Interestingly, the racialising power of racialising xenophobia increased over the centuries. Indeed, the balance between the territoriality of the “abroad” produced through racialising xenophobia and the subjectification of the stranger changes throughout the nineteenth century. Masters rarely took “their” slaves with them when they had to go to the Hexagon because it happened that slaves managed to enforce the principle of free soil when they landed there (Peabody, 2002). The territoriality produced through racialising xenophobia entailed that, in the Hexagon, no one could be enslaved, not even a slave. Touching French soil equated being emancipated, leaving one’s stranger status, and becoming French. Yet, when the indigenous left the colonies to work in the Hexagon, the threat that she represented was so stuck to her through the racialising process that the territoriality of France was no longer enough to make her equal to the French. Rather than an external threat turning to an internal one as Foucault would have it, the stranger-indigenous is both external and internal. Her production as an inherent threat rather shows the preservation of a binary conception of society, from the colonies to the Hexagon. Hence, as Le Cour Grandmaison shows, the restriction of circulation imposed on the indigenous while the French empire is supposed to be one and unifying. Specific rules apply to those indigenous who want to go to the Hexagon or to move between colonies. They need to show a clean police record which reinforces the assumption that they are, by default, a threat (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 20-21). The control of their movement becomes a political priority to avoid the “moral and sanitary demeaning” of the French population and the organisation of independentist and communist subversions (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 21-28). Hence, also, the reproduction of the colonial racial segregation in the Hexagon. Le Cour Grandmaison analyses the establishment and organisation of the “French-Muslim Hospital” in 1925 in Bobigny – a distant suburban town poorly connected to Paris. Not only is the hospital far (which involves geographical exclusion), but it quickly becomes the only hospital that accepts indigenous people for treatment in the Parisian region (thus doubling the exclusion). Moreover, the hospital is controlled by the Home Office rather than by the public health administration, and serves as a place, for the police, to gather information about indigenous people (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 25-26).

The true novelty of nineteenth-century racialising xenophobia, i.e., the promise of assimilation, proves again deceitful. Even if the indigenous changes territory to integrate French society, to be part of the sovereign, she is considered as medically “recalcitrant to assimilation” because of her race (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 25). The very term “assimilation” is even officially dropped in 1900 for “association” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 9). Indeed, Le Cour Grandmaison shows that although, in colonial law, people speculated over the possibility for “advanced” indigenous to receive more rights than their “common” fellows, making them equal to French citizens was never really considered. The telos of the so-called civilising mission supposed to make the indigenous similar to the French is never taken seriously (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 60). In the colonies and the Hexagon, the indigenous are thus produced as inherent threats through racialising xenophobia, simultaneously to the fact that they are the most dominated subjects here and there. Le Cour Grandmaison reminds us of the misery and precarity in which they live, the economic and social discriminations they face, the humiliations they endure (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 29). Nevertheless, their killing-exclusion is made acceptable.

Colonial wars are acceptable because of the “civilising mission” of France, whose exceptionalism justifies its use of violence to impose reason and liberty on the entire world. Le Cour Grandmaison uses Jules Ferry as a symbol because the latter was responsible for both the development of public instruction in France and the colonial expansion abroad (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 9). Later, “counter-insurgency” wars are justified to maintain colonial domination and the imperial position of France as a world power. Those massacres are made acceptable, notably through two legitimised and legitimising discourses whose power starts increasing in the nineteenth century: the medical and the juridical discourses. While the colonial medical discourses articulated by Doctor Martial and Georges Mauco allow them to rise to the top of the academic and civil service communities, the recommendations that they formulate and the “truths” that they “discover” are implemented by the French governments, no matter the “quality” of the regime – republican, autocratic, collaborationist (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 22-25). Furthermore, colonial law acquires the status of academic discipline: it is taught in French universities which deliver prestigious degrees. If the discipline eventually disappears, it is not because of the overthrow of the collaborationist Vichy regime and a so-called “triumph of liberty” over

authoritarianism, but because the empire itself collapses twenty years after, as Le Cour Grandmaison shows (2010, 28-32). Racialising xenophobia has outlived the colonial discourse and is still operating today. Hence, for instance, Le Cour Grandmaison's forging of the term "colonised-immigrants" to analyse – as one lasting phenomenon – the racialised subjects produced during and after colonisation (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2008, 24). Today, the subjectifications of the postcolonial immigrant and the Muslim as threatening strangers is indeed directly linked to the way racialising xenophobia has been operating since the nineteenth century (at the crossroad of colonial and nationalist discourses), as I show in the last part of this chapter.

### **3 Racialising Xenophobia and the Stranger in Postcolonial France**

This entire research analyses the *xenos* through the subjectification practices which could only have emerged in postcolonial times, because of the typically postcolonial problematisation of ambiguity by a typically postcolonial xenophobia. That said, the emergence of a threatening subject produced immanently to the sovereign and the other, but beside their binary differentiation, does not mean that the oppositional binary has ceased to operate in postcolonial times. On the contrary, postcolonial France still witnesses powerful racialising xenophobia, which intensifies the production of the French and the stranger through a discourse on the race war. In other words, we can still approach postcolonial France through a binary conception of society, despite the emergence of ambiguity and postcolonial xenophobia (cf. Chapter 3). Furthermore, studying racialising xenophobia in postcolonial France allows us to reinforce that not *any* non-national is considered a stranger (contrary to a simplistic approach to xenophobia).

The first section analyses the racialising and xenophobic production of the postcolonial immigrant as a paradigmatic stranger, thanks to Étienne Balibar's notion of "neo-racism" (Balibar, 1991a). The second section analyses the racialising and xenophobic subjectification of the Muslim as another stranger in postcolonial France through Rogers Brubaker's concept of "civilisationism" (Brubaker, 2017). Interested in the links between xenophobia and nationalism, both authors nevertheless demonstrate that

nationalism alone is not enough to understand who is produced as a threatening stranger in today's France. Hence, my contention that we still need racialising xenophobia in this context.

### **3.1 Étienne Balibar's "Neo-Racism": Thinking Racialising Xenophobia and the Postcolonial Immigrant after the Independences**

According to Foucault, Nazism represented "the paroxysmal development of the new power mechanisms that had been established since the eighteenth century", that is, of the intertwining of biopower and racism (Foucault, 2003, 259). After WWII and the Holocaust, biological racism becomes associated with a German abomination, something foreign to the European enlightened mind. France even introduces itself as a colour-blind society which does not believe in the very notion of race (see Romeyn, 2014). Of course, this is pure rewriting of history, as biological racism has a French genealogy (e.g., Arthur de Gobineau) and as race does operate in France despite desperate attempts to "cure the evil by not naming it": ethnic statistics are forbidden and the word "race" will disappear from the French constitution at the next review.<sup>103</sup> The first article of the constitution will be updated from "France ... guarantees equality before the law regardless of origin, *race*, or religion" to "France... guarantees equality before the law regardless of *sex*, origin, or religion" (Le Monde and AFP, 2018).<sup>104</sup>

If Balibar knows this French genealogy of biological racism, he is interested in the workings of what he calls "neo-racism", i.e., a "differentialist racism" whose historical precedents can also be found in French history, notably with antisemitism and colonial racism (Balibar, 1991a, 24; 1991b, 38). As Balibar notices, through neo-racism, "*culture can also function like a nature*, and ... as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin" (Balibar, 1991a, 22). The possibility to produce subjects as inherent threats, regardless of their actions and only because of their racialised origin, still exists. More precisely:

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<sup>103</sup> See Étienne Balibar (1992) and Cécile Laborde (2011).

<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, the word "race" will not disappear from the "code of honour" of the French Foreign Legion. Article 2 still says: "Every legionnaire is your brother in arms, regardless of his nationality, his race, his religion" (Légion étrangère, 2010). Made for and through war, the *foreign* legion acknowledges racial differentiation as a criterion as relevant as nationality or religion in producing a stranger.

Current racism, which in France centres upon the immigration complex, fits into a framework of “racism without race” which is ... a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but “only” the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions. (Balibar, 1991a, 21)

As a legacy from the colonial discourse, neo-racism produces the postcolonial immigrant as a new inherently threatening stranger. If the first discourse relied on nineteenth-century biological and anthropological conceptions of race, the second has shifted toward a “theory of ‘race relations’” (Balibar, 1991a, 22). According to the latter, if culture functions as nature, it means that different cultures have different ontologies which entail unsurmountable differences that inevitably lead to conflictual – warlike – relations. Neo-racism has denaturalised racial belongings but, according to Balibar, it has simultaneously naturalised “racist conducts” (Balibar, 1991a, 22). This is a crude instance of “difference” (opposed to identity/similarity) being integrated into a system of domination, as mentioned in the Introduction to the thesis because, as Balibar explains, this comes from the fact neo-racists have read and assimilated the structuralist theories that singled out difference and differentiation (and thus, in a neo-racist rationale, separation) as constitutive of every community (Balibar, 1991a, 22).

Balibar needs a notion like neo-racism to debunk approaches influenced by “crowd psychology”,<sup>105</sup> for which there is a pre-existing subject called “the stranger” who is always already a threat that triggers legitimate “irrational movements, aggression and collective violence, and, particularly, ... xenophobia”; the latter being “useful” in inducing “groups to defend their ‘territories’ and ‘cultural identities’ and to maintain the ‘proper distance’ between them” (Balibar, 1991a, 23; 1991b, 47).<sup>106</sup> Against this traditional conception of subjectivity, Balibar’s neo-racism helps him to analyse the (discursive) practices that produce the immigrant as a stranger (Balibar, 1991b, 47-48). This attention to subjectification is what Balibar draws from Foucault’s poststructuralism, which has allowed the “passage from constitutive to constituted

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<sup>105</sup> This is Gordon W. Allport’s “contact hypothesis” (Allport, 2015) or Donald T. Campbell’s “realistic conflict theory” (Campbell, 1965).

<sup>106</sup> This has been articulated in France, in the 1970s-1980s, as “ethno-differentialism” (see Benoist, 1982) by the far-right Research and Study Group for European Civilisation (GRECE), also known as the New Right (Keucheyan, 2017).

subjectivity” (Balibar, 2003, 10). Through this conception, there is also “no subject without subjection” (Balibar, 2003, 17). When it comes to the postcolonial immigrant produced as an inherently threatening stranger, a significant part of her subjection arguably results from racialising xenophobia. Additionally, because of the historical dynamics at work in France since the nineteenth century, this racialising xenophobia structures Balibar’s neo-racism at the crossroads of racism and nationalism. If, to avoid racist conduct, it is necessary to avoid contact between different cultures, national frontiers appear to be the most convenient and “natural” tools for a neo-racist discourse (Balibar, 1991a, 23; 1991b, 39).

Approaching Balibar’s neo-racism through the perspective of racialising xenophobia allows us to synthesise the so-called “normal ideology” (nationalism) and the so-called “excessive ideology” (racism) (Balibar, 1991b, 46). It also allows us to analyse together a supposed “good nationalism” (the French “liberal” version) and a “bad nationalism” (the German “imperialist” version, associated to a biological conception of race), to reveal that they are not so different from one another (Balibar, 1991b, 47). As early as during the French Revolution, Balibar notices the emergence of an imperialist nationalism (Balibar, 1991b, 65).<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Balibar’s neo-racism allows us to notice that racism and imperialism are present in all forms of contemporary nationalism (Balibar, 1991b, 38 and 48). It does not mean that this is “inevitable”, but it does mean that in French history the production of the stranger and the French has involved something like racialising xenophobia. Indeed, racialising xenophobia has operated through the exclusion of the stranger who puts pressure on the French sovereign – whose Frenchness is also whiteness. As Balibar argues: “racism sees itself as an ‘integral’ nationalism, which only has meaning (and chances of success) if it is based on the integrity of the nation, integrity both towards the outside and on the inside” (Balibar, 1991b, 59). Thus, traditional xenophobia does not impact Europeans in postcolonial France because, despite what we usually think when we approach (French) nationalism, they are also racialised as white.

For Balibar, neo-racism is what makes possible the division of humankind into “two humanities which seem incommensurable” (Balibar, 1991b,44). One humanity – a mix

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Foucault’s genealogy of the racist and the revolutionary discourses that would both come from the discourse on the race war (Foucault, 2003, 81).

of race and nation, that is, a “culture” – would “be universalistic and progressive, the other supposed irremediably particularistic and primitive” (Balibar, 1991a, 25; 1991b, 54). Neo-racism makes possible classification, hierarchisation, and even a distinction between humanity and animality (Balibar, 1991a, 24; 1991b, 56-57). Just like any discourse on the race war, neo-racism also combines acceptable killing, exclusion (“segregation”), and deceitful assimilation (Balibar, 1991a, 18 and 25). The subject who is produced as a threatening stranger through neo-racism is the postcolonial immigrant. She is a threat because she endangers the very existence of the French culture (which would disappear through interbreeding), spreads a so-called “anti-French racism”, and takes the job of the “true French” (Balibar, 1991a, 20-22; 1991b, 37). First, Balibar shows that, despite their subordinate position in French society, the postcolonial immigrants are considered too visible compared to the “true nationals”, whose alleged invisibilisation would prefigure their disappearance in the long run (Balibar, 1991b, 60). The production of the postcolonial immigrant as a “false national”, that is, as a stranger, explains how such labels as “first-generation”, “second-generation”, “third-generation”, and now “fourth-generation immigrants” are used in France. Despite their French birth, education, nationality, and citizenship, they are not considered “truly French”.<sup>108</sup> Those labels are, incidentally, not used to talk about French-born descendants of European immigrants. Second, the argument according to which xenophobia would come from the threat postcolonial immigrants pose, as strangers, to French workers’ employment is discarded by Sylvain Laurens’ research on the trajectory of the senior-level public administration in charge of immigration (Laurens, 2009). The usual story about the so-called sudden change in French immigration policy in July 1974<sup>109</sup> goes as follows: after the October 1973 oil shock, an economic crisis burst, unemployment rose, and the job market became saturated. Consequently, a “national preference” was formulated by the government, supported by an allegedly xenophobic working class. This would have justified a turning point in terms of how immigrant workers were henceforth perceived, (un)welcomed, and eventually “sent back” to where they came from (Laurens, 2009, 207).

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<sup>108</sup> See Paul Silverstein (2018).

<sup>109</sup> When the French government of newly elected President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing “closed the borders” (Laurens, 2008).



Laurens rather shows that the agents of the new administration in charge of immigration came from the colonial administration. The long decolonisation process that started in the mid-1950s and lasted more than 10 years saw a “conversion” of colonial civil servants who came back to France and brought with them their conception of – what I call – the stranger (Laurens, 2009, 88).<sup>110</sup> They knew her as an indigenous, they were meeting her again as an immigrant and, in both cases, they produced her as an inherent threat to the French sovereign to exclude or deceitfully assimilate her. This is how the 1974 closing of the borders should be reread, regardless of the economic crisis or unemployment question: immigration law was a way to “protect” the French from the threatening immigrants the same way colonial law protected him from the threatening indigenous. The change in immigration policy thus does not come from a global event, like the oil shock, but from an incrementally established set of practices of subjectification of the postcolonial immigrant as a stranger. This set of practices has been intensified by racialising xenophobia and articulated by the members of an administration that had acquired an “expertise” in the “issue” that it had contributed to creating (Laurens, 2009, 213-216). Laurens can thus title his work *A Quiet Politicisation* (of immigration, that is), which shows the articulation of, at least, a historico-political discourse that produced the immigrant as a political adversary. It should come as no surprise, then, that one of the criteria chosen by the colonial administration to exclude the Algerian indigenous from the French sovereign – i.e., their Muslim faith – is still used in the subjectification of the stranger in today’s France. As shown below, the Muslim is indeed another stranger produced through racialising xenophobia in postcolonial France.

### **3.2 Rogers Brubaker’s “Civilisationism”: Thinking Racialising Xenophobia and the Muslim in Today’s France**

Rogers Brubaker analyses a shift in Northern and Western Europe, from nationalism to “civilisationism” (Brubaker, 2017, 1193) – the latter being both “a new articulation” of the former and “an alternative to it” (Brubaker, 2017, 1211). Both the nation and the civilisation entail a relationship to a community, sometimes to a culture, and also

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<sup>110</sup> This “conversion” is not the first one: during WWII, the senior members of the police, who were until then in charge of strangers, became in charge of the “Jewish questions” under the collaborationist Vichy regime (Joly, 2011; Bornstein, 2019).

to a territoriality where that culture and community have emerged and developed (Brubaker, 2017, 1200). Brubaker argues that civilisational discourses produce enemies clearly identified as threats to liberalism – allegedly characterising European civilisation – that are: Islam and Muslims. Following Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilisations” (Brubaker, 2017, 1196), civilisationism results from and organises a typical Foucaultian “race war”. The threats it produces are both internal and external, “a matter of identity as well as security” (Brubaker, 2017, 1207). Indeed, some Muslim people already live in Northern and Western Europe, some others try to settle there, and, especially since 9/11, a unified perception of Islam is accused of fomenting to crush Europe. Through civilisationism, the Muslim is racialised as much as she is supposed to belong to “an alien and threatening civilisation” (Brubaker, 2017, 1204). She is therefore a paradigmatic figure of the stranger as produced through racialising xenophobia and binary opposition. Islam is considered as “backwards, regressive, and illiberal” whereas the European civilisation would be “modern, progressive, and liberal” (Brubaker, 2017, 1197). Yet, Brubaker makes it clear: civilisationism is not a plain “anti-Muslimism”. To be sure, it feeds on Islamophobia, but it also constitutes Islam as “a civilisational threat” to Europe (Brubaker, 2017, 1193).

Allegedly, the latter has always cherished core values like intolerance against antisemitism, promotion of gender equality, defence of LGBTQI rights, and protection of the freedom of expression. If we focus on France, the working-class and racialised neighbourhoods would be the place of a so-called “new antisemitism”, emerging from the Israel-Palestine conflict and characterising Muslim young people whose allegiance to Islam would make them more loyal to Palestinians – because of their shared faith – than to their fellow Jewish countrymen.<sup>111</sup> This new antisemitism would be the result of an obscurely formed “Islam-leftism”, a word constituted through the same process as the antisemitic “Jewish Bolshevism” (Hayat, 2020). Indeed, as Brubaker notices, if “the Jews are redefined as fellow Europeans and as exemplary victims of the threat of Islam”, French history and the contemporary period have rather seen them “represented [as] a threat to the ethnocultural homogeneity of the nation” (Brubaker, 2017, 1202). During the nineteenth-century and the first half of the twentieth century, the Jew was, in fact, a paradigmatic stranger: she was even one of the representatives

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<sup>111</sup> See *The New Antisemitism in France* (Ferry et al., 2018).

of a so-called “anti-France” (Crane, 2008). More recently, negationist discourses regarding the reality of the Holocaust have come from the French far right (Robert Faurisson, Jean-Marie Le Pen), Jewish cemeteries have been profaned by white supremacists, and conspiracy theorists have accused a fantasied Jewish elite to be the initiator of “the great replacement” of the Christian-European civilisation with a Muslim-African population (Bornstein, 2019). However, the dramatic jihadist attacks against a Jewish school in Toulouse (2012) and a Jewish food store in Vincennes (2015) and the murders of Ilan Halimi (2006) and Sarah Halimi (2017), because they were Jewish, have been used to turn Islam as a whole into the most serious threat against Jews living in France. Yet, the four murderers involved in those cases were not only Muslim, but also French.

On gender equality, while “Muslim women are represented as victims” of a civilisational patriarchy, “Western women are represented as threatened by conversion as well as by sexual assault from Muslim men” (Brubaker, 2017, 1203). In Europe, the reflection of the 2016 New Year’s Eve sexual assaults in Cologne, which were allegedly perpetrated by “migrants” identified as Muslim, is tremendous – even if the police and media investigations have been unable to rigorously tell what happened that night (Méadel and Noûs, 2020). In France, a movement like “*Ni Putes Ni Soumises*” (“Neither Whores Nor Submissive”), created in 2003 in the suburbs, has contributed to turning Muslim young men into the biggest threats to women (Guénif-Souilamas, 2004). The many “veil controversies” since the 1980s have also contributed to depicting Islam as more conservative than the allegedly sexually liberated French culture.<sup>112</sup> If some French men consider themselves as “ladies’ men”, Muslim men are seen as threatening because of their supposed hostility to a French tradition of women liberation and so-called Don Juanism.<sup>113</sup> Yet, the number of femicides (149 in 2019, i.e., a woman killed every two to three days by her (former) partner), the impact of the movements #MeToo and the specifically French #BalanceTonPorc (literarily “Expose Your Pig”), and the 18,5% average gender pay gap show that sexism is widely spread in French society and that patriarchy is not a characteristically Muslim phenomenon.

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<sup>112</sup> See the work of lesbian universalist feminist Caroline Fourest (2016).

<sup>113</sup> See the collective op-ed in the reference newspaper *Le Monde*, entitled “We defend the freedom to disturb because it is indispensable to the freedom to seduce” (Millet et al., 2018), and published in response to the #MeToo movement.

With the Dutch Pim Fortuyn moment, homonationalism breaks in Europe and promotes the civilisationist discourses according to which Northern and Western Europe would be a heaven for LGBTQI people (Brubaker, 2017, 1194). In France, the xenophobic party *Rassemblement national* counts openly gay men among its leaders and claims that only the Western civilisation can protect LGBTQI people from Islam. Despite the clearly homophobic tradition of the far right, this discourse is effective: during the 2019 European elections, 28% of the French lesbians, gays, and bis voted for the four running far-right parties (IFOP and Têtu, 2019). Yet, in France, the mobilisations against gay marriage, homoparentality, surrogacy (the *Manif pour tous*, mainly formed by regular churchgoers, gathered more than a million demonstrators in 2013), the pathologising of homosexuality and trans identities by French psychiatry and the justice system, and the lack of ambitious policies against HIV/AIDS, are signs that Islam is not the main obstacle for the LGBTQI people's lives there (Fassin, 2003; 2012). Furthermore, the civilisationist discourse implies that Muslims could not themselves be LGBTQI. It does not conceive the possibility of being both Muslim and LGBTQI, since it produces those racialised identities as mutually exclusive: they are *either* one *or* the other, not both. I come back to this apparent antagonism in Chapter 3, where I approach it through the lens of postcolonial xenophobia and the production of the homosexual Arab man as a *xenos*.

Finally, Northern and Western Europe, and France at the forefront, would have sacralised free speech. Civilisationist discourses claim to protect it, notably against “the multiculturalist left [which] has supported measures criminalising ‘hate speech’” (Brubaker, 2017, 1204). After the 2015 attacks in Paris and its region, Voltaire's *Treatise on Tolerance* was waved as a flag and the excerpt that was the most often cited was: “The supposed right of intolerance is absurd and barbaric” (Clarini, 2015). It is worth noting that, to talk about tolerance (paradigmatically French), most of the people went through the opposition with intolerance (paradigmatically Muslim, thus foreign) – and “barbarised” it. It is also symptomatic that French people spontaneously picked Voltaire, who is known for hating Jews. Now, the French media and political scene have made sure that the critique of Islam is considered as the very enactment of

freedom of expression,<sup>114</sup> while the critique of the French colonial past and contemporary racism have been considered as “anti-France rant” by the same media and political rulers (Larcher, 2019). Furthermore, anti-terrorist measures (like the state of emergency) have been widely used against the freedom of expression, movement, and demonstration of political opponents (Alimi, 2021).

Through Brubaker’s analysis of civilisationism, we thus see the persistence of racialising xenophobia over France, which targets Islam as foreign to allegedly protect the European civilisation. For Brubaker, civilisationism is characterised by, first, a twofold binary conception of society, or a “polarised opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in both vertical and horizontal dimensions” (Brubaker, 2017, 1192). The vertical dimension opposes “the people” and “the elite”, and the horizontal dimension opposes insiders and outsiders. Brubaker describes the insiders as “‘people like us’, those who share our way of life” and the outsiders as people “who are said to threaten our way of life”. He adds that the term outsiders “includes ‘internal outsiders’: those living in our midst who, even when they are citizens of the state, are not seen as belonging to the nation” (Brubaker, 2017, 1192). Brubaker’s notion of civilisationism shows that, external or internal, the Muslim is always a stranger who threatens the French sovereign. Second, Brubaker considers that civilisationism is characterised by “an identitarian ‘Christianism’” where “Christianity is embraced not as a religion but as a civilisational identity understood in antithetical opposition to Islam” (Brubaker, 2017, 1193-1194). Thus, religion becomes “a matter of belonging rather than believing” (Brubaker, 2017, 1199). But, through racialising xenophobia, “the definition of the constitutive other in civilisational terms invites a characterisation in the same register”. If the stranger is Muslim, the French must be Christian (Brubaker, 2017, 1200). This “culturalization of religion” (Brubaker, 2017, 1200) is a result of the third characteristic of civilisationism: a secularist trope. Secularism is especially strong in France, where the allegedly untranslatable *laïcité* is a constant object of debate (Brubaker, 2017, 1201). Brubaker argues that secularism is actually “embraced as a way of minimising the visibility of Islam” which has apparently become too visible – and therefore “threatening” – in/to the public sphere, “despite the fact that Islam has little institutional power, political influence, or cultural authority” (Brubaker, 2017,

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<sup>114</sup> See far-right polemist Eric Zemmour, who receives support from all parts of the political spectrum and who, despite his convictions for incitation to racial hatred, is always present on national television.

1194 and 1201). Alongside far-right and right-wing parties, the “left-wing” *Printemps Républicain* (“Republican Springtime”), has become central in opposing France, the Republic, and *laïcité* to Islam. Secularism has thus contributed to culturalising religion: paradoxically, it makes Christianity part of the French secularised culture and turns Muslims into strangers whose “distinctive signs” must be banned: the veil and other women’s modest clothing, ritual slaughter, infant circumcision, Friday prayers (Brubaker, 2017, 1202). Brubaker explains that culturalising religion “allows Christianity to be privileged” while Muslim practices are “*restricted*” – which could not be possible if both were apprehended as religions since it would obstruct religious freedom and the state’s neutrality toward religion (Brubaker, 2017, 1200). This form of cultural differentialism depicts Islam as incompatible with secularism, and therefore, with France. By producing Muslims as strangers, through racialising xenophobia, it triggers “moral panics” which present Muslims as internal and external threats to the integrity of the European civilisation defended by French people (Brubaker, 2017, 1209).<sup>115</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapters shows that, when we focus on a country like France, the traditional meaning of xenophobia actually refers to a racialising force which intensifies practices of subjectification that always operate in a binary way toward the stranger and the French. This subjectification started in the seventeenth century, alongside the emergence of what Foucault names “the discourse on the race war”. Intensified by racialising xenophobia, this discourse produces the stranger as an inherent threat to the French, despite the fact that the former is dominated by the latter.

From the seventeenth century, the stranger has been embodied by various subjects. Among the many there were, I studied the slave, the German, the counter-revolutionary, the English, the indigenous, and, more recently, the postcolonial immigrant and the Muslim. All have been produced by practices intensified by racialising xenophobia and through the Foucaultian binary race war.

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<sup>115</sup> See Chantal Delsol’s naturalisation of a continuity of meanings between Europe, Christendom, and Enlightenment and her description of Islam as foreign and threatening (in Delveaux, 2018).

Finally, racialising xenophobia and the race war resort to techniques of power to produce subjects as either dominant or dominated. What Foucault calls the “killing” of the stranger (the many forms of exclusion up to actual murder) has been historically the most determining technique. Yet, the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a deceitful form of assimilation of the stranger, who eventually ends up “killed”. Those are the ways the oppositional binary, understood as a political foundation, seems to deal with difference: either through its plain annihilation or through turning it into similarity. In both cases, the aim is to make sure that difference, because of the threat it poses, no longer is.

In the next chapter, I build upon this reasoning to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos* and the emergence and workings of postcolonial xenophobia. This leads me to understand how a threat can be produced beside the oppositional binary.

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## Chapter 3

# Toward an Emotional Archaeology of Postcolonial Xenophobia: The Production of an Ambiguous Threat and the Intensification of Fear

### Introduction

This chapter shows that, if the dividing practices of subjectification of the *xenos* are immanent to those of the sovereign and the other, they are intensified by what I call postcolonial xenophobia. Through the latter, the *xenos* is produced as ambiguous and threatening. I argue that this has only become possible in our postcolonial times, which started with the decolonisation period (1954-1962 in France).

As I explore through a “historico-political” perspective in this chapter (and through a historico-epistemological perspective in Chapter 4), two elements characterise the postcolonial period in which France is situated. First, the affirmation of difference over identity – which challenges the former’s historical production as a threat – has unexpectedly turned the oppositional binary into an even more powerful political foundation than it was before. Indeed, difference is no longer *only* what threatens the sovereign’s dominion, but it is valued – or at least acknowledged – as central to politics.<sup>116</sup> If the affirmation of difference is supported by several theoretical frameworks (cf. Chapter 1), in this chapter, I focus on the consequences of the poststructuralist affirmation of difference for the subjectification of postcolonial subjects – an affirmation of difference which was “eventualised” with the Algerian victory over France in 1962.<sup>117</sup> Second, ambiguity emerges as a specific threat to the

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<sup>116</sup> Which does not mean that difference and the other are no longer dominated, because produced as threatening to similarity and the sovereign through the oppositional binary (cf. Chapter 2).

<sup>117</sup> Affirming difference over identity in a postcolonial context has obviously reached beyond poststructuralism. It could be therefore more accurate to follow Fredric Jameson who distinguishes poststructuralist theory (limited to philosophy) and the postmodern, which “occupies the mediatory position within the various specialised dimensions of postcontemporary life” (Jameson, 2005, xiii-xiv). Above all, the postmodern discourse implies that the affirmation of difference has been integrated to the relations of domination entailed by late capitalism, while poststructuralist theory maintains a critical perspective (Jameson, 2005, xii-xxi and 392-393). That said, sticking to “poststructuralist” maintains consistency, avoids confusion, and articulates a critical stance on the – unforeseeable – consequences of poststructuralism in terms of postcolonial xenophobia.



oppositional binary because, appearing beside similarity and difference (and their opposition), it challenges their – until then – exclusive relation. Postcolonial xenophobia makes ambiguity intelligible where there used to be only similarity and, above all, difference (dominated and affirmed). The subjectification of the *xenos* as ambiguous and threatening thus shows that differentiation is not only binary. The production of ambiguity as a threat is precisely what postcolonial xenophobia is about. By acknowledging postcolonial xenophobia as distinct from racialising xenophobia, we can make the specificity of the *xenos*' subjectification intelligible: they can be approached beside the oppositional binary, as a subject who is neither similar nor different.

For all those reasons, this research holds on to the term “xenophobia” to analyse the subjectification of the *xenos* because, as an analytical notion, it allows me to associate a Foucaultian archaeology (regularity of practices) and historical epistemology (problematization of ambiguity) with a political theory of emotions (mainly fear) to understand the historicised domination of subjects produced as threats. Despite the centrality of this notion of threat shared with the “traditional” scholarship on xenophobia, this research does not, therefore, contribute to this literature. Constituted, on the one hand, through (social) psychology and, on the other, through social sciences, the scholarship on xenophobia is obviously diverse, but it assumes common elements that are not shared by this research.

First, it understands xenophobia as a possible or “normal” – even “natural”<sup>118</sup> – response to immigration;<sup>119</sup> the immigrant being the sole victim of xenophobia, which arises from either too much or too little “contact” with immigrants.<sup>120</sup> This is linked to the period (1980s-2000s) when this literature really develops, which sees the sedimentation of multiculturalism in Western societies and the intensification of globalisation.<sup>121</sup> Second, it focuses on the xenophobe's subjectivity and his cognitive

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<sup>118</sup> See McEvoy (200), Dawkins (2006), and De Dreu et al. (2011). Cf. Chapter 2 for a critique, drawing from Balibar (1991a), of this justification of xenophobia through “nature”.

<sup>119</sup> See Tajfel (1981), Hirschfeld (1998), Rydgren (2004) Sanchez-Mazas (2004), Turner (2007), and Scheffer (2011). Cf. Chapter 2 for a historicised approach to the stranger (not only the immigrant) produced through racialising xenophobia.

<sup>120</sup> See Campbell (1965) and Sherif (1967) for the “realistic conflict theory”, Faulkner et al. (2004), Binder et al. (2009), and Allport (2015) for the “contact hypothesis”. Cf. Chapter 3 for a critique, drawing from Ahmed (2014), of xenophobia as the phobia of the *xenos*.

<sup>121</sup> See Moosavi (2013).

framework: he is either anxious about the loss of his (national) identity,<sup>122</sup> protecting his (“ingroup”) interests,<sup>123</sup> an ignorant victim of globalisation...<sup>124</sup> or all those things at the same time. Third, it considers education as the main tool to fight against xenophobia and the stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminations it entails.<sup>125</sup> Fourth, it links xenophobia with ethnocentrism and distinguishes between the French “universalist-assimilationist” and the German “differentialist-culturalist” national traditions.<sup>126</sup> Fifth, it analyses xenophobia in relation to democracy, sovereignty, and citizenship.<sup>127</sup> Rather, to understand the workings of postcolonial xenophobia, I posit my analysis in two parts. First, I analyse the subjectification of a paradigmatic *xenos*, i.e., the homosexual Arab man in postcolonial France. Contrary to what could have been the case before the decolonisation of the French empire and the subsequent postcolonial immigration to the former metropole, it is possible to analyse the homosexual Arab man beside his position of “other”, beside his difference to the French, i.e., beside his sole Arabness. It is now necessary to take an analytical shift from difference to ambiguity because, in postcolonial France, the homosexual Arab man is discursively produced as a threat, not so much for being different, but for being ambiguous – i.e., neither similar (homosexual/white) nor different (Arab).

Second, I explore the necessary links between xenophobic practices of subjectification and the emotional register of fear. Talking about threat requires an analysis of, following Sara Ahmed, “an economy of fear” to understand how the sign “threat” gets to “stick” on the *xenos*’ body as if it was its only meaning. It is indeed through the emotional intensification entailed by postcolonial xenophobia that the *xenos* can be reified and felt as an inherent cause of fear. Furthermore, turning the *xenos* into an ambiguous threat follows a strategy of disambiguation. This shows the intentionality at work through the discourses and the emotions intensified by xenophobia, which can thereby be analysed through archaeology.

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<sup>122</sup> See Joffe (1999), Tajfel and Turner (2004) for the “social identity theory”, and Pettigrew et al. (2008) for the “relative deprivation theory”. See Chapter 3 for a non-subjective approach to emotions.

<sup>123</sup> See Blumer (1958) for the “group threat theory”, Campbell (1965), Tajfel (1981), and Esses, Jackson and Armstrong (1998).

<sup>124</sup> See Wrench and Solomos (1993) and Wicker (2001).

<sup>125</sup> See Macrae, Stangor and Hewstone (1996), Berezin (2006), APA (2010). Cf. Chapter 4 for an approach to xenophobia, drawing from agnotology, as an intensity linked to knowledge production and not as a mark of ignorance.

<sup>126</sup> See Anderson (1983), Wimmer (1997), and Pehrson, Brown and Zagefka (2009).

<sup>127</sup> See, for instance, Honig (2003) and Brown (2017).

# 1 A Figure of the *Xenos*: The Homosexual Arab Man in Postcolonial France

To understand what postcolonial xenophobia does, this chapter analyses the subject it contributes to producing, i.e., the *xenos*. It focuses on a paradigmatic *xenos*, the homosexual Arab man in France, approached through the angle of the external dividing practices of subjectification.

## 1.1 The “Homosexual Arab” or, the Problem of the Name

Naming this subject “the homosexual Arab” is not fully satisfying. Referring to Joseph A. Massad’s *Desiring Arabs* as I do below should almost forbid such labelling. Indeed, if we follow Massad, the “hetero-homo binary” is alien to “the ontological structures” operating in Arab countries, and trying to internationalise it only imposes a typically Western “heterosexualising” of Arab and/or Muslim societies (Massad, 2007, 55 and 214). Yet, contrary to Massad’s unsettling work, my analysis studies the French postcolonial context. This does not mean that the ontological structures mainly operating in Arab and/or Muslim countries did not travel to France with the people who live by them or that they were not passed along the generations of French Arabs. As Massad argues, especially since the second half of the twentieth century, “the interconnections of the world can no longer allow for separation: there is no absolute East and no absolute West; and there is no complete separation between those territories” (Massad, 2007, 57). Nevertheless, if Massad is right in arguing that the “hetero-homo binary” is typically Western, then it is not incorrect to talk about homosexual Arabs in France.<sup>128</sup>

I also hold on to this name because, if it takes into account Massad’s critique of the “Gay International”, it does not prevent Arab men in France from the possibility of identifying as homosexual (in opposition to heterosexual) simply because they are Arab. This because, on the one hand, the term homosexual does not situate the subject as part of “the” gay community or a political activist for “the” gay cause. It leaves room for a minimalist approach that only considers occasional same-sex sexual

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<sup>128</sup> With the risk of reproducing what Spivak criticises as a postcolonial research which “concentrates on the hexagon and is gendered” – as the focus on the homosexual Arab *man in postcolonial France* would demonstrate (Spivak, 2013, 239).

“contacts”, as Massad puts it (2007, 215). On the other hand, as explained below, it allows us to acknowledge that Arabness is not incompatible with “Western homosexuality”, and that denying it would prevent us from understanding the subjectification of homosexual Arab men in postcolonial France.

Additionally, I here only study the case of the homosexual Arab *man* in postcolonial France. As developed below, this is because the period following the Algerian War of Independence, and more generally the decolonisation of the French empire, witnessed a shift of focus between the Orientalist obsession about the colonised women in the colonies toward a postcolonial obsession about the male descendants of colonised people in France (cf. Shepard, 2018, 3).<sup>129</sup> Nacira Guénif-Souilamas notices this tendency with the subjectification of “the Arab boy”, especially since the emergence of the civilisational discourse, introduced in Chapter 2, where the meanings of Arab and Muslim merge (Guénif-Souilamas, 2004; 2006).

Finally, the locution “homosexual Arab” should be understood in the French postcolonial context as reductively grouping, as Todd Shepard and Guénif-Souilamas explain, Kabyles, Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Muslims all together (Guénif-Souilamas, 2006, 25-30; Shepard, 2018, 275). This is linked to the French colonial history when, e.g., Algerians could only claim French citizenship if they first abjured Islam. The confusion has been worsened after 9/11 and the attacks in France since 2012. This “cultural” confusion, supported by a simultaneous racialisation of North-Africans, Muslims, and Middle-Easterners, is what allows me to navigate the literature which either focuses on the homosexual Arab or the “queer Muslim” as accounting for the same (postcolonial) xenophobic subjectification.

## **1.2 “Othering” the Homosexual Arab Man in Postcolonial France: A Reduction of his Historical Subjectification**

Fatima El-Tayeb actually focuses on European queer Muslims. She introduces the common approach according to which, in Western Europe, queer Muslims experience a “marginalisation within both their ethnic communities and the ... gay scene” (El-

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<sup>129</sup> This does not mean that the subjectification of Arab and/or Muslim women in France has not gone through specific transformations throughout the postcolonial period.

Tayeb, 2012, 86). If this perspective is sensible, it presents two problems to understanding the subjectification of the homosexual Arab in postcolonial France as a *xenos*. First, it only takes into consideration the racism at work within the queer community (which would perceive itself as white in Western Europe) and the homophobia at work in the Muslim community (which would perceive itself as straight). This means, that the general homophobia operating within Western European societies is left aside when it comes to understanding the queer Muslims' position. Second, this approach analyses the homosexual Arab as dominated more because he is an Arab-Muslim (a stranger) than because he is homosexual. El-Tayeb aptly insists on the "homophile Islamophobia" that operates in Western European societies (El-Tayeb, 2012, 80), which is indeed one of the effects of Brubaker's "civilisationism" (cf. Chapter 2). Through racialising xenophobia, Muslims are turned into a threat for Europe and its LGBTQI communities. As a result, European Muslims become "the source of gays and lesbians' victimization" which ends up validating LGBTQI people who are recognised and allegedly protected by "the majority". In turn, the latter claims that it no longer oppresses gays and lesbians (El-Tayeb, 2012, 85-86). If it allows us to analyse the Islamophobia at work in Europe, the approach to the homosexual Arab at the intersection of the queer community's racism and the Muslim community's homophobia, covers the larger homophobia which plays a role in the subjectification of white *and* Arab homosexuals in Europe. Consequently, El-Tayeb argues that "(white, middle-class, male) gay consumer-citizens represent the successful integration of minorities into the mainstream" which, in return, places "Muslims as unacceptably and gays as acceptably deviant" (El-Tayeb, 2012, 81-84).

This is precisely what allows El-Tayeb to approach the queer Muslim as a "European other" (El-Tayeb, 2011), that is, as a stranger rather than as a *xenos*. This is, I argue, because she considers the subjectification of queer Muslims in our time only through racialising xenophobia. To be sure, she does so because the implications of racialising xenophobia for those subjects are still tangible. Indeed, "despite" their queerness, which is considered as Western, queer Muslims are identified as more Muslim than queer – and they are "de-Europeanised" accordingly (El-Tayeb, 2012, 84). According to El-Tayeb, it is because, for queer Muslims only, "culture" (a euphemism for race) takes over "identity". This is a legacy of the Orientalist discourse, according to which "Muslims would lack individuality and agency, their collective actions [being]

determined by an archaic religion/culture dictating their every move” (El-Tayeb, 2012, 88), while Europeanness would favour self-cultivation. Consequently, because of their culture which allegedly maintains them in “the age of shame” queer Muslims appear at odd with “21st-century models of identity”. For instance, they are considered unable to embrace “the normative coming out process” (El-Tayeb, 2012, 86). For El-Tayeb, European queer Muslims’ difference, their otherness (manifested through their Muslimness), is more decisive for their subjectification than what would make them similar to white queers – i.e., their queerness (El-Tayeb, 2012, 90).

However attentive this approach, it is still too much linked to racialising xenophobia. If we want to understand the subjectification of the homosexual Arab as a *xenos* – i.e., as an ambiguous and threatening subject produced through postcolonial xenophobia – this is not enough. Classifying the homosexual Arab mainly as an Arab means, first, skipping his simultaneous production and persecution as ambiguous (because threatening) and starting at the end of the process – i.e., when he is mostly “disambiguated” into a different subject, into the other.<sup>130</sup> Second, it is eventually contradictory because, while the Arab man (perceived as heterosexist by default) is produced as a threat to LGBTQI people through racialising xenophobia, the homosexual Arab is not. To the least, he is a victim of the allegedly inherently homophobic Arab “inferior culture” (El-Tayeb, 2011, 86). El-Tayeb is obviously right to argue that homonormativity mostly plays against queer Muslims within the queer community and that Islamophobia can benefit white and homonormative queers (El-Tayeb, 2012, 85). However, because it forces us to approach the homosexual Arab through the “unambiguous identity” of an Arab, her analysis cannot account for the current subjectification of the homosexual Arab as ambiguous – i.e., neither homosexual nor Arab. In other words, she resorts to othering to understand the subjectification of queer Muslims as a way to solve an apparent lack of intelligibility of the “in-between state” they occupy (El-Tayeb, 2012, 90).

I rather argue that this ambiguous position becomes intelligible if we resort to postcolonial xenophobia. Rather than linking “minoritarian queers back to the larger group of racialized communities” (El-Tayeb, 2012, 90), postcolonial xenophobia

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<sup>130</sup> I explain this notion of disambiguation in the next part.

allows us to show that they are produced as a distinct type of threat. Because El-Tayeb focuses on “old binaries and borders” and on “binary discursive formations”, she still sees difference as the only possible threat to similarity and, therefore, she cannot read the homosexual Arab’s ambiguity as it is: not a more refined type of difference, but an in-between position made intelligible and threatening by postcolonial xenophobia. Now, if the lasting productivity of racialising xenophobia can explain the subjectification of the homosexual Arab through othering, it is not enough. The poststructuralist affirmation of difference also allows us to explain that, in a Western European country like France, the homosexual Arab is mainly approached through his difference rather than his similarity – i.e., through his Arabness rather than his “homosexuality” (considered as typically white). In this perspective, Massad’s argument in *Desiring Arabs* is useful.

Massad is right to insist that the Western oppositional binary, which emerged in the classical age, can still be observed in the dividing practices of subjectification between heterosexual and homosexual (Massad, 2007, 198-200).<sup>131</sup> He is also insightful when he claims that internationalising this “Western sexual ontology” to “the rest of the world”, where those clear-cut identities did not necessarily operate *politically* before colonisation, institutionalises heterosexuality as a norm where it was not necessarily a structural one or, at least, not a norm that constituted itself in binary opposition to deviant homosexuality (Massad, 2007, 52 and 214). Massad also argues that the Arab world’s difference in terms of sexual practices is more complex than the Western binary opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality. For him, it was the Western “incitement to discourse” about sexuality, a phrase first coined by Michel Foucault (1978, 17), that over-simplified the identification of sexual “contacts” in Arab societies (Massad, 2007, 52). Massad’s critique is relevant to understand the damaging heterosexualising (and binary organising) of the sexual norm in Arab countries that paradoxically comes from the so-called defence of “homosexual” people there. However, it is less relevant when it denies the homophobic repression organised by Arab or Muslim state apparatuses, which he only sees as a “nationalist” response to a – undeniable – neocolonial discourse (Massad, 2007, 214-215). Massad obviously wants to emancipate the homosexual Arab (in the loose sense introduced above) living

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<sup>131</sup> See Michel Foucault (1978) and Lynne Huffer (2010).

in Arab countries from the Western oppositional binary by affirming his difference, which exists outside of the binary division heterosexual/homosexual. He also challenges the homosexual Arab's objectification by the "Gay International" as a subject who cannot speak for and defend himself because his "truth" has been confiscated by a Western discourse that pretends to save him (Massad, 2007, 57).

Coupled with racialising xenophobia, this argument has however another effect in postcolonial France: it eliminates the role of homophobia in the subjectification of the homosexual Arab to focus only on the problematisation of his Arabness which cannot be associated with homosexuality since the latter would only be a Western reality. Doing this validates another binary structure (homosexuality is white/Arabness cannot involve homosexuality) which limits our understanding of the subjectification of the homosexual Arab in France as a subject produced as neither homosexual nor Arab – as explained below. This conception of practices of subjectification that can only go through an oppositional binary between similarity and difference emerged in the classical age and notably through colonisation. Despite decolonisation, this perspective is upheld by Massad who argues that, if the hetero-homo binary is Western, there are "other sets of binaries, including sexual ones" that organise "existing subjectivities" in Arab countries (Massad, 2007, 56). In the West, he also explains that binary divisions are "transhistorical" and "constituted at the level of metaphysical ontology", and that those who escape the oppositional binary are systematically excluded (Massad, 2007, 58).

I rather argue that the homosexual Arab's subjectification in postcolonial France shows that power relations already operate beside the oppositional binary, which is nothing more (but nothing less) than a powerful contingent political foundation that emerged in the classical age. Massad himself argues that because of the importance of "the economic, anticolonial, or 'emergency' realm", the Arab men's desires have simply been "eliminated" by most analyses (Massad, 2007, 203). I want to further this concern to tackle what he calls the homosexual Arab's "perceived instability" or "polymorphousness" (Massad, 2007, 190). Those characteristics are almost voluntarily left unintelligible (or unidentifiable, as a pure difference), through the perspective he articulates to leave them out of the oppressive Western oppositional binary. In contrast, through postcolonial xenophobia, the homosexual Arab's



ambiguity is already problematised, made intelligible, and produced as a threat. Moreover, if we stick to Massad's method of affirming the homosexual Arab's difference, the latter is deprived of the possibility to ever "be" homosexual, which is contradictory to the claim to reintroduce his desire in the analysis. Like Todd Shepard and Mehammed Amadeus Mack whose works I discuss below, Massad has noticed a rupture in the production of the (homosexual) Arab in France since the decolonisation period: "While the premodern West attacked the world of Islam's alleged sexual licentiousness, the modern West attacks its alleged *repression* of sexual freedoms" (Massad, 2007, 52). However, I think that his affirmation of the Arab's difference prevents him from understanding the implication of this rupture for the subjectification of the homosexual Arab.

### **1.3 From the Arab Man's Ambivalence to the Homosexual Arab's Ambiguity: The Emergence of Postcolonial Xenophobia**

Todd Shepard indeed notices a shift in the discourses regarding the Arab man and the homosexual Arab in France after Algeria's victory and independence in 1962. Before decolonisation, Orientalism focused on Arab women as a symbol of the colonised's inferior difference. The alleged femininity of colonised people – including men – and their so-called deviant sexual practices served as a justification for their domination. Thus, Shepard writes that "formal decolonization ... cast into doubt long-standing, explicitly sexualized explanations for French domination, which included claims that Arab culture was profoundly decadent" (Shepard, 2012, 85).

With the Algerian victory over France, the relation of forces changes. The focus moves to the Arab man and asserts his masculinity, which is either restored, idealised, or excessive, depending on the political strategy articulated through the discourse. The far right and the former supporters of French Algeria produce the Algerian man as dangerously virile. Because "Arabs' embodied animalistic sexual excess", they posed a threat to France that they were "invading" or "penetrating" through immigration. Once there, they could commit countless "sexual crimes", victimising "innocent French people" and especially "white women" (Shepard, 2012, 92-93). While they are still nostalgic of "French Algeria", which implies that they thought of Algeria in terms of similarity with France, they are completely petrified about the idea of a so-called

“Algerian France”, which shows that they also acknowledge a difference between the two entities, a difference that is a source of fear should the relation of domination reverse (Shepard, 2018, 44).

At the other side of the political spectrum, the French leftists see the Arab man, and especially “the ‘revolutionary’ Algerian Man, as the embodiment of (universal and true) manliness”, i.e., as “the embodiment of healthy, virile, heterosexual masculinity” (Shepard, 2012, 88-91). While Arab women, especially those wearing the hijab, are relegated to an absolute difference (because of their “visible” link to Islam), Arab men are approached as similar to the French universal ideal because they fought for freedom and, as mentioned in Chapter 2, French people see freedom as French (Shepard, 2012, 91). That said, at the same time, the Arab’s difference is acknowledged to counter the colonialist discourse and support the Algerian independence which entails that France and Algeria are “distinct entities: two states and two wholly different peoples” (Shepard, 2012, 85). Shepard explains that far-left activists recognised “Algerian differences” which did not prevent them from standing in solidarity with them, in Algeria or France, “against imperialism, racism, and other forms of oppression” (Shepard, 2012, 108).

Interestingly, a “new” position of subjectivity also articulates a discourse that enhances the Arab men’s masculinity: the one occupied by French (white) radical gays – whose discourse could only have emerged after decolonisation in France.<sup>132</sup> According to Shepard, in the 1960s-1970s, the radical gays saw Arab virility as either “restored”, because it was temporarily lost and/or repressed during colonisation, or positively “perverse” (Shepard, 2012, 112). As for the two previous discourses, radical gays also apprehended Arab’s masculinity as ambivalent, simultaneously similar and different, to their own situation. Similar, Arab men are the radical gays’ models to challenge the French state. Indeed, while France is forced to leave its former colonies, the state introduces homophobic laws at home. While, in 1942, the collaborationist regime of Vichy had aggravated the so-called “indecent assault” in the case of same-sex intercourse (the age of consent for a heterosexual relation was 15 years old and 21 years old for homosexuals), this homophobic legislation is not abrogated with the

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<sup>132</sup> And sees itself as knowledgeable, like those studied in the following chapters.

return of democracy after WWII, despite the fact that 42,000 European homosexuals have been either sent to forced labour or deported in concentration camps because of their homosexuality. Moreover, in 1960, the notorious “Mirguet amendment” turns homosexuality into a “social plague” (alongside prostitution, proxenetism, alcoholism), which aggravates the crime of “indecent exposure” (sex in public) when it involves same-sex partners.<sup>133</sup> Those homophobic measures were valid until 1980-1982 and more than 10,000 people (mostly men) were convicted because of them (see Idier, 2013; Gauthier and Schlagdenhauffen, 2019). The radical gays thus consider that the oppressive power of the French state they confront is the same as Algerian men during colonisation and since their emigration to France. They even use the same word to describe what they call “anti-Arab and anti-fag racism” (Shepard, 2012, 105). Since Algerian men have won their war against France, the radical gays see them as an inspiration for their own struggle (Shepard, 2018, 272). Shepard also writes that the 1960 social plague law “reveals how the Algerian revolution crystallized French concerns about sexuality and sexual behaviours ... that appeared alien or dangerous” (Shepard, 2018, 138). It shows how much French rulers “compensated” the loss of colonies (and the threatening revelation of their lack of virile strength in front of Arab fighters) with a tightening of sexual norms at home *and* “precautions” against the introduction of deviant sexual behaviours by Arab male immigrants. Thus, white gays see themselves as similar, in terms of perversion, to Arab men (Shepard, 2012, 110). According to them, all are complicit in challenging the heterosexism and racism operating in France. However, Arab men are not positioned on the homo-hetero binary, both as a legacy of Orientalism (according to which they would all be bisexual) and as a result of the anticolonial affirmation of the Arab (sexual) difference. Radical gays and Arab men are all the more complicit in that they engage in sexual relationships in which the former receive while the latter penetrate during sodomy, thus reversing the colonial “homosexual” intercourse. Yet, this stereotyping of the positions introduces a structural difference between them, one that also focuses on the Arab man’s Arabness rather than the tendency among some of them to engage in same-sex relationships. Shepard explains that the radical gays “recognize[d] that different people had particular needs (sexual, among others) and struggles that were distinct from those of other groups of people because of history and politics” and, at the same time, that

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<sup>133</sup> A symbolic space of encounter between radical gays and homosexual Arabs at that time was the public urinal.

“revolutionary connections (through sex as well as other means)” were possible (Shepard, 2012, 112).

Now, because of the oppositional binary, while the Arab man is produced as virile and his masculinity is affirmed as a sign of his difference, we have to understand that the French man is therefore produced as effeminate by the same discourse. Like with Arab masculinity, this femininity is approached in various ways. For the far right, it explains France’s defeat in the independence war and its following “invasion” as “a ‘bitch nation’” (Shepard, 2012, 100). For the leftists, the French men’s failed masculinity or femininity allowed the racist constitution and corruption of the French empire. For instance, Shepard shows that “in debates over torture . . . , anticolonial critics described how colonialism had rendered French men soft and perverted, suggesting that the painful humiliation sadistic torturers inflicted on rebellious bodies revealed deviant desires to possess their manliness” (Shepard, 2012, 88). For the radical gays, receiving means allowing the Arab men to take a so-called “revenge” over the former colonising power – symbolised by their white bodies. As Shepard explains, the radical gays claim their “embrace of effeminacy, of transvestism, of sexual ‘passivity,’ of ‘perversion’” to challenge “repressive norms on which patriarchy depended” and to forge a “connection . . . with immigrant Arab men” (Shepard, 2012, 112).

The Arab man in postcolonial France is therefore produced discursively through a form of ambivalence, between similarity and difference (cf. Chapter 1). This pendulum movement is mirrored by another type of ambivalence, this time operating at the level of the emotions involved. Whether through far-right discourses or through the (often but not always converging) leftist and radical-gay discourses, the Arab man is produced as a threat to society. Yet, if the former fears change, the latter claims to take the system down and therefore welcomes this threat. Thus, the leftist and radical-gay discourses are linked to the poststructuralist affirmation of difference that has been “eventualised” with the Algerian victory over France. Additionally, *the Arab man* in postcolonial France is produced at the crossroads of discourses on race (anticolonial and nostalgic of colonialism) and what Shepard calls “sex talk” (Shepard, 2012, 82).<sup>134</sup> Obviously, weaving the two together, whether it is in the (former) colonies (Massad,

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<sup>134</sup> Which he defines as “widespread and varied references to sex, sexual morality, deviance, and normalcy” (Shepard, 2012, 82). Cf. Foucault’s “incitement to discourse” and Massad’s discussion of it.

2007) or in France (see, e.g., Dorlin, 2009), is not proper to postcolonial times. However, *the homosexual Arab* does emerge then through his problematisation by xenophobia.

His subjectification is made possible by the Arab man's ambivalence but is distinct from it. Especially for the radical gays, it was crucial "to collapse boundaries between a tiny minority who did these things [same-sex relationships] and the large majority who – like the minority – suffered from 'sexual misery'". At least, that is what the radical gays told themselves in order "to connect 'revolutionary homosexual action' to other forms of revolutionary politics" (Shepard, 2012, 106). Shepard adds that in late twentieth-century France, "male sexual deviance" is associated with "references to Algerians because sex (male and 'perverted') emerge[s] as privileged terrain for assertions about Algerian 'difference' and for efforts to negotiate France's colonial history" (Shepard, 2012, 114). If the subjectification of the homosexual Arab in postcolonial France was first made intelligible through his Arabness (difference), it is no longer sufficient. Shepard concedes this when he talks about the "messiness" resulting from the poststructuralist affirmation of difference on the subjectification of postcolonial subjects:

The sex and gender politics of anticolonialism opened up more questions than they settled. This unresolved *messiness* ... is what distinguished them from other critiques of France and "the West" that developed in reference to anticolonial and pronationalist activism. Once independence was a reality, French public officials and many French people would assert that Algeria and Algerians had never really been French with the same certainty that had previously accompanied their insistence that Algeria was French. Their new certainty, while arguably more accurate, *left even less room to raise questions about what the Republic's colonial history or such claims of obvious and definitive difference might imply*. Of course, this forgetting did not expunge the past and its effects nor the multiple connections that remained and developed. The stark boundary between French and Algerians that, after years of violence, anguish, and argument, had been legally recognized *was a binary that denied much, even as it accounted for much else*. Yet the troubling implications linked to sex that had come to the fore during the Algerian revolution had not been neatly resolved, unlike the seemingly obvious realization that Algerians are Algerians, not French. This ongoing *messiness* helps explain why sex talk became a privileged site where wide-ranging concerns about *difference* (which decolonization supposedly had resolved) could be talked about. (Shepard, 2012, 88-90, my emphases)

The emergence of the homosexual Arab in postcolonial France as neither similar nor different, neither homosexual nor Arab, does not mean that the effects of the oppositional binary and racialising xenophobia (approaching the homosexual Arab as

different) disappear. But, as Shepard notices, sticking to this approach “leaves even less room to raise questions about what ... such claims of obvious and definitive difference might imply”. For instance, Jérémie Gauthier and Régis Schlagdenhauffen have recently had access to the records of the 10,000 people convicted under the French homophobic laws between 1942 and 1982. The immense majority was born in France (in the Hexagon), but Northern African men were the most convicted “strangers” (Gauthier and Schlagdenhauffen, 2019, 447). If this piece of statistics was only read according to racialising xenophobia, we would be left with, as Shepard writes above, “the stark boundary between French and Algerians”, that is, “a binary that denied much, even as it accounted for much else”. Yet, what we have here is another type of subjectification, that of the homosexual Arab in postcolonial France, which requires a different approach if we do not want to remain at the level of what Shepard calls “the unimaginable gay Arab” (Shepard, 2018, 123). In 1973, Felix Guattari’s journal *Recherches* published an issue edited by a group of radical gays called the Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action (in French, the FHAR).<sup>135</sup> As discussed thoroughly in the Conclusion of the thesis, the FHAR articulates a seemingly knowledgeable discourse that produces the homosexual Arab as neither homosexual nor Arab, two notions that are supposed to endorse opposite meanings. Indeed, in France, an Arab man having sex with other men is not homosexual in the way radical gays politicise the notion: he lives out of the homo-hetero binary (*Recherches*, 2015, 34-35), he is violently frustrated (45-51), victim of “sexual misery” (13-35) and in financial trouble (12-25),<sup>136</sup> or he turns his male partners into symbolic women by exclusively penetrating and dominating them (12-13). The homosexual Arab also cannot be homosexual because he cannot be emotionally involved with other men, only sexually and politically in the case of his revolutionary relations with white radical gays (14-17). Furthermore, he is neither politically awakened to sex politics nor an activist for the gay cause, nor even “out” (15-20). Above all, he is not rational as a white gay, he is even deprived of discourse, made prisoner of his body’s reactions, and animalised (*Recherches*, 2015, 17-21).

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<sup>135</sup> Foucault officially contributed to this issue, although it is impossible to know for certain which text(s), if any, he wrote. Since homosexuality was criminalised, the texts were not signed; there was only a list of contributors – some of whom might have agreed to appear simply to support Guattari and the FHAR (cf. Macey, 2019, 379).

<sup>136</sup> Which means, in the radical gays’ minds, that he cannot afford a female sex worker *and* that he has to become a sex worker for white men.

At the same time, the homosexual Arab is not truly Arab because he is not the political subject embodied by the Algerian revolutionary: the xenophobic discourse deprives him of the Arab agency and strength demonstrated during the independence war (Recherches, 2015, 36-59). While the Arab man is a model for the radical gays, the homosexual Arab needs them to be freed (20-21).<sup>137</sup> He is also always on the verge of being too Western to be Arab, especially when he reflects on his own homosexuality (20-36), even in the loose sense I articulate here. Finally, the homosexual Arab is no longer Arab the moment he wants to be penetrated (Recherches, 2015, 13-14). Neither similar (homosexual) nor different (Arab), neither the sovereign nor the other, the homosexual Arab is problematically ambiguous, he is a figure of the *xenos*, and he finds himself trapped in this in-between position.

The change in territoriality is of course a condition of possibility for this transformation. It is no longer about same-sex relationships between a White/coloniser and an Arab/colonised in the (former) colonies which followed the binary organisation entailed by colonisation – that is, the domination of the latter (because of his difference) by the former. In the 1973 issue of *Recherches*, the authors establish a stark distinction between homosexual Arabs in Morocco or Tunisia, whom they believe are *all* bisexual (even after decolonisation), and homosexual Arabs in France, whom they problematise differently (Recherches, 2015, 35). Furthermore, this territorial change is intensified by a change in “problematism” (cf. Introduction). The poststructuralist affirmation of difference is the condition of possibility for the emergence of a typically postcolonial intensity – i.e., xenophobia – that makes the homosexual Arab intelligible in a “new” way. If we take into account xenophobia, the homosexual Arab cannot only be approached through the problematisation of his difference, but rather through the problematisation of his ambiguity. Doing so, we can make Shepard’s “messiness” less messy, Massad’s “perceived instability” more stable. In other words, we can make the homosexual Arab’s ambiguity more intelligible because we can analyse its problematisation through xenophobia – i.e., its production as an ambiguous threat to be disambiguated.

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<sup>137</sup> Radical gays consider that *they* “offer” to Arab men the possibility to take revenge on the “Western coloniser” because this revenge can only be mediated through their white bodies (cf. Shepard, 2012, 112).

In the case of the homosexual Arab, articulating the notion of xenophobia helps us to understand how, as Shepard writes, “sex talk became a privileged site where wide-ranging concerns about difference (which decolonisation supposedly had resolved) could be talked about” (Shepard, 2012, 90). It allows us to go further than an analysis that would only resort to the homosexual Arab’s difference (his Arabness) to understand his subjectification in postcolonial France as neither homosexual nor Arab. Despite the hopes raised by decolonisation which affirmed difference against its previous domination, this ambiguity is not neutral. As explained below, it is first and foremost produced as a threat. Shepard reminds us that, when Pierre Guyotat (a French homosexual and anticolonial writer) publishes his ground-breaking *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* in 1967, he intends to assemble “decolonization and ‘de-eroticization’” together to do away with “orientalist erotic fantasies”, institutional binary discriminations, “hierarchies of power”, and “the endemic play of difference and sex” (Shepard, 2012, 81). By problematising xenophobia, we thus offset Guyotat’s hope, because we can show that the subjectification of the homosexual Arab, understood as a *xenos*, still goes through relations of domination even if it does not (exclusively) go through the oppositional binary. We can now understand how postcolonial “narratives ... allowed anxieties and fears to be spoken” without necessarily relying on the oppositional binary that emerged in the classical age (Shepard, 2018, 194). The workings of postcolonial xenophobia is tangible in the production of the homosexual Arab as an ambiguous subject and a dominated threat, a subjectification which *contingently* follows from the affirmation of the Arab man’s difference (eventualised with the Algerian victory over France) which entails that the situation of the homosexual Arab (neither homosexual nor Arab) is no longer intelligible through the sole problematisation of difference. Postcolonial xenophobia emerges when ambiguity starts being problematised, mainly through xenophobia itself.

Mehammed Amadeus Mack shows this reality when he studies “the” French gay literature published from the 1980s, that is, after the decriminalising of homosexuality and the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Mack starts with the same observation as Massad and Shepard regarding the changing perception of the Arab man, but he focuses immediately on the homosexual Arab. He considers that the figure of the “Arab boy” has changed meanings: he no longer serves the white coloniser, but he is



“independent, sometimes resentful or indifferent” and he is “capable of unreciprocated desire” (Mack, 2014, 341). This is, in part, the result of the poststructuralist affirmation of difference which, resisting the racialising and homophobic problematisation of difference, asserts the other’s agency. Moreover, Mack shows that homosexual Arabs take upon themselves to write about their own experiences and their relations with white gays in France or the (former) colonies.<sup>138</sup> Thus, one of the logical consequences of this is a form of “postcolonial contestation” or, at least, of “reciprocity” since access to “Arab” sexuality has “been pluralized and the claims regarding it [can] more easily be challenged by those with an interest in it” (Mack, 2014, 339).

If it is certainly possible to acknowledge such instances of reciprocity, Mack shows that homosexual Arabs mainly find themselves subjugated as a two-fold threat through the xenophobic problematisation of their ambiguity. First, while the French white gay used to be the only one telling the homosexual Arab’s truth, his mastery over the former “deferential” object of his discourse is now threatened (Mack, 2014, 326). Usually, the mastery of one subject upon another (objectified) subject is made self-evident through an oppositional binary structure: I can tell (and therefore master) who you are because you are not me and there is only one way not to be me. In turn, I can also define (and therefore master) myself by contrasting me to you: I can tell who I am because I am not you (whom I have already determined). With the introduction of ambiguity – which disturbs the oppositional binary – this self-evident subjectification through the other’s objectification is no longer straightforward. I can no longer tell who I am by simply stating who I am not, since there is more than one subject that I am not. Ambiguity makes me lose the mastery I have upon the other and upon myself. Second, through xenophobic discourses, the homosexual Arab’s ambiguity and claim to reciprocity are associated with a risk of undifferentiation between white gays and homosexual Arabs (Mack, 2014, 329-333). In other words, as a *xenos*, the homosexual Arab is produced as a threat to the sovereign (the white gay) and to the oppositional binary – that is, the relation that not only distinguishes the sovereign from the other, but conditions the domination of the latter by the former.

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<sup>138</sup> See Farid Tali (2001) and Abdellah Taïa (2006).

Ambiguity understood as undifferentiation is itself a two-fold threat. First, it threatens the oppositional binary understood as a political foundation that has lasted so long that it has been naturalised and made necessary against chaos. This is the fear that far-right gay writer Renaud Camus<sup>139</sup> articulates as “the universalization of the *banlieue*”.<sup>140</sup> What frightens someone like Camus is, according to Mack, the “flattening [of] identities” that would be caused by multiculturalism and not, paradoxically, by universalism (Mack, 2014, 329-333). Multiculturalism would allegedly reverse the relation of domination between (white) French and Arabs. Therefore, ambiguity threatens the binary organisation of French society which used to benefit the white French. The possibility of a reciprocal relationship is not even considered in this xenophobic discourse. Second, ambiguity as undifferentiation threatens the affirmation of difference because the latter is exclusively understood in a binary struggle against similarity. If the possibility to distinguish no longer goes through difference alone, there is only the oppressive reign of similarity. Yet, affirming difference is crucial in the poststructuralist and postcolonial perspectives. Furthermore, Mack shows that it is also important for a problematic perspective on homosexuality which was thriving at the time. It was coined by Jonathan Dollimore as “the homosexual’s historic ‘involvement with difference’” and it would explain how white gays end up sleeping with homosexual Arabs. Indeed, because homosexuals are excluded and repressed from their “home culture”, they would almost naturally searched “for fulfilment in the realm of the foreign” (Dollimore cited by Mack, 2014, 335). Ambiguity thus unsettles the centrality of difference for sex politics that aim to empower white gays only.

Mack then notices that, because they can no longer master the homosexual Arab as their elders did, the white gay writers produce him, from the 1980s, in a new dominating way. Mack calls this technique “a trap” to illustrate the in-between position entailed by the homosexual Arab’s ambiguity (Mack, 2014, 336). Against his claim to be independent, to speak for himself, to choose his partners, to refuse to be used and objectified, to “assert his individuality”, and to demand equality, white gay writers

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<sup>139</sup> Who became gradually one of voices of white supremacy with his conspiracist notion of “great replacement”.

<sup>140</sup> In France, the *banlieues* are the neighbourhoods or cities situated on the outskirts of metropolises where immigrants from the former colonies were “pushed”, and where their descendants still live for the most part.

corner the homosexual Arab in “a ‘brutish,’ ethnic, male sexuality, which must remain essentially silent if it is to be properly virile and attractive” (Mack, 2014, 335-336). If he resists this reduction, he becomes annoying and unattractive, and the relationship is ended by the white partner. If he complies with this reduction to a “posture of mute virility because of the very demand for that virility”, he is scorned for “privileging ... physical assertion over intellect” and is therefore inferiorised, even “dehumanised” because he becomes interchangeable, anonymous, and dispensable (Mack, 2014, 333-336).<sup>141</sup> Yet, trapped, the homosexual Arab reacts, and those white gay writers notice it. Therefore, they picture him as “resentful or indomitable”, occupying an alleged “unassimilated status” – fundamentally different from his former “exploited status in colonial settings” (Mack, 2014, 322-326). Furthermore, this resentful homosexual Arab is turned into an explicit threat, one of “‘counter-colonization’ of replacement” and “Islamisation” of contemporary France. The latter is thus depicted by the “‘rightward’ movement of homosexual elites” as the land of sexual and cultural freedom that claims to be invaded by Islamist rigorism (Mack, 2014, 328-330). To be sure, this last association entails that the homosexual Arab is produced as a Muslim man. Yet, this is only the result of the disambiguating strategy articulated through his subjectification as ambiguous, that is, as a threat to the sovereign subject (the white gay, and more generally the white man) *and* to a society whose political foundation is structured by the oppositional binary.

It is incidentally through the articulation of this strategy that xenophobia operates, and through its re-articulation that we can analyse how xenophobia works. Drawing from Foucault’s methodology, but also from Sara Ahmed’s “cultural politics of emotions” (Ahmed, 2014), the next part of this chapter constitutes an attempt toward an emotional archaeology of postcolonial xenophobia, since this methodology stresses the importance of strategies in the political analysis (Foucault, 1980b).

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<sup>141</sup> This “trap” already operates in the 1973 issue of *Recherches* (2015, 14-25).

## **2 Intensification of Fear, Strategy of Disambiguation, and Legitimation: An Emotional Archaeology of Postcolonial Xenophobia**

To understand the production of the *xenos* as a threat through xenophobia, analysing the level of the dividing practices of subjectification is necessary but not sufficient. The very notion of threat involves analysing signifying relations of power and acknowledging that they necessarily involve the emotional register, especially the register of fear. This is where the “economy of fear” analysed by Sara Ahmed becomes useful because it helps us to understand how the sign “threat” gets to stick to the *xenos*’ body so much that it appears as its only legitimate meaning (Ahmed, 2014, 71). Ahmed manages to do this through her “concept of intensification”, which is key for this analysis (Ahmed, 2014, 15).

Acknowledging the intensification of fear in postcolonial xenophobia is the first step toward the elaboration of an emotional archaeology. To be sure, as William M. Reddy argues, associating the study of emotions and the methodology designed by Foucault is not self-evident: “If the very existence of the individual subject is just a secondary effect of a certain discourse, or the surface phenomenon of a certain episteme, then to examine the supposed depths of individual experience in the past is about the same as telling fairy tales” (Reddy, 2020, 170). Yet, I argue that it is possible to think of the intensification of fear entailed by xenophobia as part of the regularity of the practices of subjectification of the *xenos* and, therefore, as what allows a xenophobic apparatus to form. Indeed, through the concept of intensification, it is possible to analyse two elements that make xenophobia intelligible by archaeology: the disambiguating strategy and the process of legitimisation (analysed below). The latter allows us to understand how we can go from the general discursive production of the *xenos* as a threat to the formation of a xenophobic apparatus, which consists of xenophobic knowledge (legitimised by the fear of the *xenos*) and xenophobic persecution (legitimised by xenophobic knowledge). I analyse this apparatus in Chapter 4 and illustrate its workings in Chapter 5. Ahmed’s notion of intensification is thus what allows me to close the gap between an archaeological analysis of xenophobic practices of subjectification in postcolonial France and the structuring role that an emotion like fear plays in the very same production of ambiguous subjects. It also allows me to

analyse emotions in a political way, far from an exclusively psychological and subject-centred approach. As showed below, intensification is the reason why a subject appears inherently threatening but analysing it allows us to understand that this apparent inherence is the result of practices of subjectification. Now, Ahmed focuses on the binary differentiation-subjectification that can result from intensification: on the one hand, racism implies that the stranger is feared while the national is afraid and, on the other hand, an anti-racist analysis shows that it is the stranger who is under threat while the national benefit from this situation (Ahmed, 2003, 391; 2014, 211). Ahmed explicitly refers to “others” to describe non-national and racialised-national subjects in Western postcolonial societies, and she uses this notion to analyse a binary opposition (Ahmed, 2000). Rather, I argue that intensification is not limited to binary differentiation and subjectification and that it can be used to analyse practices of subjectification that happen beside the oppositional binary. Furthermore, while Ahmed attends to minorities’ lived experiences of being under threat or afraid (Ahmed, 2006, 544; 2014, 26-27 and 73),<sup>142</sup> I only focus on the regularity of xenophobic practices of subjectification.

## **2.1 The Intensification of Fear Entailed by Xenophobia**

Drawing from Ahmed, I thus analyse “what ... emotions do”, rather than what they are, in three steps (Ahmed, 2014, 4). First, I distinguish the workings of an emotion like fear from its effect, which at times might seem contradictory. If, as Ahmed puts it, “fear is an effect of [the intensification of threats], rather than its origin”, the threat is nevertheless “constituted as the cause of ‘our’ feeling of [fear]” (Ahmed, 2014, 72 and 48). Distinguishing the two elements allows me to make explicit the role that emotions play in *historical* relations of domination (that condition xenophobic practices of subjectification) even if an emotion like fear feels like it emerges through immediacy, i.e., out of history. Foucault’s archaeological methodology allows us to acknowledge such distinction. Indeed, there is what archaeology makes us see (fear is an effect rather than an origin) and the effect of a practice like xenophobic subjectification (fear seems to originate in the *xenos*). Second, I do not follow what Sara Ahmed or Ruth Leys have critically called the “turn to affect”, undertaken by, for

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<sup>142</sup> This results from her – queer – use of phenomenology (Ahmed, 2006) which, even though I find it interesting, I do not pursue in this thesis because it focuses on subjectification.

instance, Brian Massumi, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, or Michael Hardt (Leys, 2011, 434; Ahmed, 2014, 206).<sup>143</sup> Those theorists have been interested in what affects *are* ontologically and how they can escape signifying and historical relations of power. As Ahmed puts it, the turn to affect “enables us to go beyond a subject” while I am precisely interested in how relations of power produce meanings through practices of subjectification (Ahmed, 2014, 207). Third, I differentiate xenophobia from what Ahmed aptly designates as an emotion – for instance, fear. If the *xenos* is produced as a threat, it is because xenophobia partly operates through the circulation of fear, which implies that the two are not the same. As I develop below, xenophobia should rather be understood according to the process that Ahmed develops as “intensification”. This complex notion groups together the relationality at work in the external dividing practices of subjectification and differentiation (between threatening and threatened subjects), the emergence of fear out of the circulation between signs (threatening/threatened) and objects (subjects, bodies, and societies), and the bodily reifying process entailed by the emotional stickiness of those signs (Ahmed, 2014, 72). It might therefore be useful to consider xenophobia as an intensity which entails the intensification of an emotion like fear. Not only does the notion of intensity allow me to analyse xenophobia through Ahmed’s intensification, but it also allows me to link xenophobia as an intensity to two etymologically related notions (the Latin *intentio* means strain, tension, increase, effort, accusation, or purpose): tension and intentionality.

As Ahmed explains, emotions “not only *heighten tension*, they are also *in tension*” (Ahmed, 2014, 10). Through fear, xenophobia plays a part in the race war that Foucault theorised (cf. Chapter 2). Indeed, at the same time fear contributes to political conflicts and relations of domination (A engages in war with B to annihilate the threat that B represents to its survival), it reveals the positions within the conflict through an intense feeling (A faces B, is afraid of B, and B is thus threatening). As Ahmed explains, “fear works to produce subjects in relation to others, and to secure the very boundaries that become lived as givens” (Ahmed, 2003, 389). Yet, Ahmed limits her analysis to a binary framework that my conceptualisation of the intensification of fear entailed by xenophobia allows me to challenge. Still, this transformation from

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<sup>143</sup> See Massumi (1993; 2015), Sedgwick and Frank (1995), Sedgwick (2004), and Hardt (2007).

something produced into something given is entailed by intensification, as I show below. Additionally, Ahmed writes that “emotions are intentional in the sense that they are ‘about’ something: they involve a direction or orientation toward an object. The ‘aboutness’ of emotions means they involve a stance on the world, or a way of apprehending the world” (Ahmed, 2014, 7). Including the notion of intentionality in this analysis once again involves situating it at a distance from “the turn to affect” mentioned above. The latter has constituted itself against a phenomenological approach to emotions, i.e., against the primacy of a constitutive subject who would be the origin of his emotions projected onto objects that would already be there. Thus, Ahmed is right to say that “to talk about emotions may be risky because of how they have been understood as the interior of subjects, as psychological givens or attributes” (Ahmed, 2003, 381).

Because of its Foucaultian stance, this research also distances itself from phenomenology.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, the notion of intentionality should be considered seriously. Indeed, talking about hate, Ahmed explains that it is intense and intentional because it “involves a feeling of ‘againstness’”. She adds that, if “hate is always hatred of something or somebody, ... *that something or somebody does not necessarily pre-exist the emotion*” (Ahmed, 2014, 49, my emphasis).<sup>145</sup> Thus, focusing on intentional emotions does not necessarily mean reintroducing the constitutive subject. Rather, drawing from Ahmed, it allows us to analyse the intensification of emotions like hate and fear as a constitutive part of the regularity of xenophobic practices of subjectification. To be precise, even if Ahmed concedes that “emotions are not only about objects” and should therefore not “be easily reduced to intentionality”, she states that emotions are linked to practices caught up in relations of power, which means that analysing them requires taking into account the “aboutness” implied by intentionality. In Ahmed’s words, “emotionality as a claim *about* a subject or a collective is clearly dependent on relations of power, which endow ‘others’ with meaning and value” (Ahmed, 2014, 4). A subject is not only produced, her subjectification entails the

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<sup>144</sup> See Foucault’s interview with Gérard Rault (1983, 198-199) and Gilles Deleuze’s acknowledgement that Foucault “break[s] with phenomenology in the ‘vulgar’ sense of the term”, which leads him to state that “Foucault’s major achievement [is] the conversion of phenomenology into epistemology” (Deleuze, 1988, 108-109). I explore this epistemological shift in Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>145</sup> The same can be said about fear, especially when we talk about xenophobia, where hate and fear are so intertwined, like Pierre Villard notices (Villard, 1984, 191).

attribution of a meaning and the accumulation of an affective value.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, Ahmed’s cultural politics of emotions does not “assume ... separate spheres between consciousness and intentionality, on the one hand, and physiological or bodily reactions on the other” (Ahmed, 2014, 208). On the contrary, as I show below, Ahmed’s conception of emotions is interesting because it allows us to think together about the body and mind – whose traditional Cartesian dualism would be reintroduced (even if in a reversed way) through the turn to affect, according to Ahmed and Leys (Leys, 2011, 455; Ahmed, 2014, 206-208).<sup>147</sup> Acknowledging intentionality also allows me to support the case for an emotional archaeology of xenophobia. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault identifies four elements to analyse the regularity of a discursive practice: the production of an object, the enunciation of different types of statements (by different positions of subjectivity), the dissemination of concepts, and the articulation of a strategy (Foucault, 2002a, 81). I develop what this emotional archaeology entails in the next section, but here suffice to say with Ahmed that intentionality means that “we are not only directed toward objects, but those objects also take us in a certain direction” (Ahmed, 2006, 545). Intentionality thus usefully allows us to maintain a focus on the production of an object (here, an objectified subject) through the study of regular practices of subjectification. Finally, from a political perspective, intentionality is linked with the notion of strategy, which is pivotal in an archaeological methodology like the one I use in this research. Indeed, Foucault argues that relations are intelligible precisely because they are “intentional”, that is, “imbued ... with calculation” and articulated according to “a series of aims and objectives” (Foucault, 1978, 94-95). Away from the phenomenological argument that consciousness is intentional – which might make us return to a constitutive subject<sup>148</sup> – Foucault situates intentionality at the level of strategies. As I develop below, the strategy articulated through xenophobic practices of subjectification is disambiguation. Thus, the object toward which xenophobic practices are orientated is an ambiguous threat to be disambiguated, that is, a *xenos* turned into a similar or

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<sup>146</sup> Reddy actually argues that intentionality – which he identifies with meaning giving/reading – is “unavoidable” when it comes to emotions, despite neuroscientific findings (Reddy, 2020, 174).

<sup>147</sup> Leys refers to this theoretical move as “nonintentionalism”. According to this, the analytical notion of emotion designates “embodied, intentional states governed by our beliefs, cognitions, and desires” while the notion of affect refers to “non-intentional bodily reactions” (Leys, 2011, 437).

<sup>148</sup> Although Ahmed, among others, works toward a different phenomenological approach (Ahmed, 2006). See also Elsa Dorlin’s formulation of a “phenomenology of the prey” (Dorlin, 2017, 160-177; Institute for Ideas and Imagination, 2019).



different subject. To understand how this is possible, let us now analyse Ahmed's concept of intensification.

Foucault also argues that power relations are “nonsubjective”, which means that power “does not ... result from the choice or decision of an individual subject” (Foucault, 1978, 95). Indeed, (Foucault's) poststructuralism deconstructs the constitutive subject, understood as the legitimate source of sovereignty, and rearticulates it into a subject constituted through power relations (cf. Chapter 1). Foucault writes that individuals “are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays. In other words, power passes through individuals” (Foucault, 2003, 29). As a matter of fact, this is also Ahmed's starting point. Indeed, she writes that “emotions do not positively inhabit *anybody* or *anything*, meaning that ‘the subject’ is simply one nodal point in the economy, rather than its origin and destination” (Ahmed, 2014, 46). If the subject is not the origin of power but what is produced through relations of power, it seems logical to approach emotions through the same perspective, that is, as “effects rather than origins”, which means that emotions “cannot be taken as ‘the ground’ of judgement” (Ahmed, 2014, 196).<sup>149</sup> Since there is not a subject who would be the owner of power (the sovereign of the theory of sovereignty), there cannot be a subject who would be inherently threatened or threatening either. Ahmed explains that “while emotions involve subjects, they do not inhabit them as a form of residence or dwelling” (Ahmed, 2003, 386). For instance, fear does not inhabit specific subjects or, in Ahmed's words, fear “does not originate within an individual psyche; it does not reside positively in consciousness. As such, [it] resists ... what we might call ‘positive residence’” (Ahmed, 2014, 44). Similarly, xenophobia should not be understood as the phobia of the *xenos*, even if it does appear as such.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Analysing our contemporary societies, Fredric Jameson writes: “The liberation ... from the older anomie of the centred subject may also mean not merely a liberation from anxiety but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling. This is not to say that the cultural products of the postmodern era are utterly devoid of feeling, but rather that such feelings – which it may be ... more accurate ... to call ‘intensities’ – are now free-floating and impersonal and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria” (Jameson, 2005, 15-16).

<sup>150</sup> Contrary to all the “psychological” approaches inspired by Gordon W. Allport's “contact hypothesis” (Allport, 2015) or, opposite to it but with the same result, Donald T. Campbell's “realistic conflict theory” (Campbell, 1965). Related to xenophobia, the former would argue that the phobia of the *xenos* comes from prejudices (and ignorance) and that contacts with (and first-hand knowledge about) the *xenos* make it disappear. The latter would argue that it is when there is contact with the *xenos*, understood as a group, that the phobia of the *xenos* arises because they become a competitor for the access and the benefit of resources.

The work of emotions is important to understanding the production of threats because, through intensification, they make us feel *as if* they positively reside in subjects, precisely because emotions are felt in a *seemingly* immediate way, without *apparently* resorting to a process of attribution of meaning. Yet, as Ahmed explains:

Emotions are not immediate, however immediately they impress upon us. They ... are mediated, in the sense that they involve reading the bodies of others, such that “they” become the source of an affect: “I am disturbed,” becomes “it is disturbing,” which becomes “you are disturb[ing].” Such an emotional response is a reading that not only creates a border between subject and other, but also “gives” the other a meaning and value in the very apparent separation, a giving which temporarily fixes an other, through the movement engendered by the emotional response itself. (Ahmed, 2003, 381-382)

While Ahmed uses the concept of intensification to analyse this false immediacy and the lived experience of minorities, I only focus on the former phenomenon as structuring for the regularity of xenophobic practices of subjectification.

Furthermore, the process of attribution-reading of a meaning to a subject – which depends on the dividing practices of subjectification and the (at least linguistic) exclusion of difference – is doubled by emotions. About hate, Ahmed writes that it “does not *reside* in a given subject or object. Hate is economic; it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement” (Ahmed, 2014, 44). Ahmed attaches importance to this notion of circulation for two reasons. First, it situates her analysis at the level of discourses which produce meaning through relationality and differentiation (a subject is threatened because they are under the threat of, and therefore in relation with, a threatening subject, and those positions *de facto* make them distinct). Second, it allows her to understand how subjects accumulate what she calls an “affective value” (Ahmed, 2014, 45). Indeed, it is through the circulation of meaning that subjects become valued emotionally (Ahmed, 2014, 219). Doing so, Ahmed acknowledges that subjects are produced as meaningful through dividing practices of subjectification and that the attribution of meanings which follows from this differentiation associates those meaningful subjects with emotions.

In other words, if “feelings do not reside in subjects and objects, but are produced as effects of circulation” and if this circulation occurs “between objects and signs”

(Ahmed, 2014, 8 and 45), this means that the *xenos* is not inherently threatening, but is objectified as threatening (because ambiguous) through their relation with and differentiation from other subjects (who are not ambiguous). This relation-differentiation is intensified and made threatening by xenophobia through the intensification of fear. The *xenos* is not the only subject objectified as threatening through their relation with, and differentiation from, other subjects. As Ahmed explains, the “lack of residence ... allows fear to slide across signs and between bodies” (Ahmed, 2014, 63). Thus, Ahmed can write that “*othering* takes place through the attribution of feelings to others, or by transforming others into objects of feelings” (Ahmed, 2014, 16, my emphasis). Through racialising xenophobia, for instance, the stranger is produced as a threat to the sovereign subject. As Ahmed explains, the stranger is not someone we do not know. Rather, “*some bodies are recognised as strangers*”, which involves “an affective judgement: a stranger is the one who seems suspicious, dangerous, object to be feared” (Ahmed, 2014, 211). Below, I show the specificity of postcolonial xenophobia in that regard: it produces the *xenos* as a threat to the sovereign and to the oppositional binary. The distinction from Ahmed’s reasoning is that I do not limit my analysis to a binary subjectification since the oppositional binary – which the subjectification of the *xenos* challenges – supports and is supported by the relation of domination between the sovereign and the other. We come back here to Foucault’s race war since, as Ahmed explains, “through the generation of ‘the threat’, fear works to align bodies with and against others” (Ahmed, 2014, 72). The dividing practices of subjectification are not neutral, they take part in the intensification of a political conflict that opposes adversaries – i.e., subjects are materially “delineated as if they are objects” whose “surfaces and boundaries” come to be felt because of an emotion like fear (Ahmed, 2014, 10).

Methodologically, we can say that xenophobia doubles or intensifies the work of discursive dividing practices on the emotional and bodily level of sensations (which are always already imbricated) to create an opposition between adversaries whose division across the battlefield makes the differences within each camp less meaningful, and makes the subjects within each camp seem similar to each other. Ahmed writes that love and hate produce effects of “likeness and unlikeness”, which are considered as inherent bodily characteristics (Ahmed, 2014, 52). What the analysis of xenophobia adds to Foucault’s and Ahmed’s conception of political conflict is the fact that the

division across the battlefield is no longer necessarily binary: immanently to the lasting conflict between the sovereign and the other, our postcolonial times see the emergence of a third “subject who is fighting a war” (Foucault, 2003, 54) – the *xenos*.

If emotions do not reside positively in subjects, it means that the association between the *xenos* and the meaning, or sign, “threat” is contingent. As we know, the attribution of meaning depends on historical relations of domination. Moreover, Ahmed tells us that this contingency also reveals the relationality and “contact” between the subjects which are themselves shaped through history (Ahmed, 2014, 8). She insists on the etymological link between contingency and contact (from the “Latin: *contingere*: com, with; *tangere*, to touch”) to take us away from an approach to emotions through contagion (Ahmed, 2014, 18-28). This is vital to understanding how emotions work. If subjects are produced through relations of domination, it is their relations that are problematic, not their individuality. Xenophobia makes the relation between the *xenos* and other subjects threatening and it is only through intensification that fear seems to characterise the *xenos* themselves. Ahmed explains that “to be moved in a certain way by an encounter with another may involve a reading not only of the encounter, *but of the other that is encountered as having certain characteristics*” (Ahmed, 2014, 28). To illustrate this point, Ahmed tells the story of a child meeting a bear. She writes that “fear is not in the child, let alone in the bear, but is a matter of how child and bear come into contact. This contact is shaped by past histories of contact, unavailable in the present, which allow the bear to be apprehended as fearsome” (Ahmed, 2014, 7). Again, while Ahmed manages to attend to both historical productions and lived experiences, I only focus on the intensification of fear as a constitutive part of the regularity of xenophobic practices of subjectification. Because this regularity is historical (postcolonial), the contingency of the association between an object and a sign always requires its historicisation, which contrasts with the effect of emotions. Through intensification, the historical steps of subjectification disappear, time shortens to a disconnected present, and leaves only the immediate feeling in our body.<sup>151</sup> This

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<sup>151</sup> According to Jameson, “the postmodern” is characterised by “a weakening of historicity” (Jameson, 2005, 6). He writes that we should “grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place” (Jameson, 2005, ix). Of course, Jameson’s postmodern cannot serve as a perfect synonym to “the postcolonial” (because of the former’s presentism whereas the latter entails an explicit link to the colonial “past”). Nonetheless, it is useful to understand how a postcolonial intensity like xenophobia manages, through

is where the workings of emotions differ from what they produce. This is where there seems to be a discrepancy between the lack of positive residence, in the *xenos*, of an emotion like fear, and the fact that the *xenos* still seems to provoke fear.

Ahmed helps us to understand that “we need to give this residence a history” – which is how she understands Foucault’s genealogy – to consider how a subject like the *xenos* can be marked by the sign “threat” as if it was their only legitimate meaning (Ahmed, 2014, 214). And indeed, Foucault argues that “feelings are immutable, but every sentiment, particularly the noblest and most disinterested, has a history” (Foucault, 1980a, 153). A historicised approach to an emotion like fear can thus help us to deconstruct the intensification entailed by xenophobia. Indeed, while emotions seem to be felt in immediacy, a historicised approach to them rather proves that past events and apparatus (colonialism, for instance) may well not have been lived by late generations, their dynamics are still alive and the violence they involve still “shape lives and worlds in the present” (Ahmed, 2014, 202).<sup>152</sup> If xenophobia can intensify the production of the *xenos* as a threat, it is because the subjects who are produced as *xenos* have been in lasting conflict with the legitimate subjects of a given society, at a given time. The interest of an analytical notion like xenophobia is, to follow Foucault’s comment mentioned above, to make relations of power “intelligible” by articulating the historical “aims and objectives” that have emerged in our postcolonial times within the practices of subjectification of ambiguous and threatening subjects, but which tend to become invisible through intensification. For instance, the intersex starts clashing significantly with the binary sexual differentiation that structures Western societies – and which poses the subject women as the only and necessary opposite to the subject men – in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>153</sup> The intersex, being produced as neither a typical woman nor a typical man, threatens their individual positions and the

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intensification, to shorten time and produce a feeling of immediacy, notably throughout the body. Indeed, Jameson also explains: “One of the things I have written about is the effects [of the postmodern] on temporality. The French have invented this word *presentism* .... I have written a lot about the disappearance of history, of historicity, about the becoming simulacrum of the past, the reduction to the present. I also call it a reduction to the body, because if you’re in the present that’s really all you have.” (in Baumbach, Young and Yue, 2016, 145).

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Fanon’s story of the child afraid of being eaten up by him (Fanon, 2008, 85-86).

<sup>153</sup> See Guillot (2008) and Karkazis (2008).

historical system that holds them together, even if it holds them together in a relationship of domination.<sup>154</sup>

If emotions are effects of the contingent circulation between signs and objects, the intensification entailed by xenophobia makes this circulation both recursive and sticky. Intensified, the dividing practices of subjectification are obsessively repeated, which makes the sign “threat” stick onto the *xenos* because the historical work of repetition wanes away through intensification. As Ahmed writes, “social forms ... are effects of repetition” and this recursiveness ends up “concealing” the “work of repetition” itself, which makes those “norms appear as forms of life” (Ahmed, 2014, 12). While they are contingent, the association of meanings and emotions with subjects and their bodies are naturalised through intensification. Ahmed indeed explains that “the work of emotion involves the ‘sticking’ of signs to bodies” which means that “such objects [of emotions] become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension” (Ahmed, 2014, 11-13). The discursive process of stereotyping, which “fix[es] the meaning of others”, is doubled by the emotional process of stickiness. This process cuts us off from history and keeps us in a sense of obviousness and immediacy: “feelings become fetishes, qualities that seem to reside in objects, only through an erasure of the history of their production and circulation” (Ahmed, 2014, 22). Ahmed uses the Marxist notion of fetishism to explain how an intensity like xenophobia can “turn something into something that simply ‘is’ rather than something that has happened in time and space” (Ahmed, 2014, 32) – something produced through historical relations of domination.<sup>155</sup> For Ahmed, “objects only seem to have such [affective] value... by an erasure of these histories” (Ahmed, 2014, 11). Thus, intensified through xenophobia, “the circulation does its work: it produces a differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ whereby ‘they’ are constituted as the cause of ‘our’ feeling of hate” (Ahmed, 2014, 48). The sense of immediacy, of a present cut off from history, is also made possible by the sensitive and bodily aspect of emotions. Ahmed explains that emotions are felt in the body and give the sense of having a body

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<sup>154</sup> Women do not need to support their own domination by men to feel threatened by a subject produced as a challenge to the (oppressive) system that allows them to identify (through binary differentiation) as women.

<sup>155</sup> This choice of Marxist vocabulary works well with Marx’s legacy in Foucault’s theory of power that focuses on relations of domination rather than on sovereignty (which is very much fetishised). A stance I support, as argued in the Introduction to the thesis.

which is one's own: "it is through the intensification of ... sensations that bodies and worlds materialise and take shape, or that the effect of boundary, surface and fixity is produced" (Ahmed, 2014, 24). Through intensification, the *xenos* becomes one with their body, they can be apprehended as a fixed source of fear (Ahmed, 2003, 389).

Because of the intensification – both temporal and “material” – entailed by xenophobia, a subject facing the *xenos* can feel as if fear goes from the *xenos*' body to her body, without the apparent need for a cognitive attribution of meanings, a reading of those meanings, or a previous knowledge of them. Yet, going back to the story of the child and the bear, Ahmed writes that the former's knowledge of the danger that the latter represents is “bodily, certainly: the child might not need time to think before she runs for it. But the ‘immediacy’ of the reaction is not itself a sign of lack of mediation” (Ahmed, 2014, 7). Indeed, an emotion is “a sensation that becomes transformed into an emotion through an act of reading and recognition, which is also a judgement” (Ahmed, 2014, 24). Ahmed's approach allows thus us to think together about the body and mind. As she writes: “I focused on language *because* I was interested in bodies. I wanted to explore ... how a body becomes a sign, a sign of danger for instance” (Ahmed, 2014, 216).<sup>156</sup> Now, if emotions are mediated, they are also “performative”, which means that “they involve speech acts, which depend on past histories, at the same time they generate effects” (Ahmed, 2014, 13). Practices of subjectification might be contingent and historical, when they go through emotions, they can fix subjects as inherently linked to, for instance, fear. As Ahmed explains, “fear announces itself through an ontological statement, a statement a self makes of itself and to itself – ‘*I'm frightened*’”. The consequence is that “such statements of fear tell the other that they are the ‘cause’ of fear” (Ahmed, 2014, 62). Moreover, fear, like hate, works retrospectively “by providing ‘evidence’ of the very antagonism it effects. In seeing the other as ‘being’ hateful, the subject is filled up with hate, which becomes the sign of the truth of the reading” (Ahmed, 2014, 52).

Because of intensification, we are left with a subject objectified according to one element, a subject can be apprehended according to a single meaning, made intelligible through our feelings. The intensification entailed by xenophobia thus turns the *xenos*

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<sup>156</sup> This anti-Cartesian stance helps us to approach xenophobia through the form of the Foucaultian apparatus, which combines discursive and non-discursive practices.

into a threat revealed to the rest of the world by the fear that they *seem to* provoke in us. Therefore, through the intensification entailed by xenophobia, a reifying process is at work.<sup>157</sup> The historical relations of domination which produce subjects and make an emotion like fear emerge are “forgotten”. While encounters (i.e., relations between subjects) constitute the source of fear, this is also forgotten, and only stays the feeling that the *xenos* is inherently threatening. The *xenos* is reified as a threat – that is, “objectively” turned into “the cause of fear”. Furthermore, intensification locates the sensation of fear in the body, in a seemingly immediate fashion, which cuts the body off from the historical relations of power that have formed it. Finally, intensification makes the *xenos*’ subjectivity match with their univocally threatening body. Through intensification, reification implies that the only legitimate meaning of the *xenos* – being a threat – is fixed. Their body is undoubtedly read and felt as a threat since it has been reduced to an essential thing: the origin of fear. Because the *xenos* is reified as a threat, the fear associated with them appears as the only possible “shared perception”, and therefore, as “universal and innate” (Ahmed, 2014, 208-214). This is particularly serious, as Ahmed explains, because “there can be nothing more dangerous to a body than the social agreement that *that* body is dangerous” (Ahmed, 2014, 211).

To go from the lack of positive residence of an emotion like fear to the “universal and innate ... shared perception” that the *xenos* is a threat, we thus need to postulate a xenophobic social agreement – produced through a xenophobic apparatus. Only then can we differentiate, among all the subjects who could potentially bear the sign “threat”, those whose subjectification is intensified by xenophobia – that is, the *xenos*. As Ahmed writes in another context, “the structural possibility that anyone could be a terrorist does not translate into everybody being affected by the extension of the powers of detention in the same way” because “the recognition of such groups of people [Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim] as ‘could be terrorists’ depends upon stereotypes that are already in place, at the same time as it generates a distinct category of ‘the fearsome’ in the present” (Ahmed, 2014, 75). In Chapter 4, I argue that this is the difference between the normalisation that everybody goes through and the xenophobic persecution that takes part in the subjectification of the *xenos*. Furthermore, because the *xenos* is reified as a threat through discourses and emotions,

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<sup>157</sup> According to Jameson, who draws the notion from Sartre, reification implies “the transformation of social relations into things” and “the effacement of the traces of production” (Jameson, 2005, 314-315).



another form of discourse about them can emerge – i.e., knowledge. Legitimised by fear, knowledge itself legitimises the persecution of the *xenos*. This relation between discursive and non-discursive practices of subjectification forms a xenophobic apparatus. Before I focus on the process of legitimisation that makes it hold together, I need to analyse the strategy that it articulates – that is, disambiguation.

## **2.2 The Regularity of Xenophobic Practices of Subjectification: Disambiguation, Legitimation, and the Oppositional Binary**

If the concept of intensification allows us to link xenophobia with the intentionality at work in the strategy articulated through xenophobic practices of subjectification, undertaking the archaeology of those practices involves focusing on this very notion of strategy. According to Foucault, a strategy can be defined at the junction of three perspectives: first, “the rationality functioning to arrive at an objective”, that is, “the totality of the means put into operation to implement power or to maintain it”. Second, “the way one seeks to have the advantage over others”, that is, “the mode of action upon ... the actions of others”. Third, “the means destined to obtain victory” (Foucault, 1982, 793-794). More precisely, xenophobic practices of subjectification produce the *xenos* as a threat and the intensification of fear legitimises the constitution of a xenophobic apparatus, which involves a disambiguating strategy. The latter aims to turn the threatening ambiguous subject into either a similar or different subject, that is, to force the *xenos* into a frame of subjectification constituted through the oppositional binary – i.e., the political foundation enhancing similarity at the expense of difference since the classical age.

For Foucault, a strategy should neither be confused with the “expression of a worldview” nor with a “preliminary and fundamental” choice that would precede discourses (Foucault, 2002a, 77). Indeed, this would mean coming back to a constitutive subject, while archaeology implies that the practices of subjectification come first and produce both their objects and the positions of subjectivity that enact said practices. Foucault thus explains that adopting a historico-political analysis in terms of war, relations of dominations, and subjectification entails to elaborate a “strategic analysis”. Indeed, the latter focuses on mechanisms of power that it always sees as specific, which allows the analyst to decipher political struggles according to

the connections and competitions between the agents' actions (Foucault, 1980b, 145). Paying attention to strategies allows us to make practices of subjectification intelligible because we can study their opposition or complementarity, according to their intentionality (Foucault, 1978, 94-95). As Foucault explains, a strategic analysis makes sense of social dynamics through the prism of war or "agonism" – that he defines as "a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle, less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation" (Foucault, 1982, 790). If the analytical notion of xenophobia allows us to make the subjectification of the *xenos* intelligible (as an ambiguous threat), the archaeological focus on strategy allows us to make xenophobia itself intelligible, according to Foucault (1994c, 4). Now, the *xenos* and xenophobia can only be intelligible if we understand what is at stake with the oppositional binary today.

Indeed, the political foundation of our postcolonial times has been characterised by something which was not present in the pre-classical and classical times (not even during "our modernity").<sup>158</sup> The affirmation of difference – to which poststructuralism has taken part – has had consequences on the subjectification of postcolonial subjects: even if the oppositional binary enhances similarity at the expense of difference, even if it organises the relations between the sovereign and the other as the former's dominion over the latter, difference and the other are now acknowledged as constitutive elements of the binary foundation that the *xenos* is threatening. Being neither similar nor different – i.e., ambiguous – the *xenos* poses a threat to the political foundation that relates the sovereign to the other because it works as evidence that this foundation is contingent and not all-encompassing. Obviously, the other can at times challenge her domination by the sovereign – thus showing, like the *xenos*, that the oppositional binary is not the only political foundation possible. However, an unforeseeable consequence of the affirmation of difference has been the integration of difference to the oppositional binary, which now stands on two feet (similarity/difference) rather than being threatened to its core by an affirmed difference. Therefore, the oppositional binary has reinforced its hold because it can

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<sup>158</sup> The period spreading between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, which has been contingently "prepared" by the classical age, according to Foucault (Foucault, 2002b, xxvi). Jameson concurs with this periodisation (Jameson, 2005, 1-6). This research focuses more on the classical age than on modernity *per se* because difference started being problematised in the classical age, which is thus "responsible for the new arrangement in which we are still caught" (Foucault, 2002b, 48).

now encompass what contests its order. For instance, Étienne Balibar notices the integration of the (post)structuralist affirmation of difference to the “ethno-differentialist” (racist) discourse (cf. Chapter 2). In the latter, difference is affirmed to justify racist conducts (rather than racial belonging). If difference is the origin of everything and is to be preserved, then immigration and other processes of mixing threaten difference and differentiation. Thus, separation should be enforced and xenophobia is only a “sane” reaction to avoid the disintegration of one’s group’s culture (Balibar, 1991a, 22-23). Thus, the oppositional binary ends up playing a similar structuring role as the constitutive subject. Consequently, the subjectification of the *xenos* as ambiguous (neither similar nor different) puts the political foundation that enhances similarity at the expense of difference, *and* the affirmation of difference, under threat. Here again, the intensification entailed by xenophobia helps us to understand the process.

The notion of threat not only situates the analysis at the level of discourses, but also at the level of feelings. Yet, it is impossible to argue that a political foundation like the oppositional binary can “feel” the *xenos* as a threat. Against this risk of anthropomorphism, Ahmed shows that it is through an emotion like fear that a dominant subject like the sovereign comes to confuse his fate with the fate of the political system that ensures his dominion (Ahmed, 2014, 43). The sovereign reads a change in the system as a challenge to his dominating position, and therefore as a twofold threat: of chaos and to his survival. Ahmed explains that “the fear of degeneration, decline and disintegration [are] mechanisms for preserving ‘what is’” and become “associated more with some bodies than others” (Ahmed, 2014, 78). If the *xenos* is the subject who threatens the oppositional binary, the sovereign is the subject who feels the fear “in place of” the oppositional binary. For instance, as explained above, the homosexual Arab challenges the racialising sexual order that organises the (sexual) relationships he has with white (gay) men. He is no longer the fantasised passive and servile Arab boy that French gays “used” in the (former) colonies. Because his difference has been affirmed, the Arab man has indeed become the heroic subject of history, a subject who has defeated an effeminate France, who has demonstrated his virility by fighting for freedom, and who has therefore proved worthy of the French themselves. Thus, the homosexual Arab has escaped the white

gay's mastery upon his subjectivity. Hence, his new "inaccessible" and "resentful" image is spotted by Mack in the white gay literature since the 1980s (Mack, 2014).

At the same time, the homosexual Arab engages, by definition, in homosexual love, intercourse, or even just "contacts" as Massad puts it (2007, 188). In all cases, and particularly if he receives during penetration, he goes against the Western conception of (heterosexual) virility that, as an Arab man, he should enact. Above all, he challenges the racialising sexual order that has emerged after the Algerian independence according to which the Arab man, because his Arabness escapes the homo-hetero binary, cannot be homosexual. Thus, he poses a threat to the oppositional binary according to which a homosexual should be white, and an Arab man should neither be homosexual nor heterosexual (and should at least always penetrate). He is a threat because he does not occupy the position according to which he can be apprehended. This threat is *felt* by white (gay) men insofar as they benefit from the domination of the homosexual Arab and have an interest in finding a new way to master him after his "difference" – his Arabness – has been euphorically affirmed. In other words, in postcolonial France, the Arab man is more valued than the homosexual Arab, even if the former is less valued than the white gay. The historical and racist opposition between Whites and Arabs does not disappear with postcolonial xenophobia, but the condition of the homosexual Arab can only be made intelligible with the introduction of this notion. Since he is no longer mastered as an Arab man because his difference has been affirmed in postcolonial times, the homosexual Arab is produced as ambiguous – i.e., neither similar (white/homosexual) nor different (Arab). As such, he is reified as a threat and "trapped", by the white (gay) man. Moreover, in a two-step process, the homosexual Arab is, first, produced as an ambiguous threat to, second, justify his disambiguation into either a similar subject (the sovereign, here, the (European) gay) or a different subject (the other, here, the (non-homosexual) Arab man). This strategy of disambiguation reveals the intentionality at work in xenophobia. Disambiguation also demonstrates that the oppositional binary is threatened by the subjectification of the *xenos* because, since they escape this political foundation (at least until they are disambiguated), it can only be contingent and not necessary.

Disambiguation also shows that the oppositional binary is a powerful political foundation that forces what escapes it into its order. It follows from the techniques elaborated through racialising xenophobia (supporting and supported by the oppositional binary), that is, killing-exclusion (when turning the *xenos* into a different subject) and deceitful assimilation (when turning the *xenos* into a similar subject). Furthermore, xenophobic disambiguation reveals a contradiction that Ahmed generalised to every economy of fear, which “works to contain bodies of others, a containment whose ‘success’ relies on its failure, as it must keep open the very grounds of fear” (Ahmed, 2014, 67). Indeed, xenophobia intensifies the production of the *xenos* as a threat only to legitimately disambiguate them into a subject that is less threatening (because better apprehended) – i.e., the sovereign or the other. Doing this, xenophobia makes the alleged source of fear disappear. Through their disambiguating strategy, xenophobic practices of subjectification thus organise their own disappearance.<sup>159</sup>

This reinforces Foucault’s privileging of an approach to power through strategies rather than through ideologies (Foucault, 1994c, 4), as it makes no sense for an ideology to organise its own annihilation. On the contrary, the xenophobic strategy of disambiguation officially only aims at annihilating a threat. Incidentally, this is where the process of legitimisation becomes useful. Through the intensification of fear entailed by xenophobia, the *xenos* is not only produced as threatening through discourse but also felt as a reified origin of fear. Thus, their disambiguation into either a similar or a different subject – into a subject already apprehended through the oppositional binary – is legitimised. This disambiguation goes through the constitution of xenophobic knowledge (legitimised by fear) and the persecution of the *xenos* (legitimised by xenophobic knowledge). Before we study those two practices as forming a xenophobic apparatus, the process of legitimisation needs to be unpacked.

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<sup>159</sup> To understand this point, Bruno Latour’s notions of hybridization and purification are useful. According to Latour, modernity is characterised by the possibility to distinguish those two practices, while our contemporary period is characterised by the impossibility to distinguish them. Hybridization “creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture”, while purification “creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other” (Latour, 1993, 10-11). The postcolonial and xenophobic strategy of disambiguation can only be articulated if the ambiguity of the *xenos* has been problematised as a threat (hybridization) to be disambiguated, that is, reintroduced within the oppositional binary, as a similar or a different subject (purification).

First, it should be distinguished from the notion of legitimacy. According to Foucault, archaeology does not inform us about “a condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements. It is not a question of rediscovering what might legitimise an assertion, but of freeing the conditions of emergence of statements” (Foucault, 2002a, 143). In that sense, legitimacy would lead us on the wrong track because it reintroduces a constitutive subject who *is* legitimate or *has* legitimacy. Yet, discarding too quickly the act of legitimising makes us miss an important element about xenophobia, i.e., the passage from the discursive production of threat and the circulation of fear to the production of xenophobic knowledge and the persecution of the *xenos*. To paraphrase Foucault, analysing the legitimisation of xenophobic discourses is a questioning that accepts the fact of knowledge only to ask what, historically, has allowed this knowledge to be knowledge, without convoking a transcendental subject (Foucault, 2002a, 212). Indeed, if we get rid of the constitutive subject, we cannot presuppose a transcendental subject behind legitimisation. Rather, legitimisation is the process that allows xenophobic discourses to become, through the intensification of fear, xenophobic knowledge. Therefore, legitimisation is part of the discursive regularity of the xenophobic discourses that reach “the threshold of epistemologisation” to produce threats that can be legitimately persecuted. Thus, contrary to the common perspective, that Ahmed describes as “Western epistemology”, and according to which “emotions ... have been seen as either the subordinate other of thought, or at the very least as ‘getting in the way’ of judgment”, it is possible to think together of an emotion like fear and an “intellectual” process like legitimisation (Ahmed, 2003, 383).<sup>160</sup> In an agnotologic perspective, it would also mean that *xenophobia* has nothing to do with a traditional conception of ignorance and everything to do with knowledge (cf. Sullivan and Tuana, 2007; Proctor and Schiebinger, 2008). Second, drawing from Ahmed, I argue that legitimisation is an effect of intensification which tends to make us forget about history and thus projects us toward an imagined future. Through intensification, xenophobia cuts us off from past narratives and discourses and maintains us – through the seemingly immediate bodily feeling of fear – in the present. However, as Ahmed explains “while the lived experience of fear may be unpleasant in the present, the unpleasantness of fear also

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<sup>160</sup> Reddy also explains that the opposition between emotion and reason or thought is typically Western and that reason could rather be seen as a “Western example of an admirable regulatory emotion” (Reddy, 2020, 167-170).

relates to the future”. Even if it is felt in the present, in our body, “fear involves an *anticipation* of hurt or injury” (Ahmed, 2014, 65). Thus, it is through the anticipation of the danger that the *xenos* “will” represent to the sovereign and society, a threat which is felt in the present, that their persecution is justified or that the violence against them is “legitimated” (Ahmed, 2003, 385). Third, the notion of legitimisation allows us to engage in a “return to the law” which has everything to do with the “return to repression” as a tool – and not as the essence – of power that I associate with the notion of persecution (cf. Chapter 4).<sup>161</sup> Obviously, Foucault has shifted the focus of political theory from law and repression to norm and normalisation, and my point with legitimisation and persecution is not to argue that this shift was inaccurate (Foucault, 1978, 144; 2003, 81). On the contrary, it was necessary to analyse biopolitics. While the norm and normalisation apply to every subject – and this is indeed what makes biopower so powerful – persecution only concerns specific subjects. Precisely, xenophobic persecution takes part in the subjectification of the *xenos*. Thus, resorting to the notion of legitimisation intends to signify that xenophobia is not about a low-profile and creeping – even if terribly effective and dramatically pervasive – norm, but about an out-in-the-open and sharp “law” which legitimises, supported by xenophobic knowledge, the persecution of the *xenos*. Yes, as Foucault argues, “law operates more and more as a norm” and we ought to pay attention to the different apparatuses – among them, the xenophobic apparatus – to understand their regulatory functions (Foucault, 1978, 144). Yet, this does not mean that we should accept the idea that the *xenos* is affected by a plain normalisation. Legitimation and persecution thus allow us to be more precise.

## Conclusion

This chapter analyses the workings of postcolonial xenophobia through two complementary perspectives: the historical discursive dividing practices of subjectification of the *xenos* as a threat and the economy of fear that emerges through the intensification entailed by xenophobia.

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<sup>161</sup> This return to law and repression should not be understood in a psychoanalytical sense.

I show that the intentionality at work in the strategy articulated through the xenophobic practices of subjectification allows us to acknowledge, through an archaeological methodology, that the discursive and emotional registers must be thought together. If the *xenos* is produced as ambiguous and therefore as a threat, it is to make sure that they can be disambiguated, that is, turned into either a similar or a different subject. In the case of the homosexual Arab in postcolonial France, it means that he is produced as a threat to be disambiguated into either a gay (which means that he is no longer considered as an Arab) or, in most cases because of the power of the oppositional binary, an Arab man (which means that he cannot be perceived as homosexual).

Thinking about the discursive and emotional registers together also allows me to understand how the sign “threat” gets to stick so much to the *xenos*’ body that it becomes its only legitimate meaning. This fixity reached through intensification, fear, and disambiguation is critical when it comes to analysing the role played by knowledge production in xenophobia. Indeed, the pursuit of knowledge about the *xenos* is a discursive practice of subjectification driven and legitimised by the fear that circulates around the *xenos*.

In the next chapter, I draw a link between the circulation of fear studied here and knowledge production. I study how discourses that have made their way up to the field of knowledge are legitimised by fear and legitimise the persecution of the *xenos*. Those discourses are supported by a typically postcolonial problematisation of ambiguity, which thus becomes not only intelligible but known, and the reification of the *xenos* as the cause of fear.

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## Chapter 4

# From Knowledge to Persecution: The Xenophobic Apparatus

### Introduction

This chapter argues that xenophobic knowledge can be apprehended as a discursive practice of subjectification of the *xenos* legitimised by fear. More generally, knowledge is a form of discourse that has reached what Foucault calls “the threshold of epistemologisation”. For Foucault, the threshold of epistemologisation is situated “before” the thresholds of formalisation and scientificity, which allow a discourse to constitute a science, and which are studied by “traditional” epistemology. Rather, the threshold of epistemologisation allows a discourse to constitute as knowledge and is studied by archaeology (Foucault, 2002a, 206-211).

This chapter focuses on *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance*, two specific practices of knowledge which articulate an intentional disambiguating strategy. Indeed, they force the transformation of the *xenos* into a similar or a different subject – i.e., subjects that have been “known” for a longer time through the oppositional binary. Knowledge also allows me to link xenophobic discursive practices of subjectification with non-discursive practices of subjectification of the *xenos* – like persecution. Indeed, xenophobic knowledge legitimises, or justifies, the persecution of the *xenos*. Xenophobic persecution is a violent and repressive, non-discursive practice of subjectification of the *xenos* which also articulates an intentional strategy of disambiguation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the association of discursive and non-discursive practices of subjectification forms what Foucault calls an “apparatus”, which consists in “strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge”, while “being much more heterogeneous” than discourses alone (Foucault, 1980c, 196-197). Moreover, this chapter introduces a typically Foucaultian shift in the analysis of xenophobia and the subjectification of the *xenos*: from Chapters 1 to 3, I approached the *xenos*’ ambiguity through intelligibility and (political) meaning: this ambiguity is threatening. In this chapter, ambiguity and the threat it

represents are known and legitimately persecuted. This is illustrated in Chapter 5, which puts together an archaeology of the xenophobic practices of subjectification of the intersex and the foreigner in French faculties of medicine and law.

Through problematisation, which is historically linked to an episteme (Foucault, 2002a, 211),<sup>162</sup> intelligibility/meaning, knowledge, and persecution can hold together under the notion of xenophobia. The *xenos* is produced as a political problem because ambiguity has been made a problem for knowledge (which is triggered by fear) as a result of its intensification as a threat by xenophobia. Foucault defines problematisation both as “the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that ... pose problem for politics” and as “the ensemble of discursive and non-discursive practices which brings something into the play of true and false and which constitutes it as an object of thought” (Foucault, 1994c, 593 and 670). This division between what is true and false – a “system of exclusion” in itself (Foucault, 2009a, 16) – makes knowledge one of the external dividing practices of subjectification through legitimisation.<sup>163</sup> In Chapter 1, we saw that Foucault claimed that his entire work was dedicated to analysing the “modes of objectification which transform beings into subjects” (Foucault, 1982, 777). He also claimed that problematisation is “the notion that constitutes the common form to the studies [he] undertook since *History of Madness*” (Foucault, 1994c, 669). In that sense, Deleuze was right to state that “Foucault’s major achievement” is “the conversion of phenomenology into epistemology” (Deleuze, 1988, 109) – a conversion realised through politicisation and historicisation (cf. Introduction). This epistemological thread, developed in parallel to an analysis of xenophobic knowledge and persecution (alongside their intentional disambiguating strategy), leads me to introduce Foucault’s analysis of the pre-classical episteme of similarity and the classical (and “modern”) episteme of difference. Those epistememes explain why the similar and the different subjects have been known for a longer time than the *xenos*, and why the latter is disambiguated through xenophobia.

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<sup>162</sup> For Arnold I. Davidson, an episteme is the “order of knowledge uniting different sciences” and their “discursive regularities”. It also “marks out the relations and communication between the different sciences; it is located neither at the level of accumulated empirical knowledge (*connaissance*) nor at that of the internal norms of a science that provide the framework for this *connaissance*, but is rather to be found precisely at the level of the discursive formations of *savoir*” (Davidson, 2004, 201-202).

<sup>163</sup> Insofar as one keeps in mind Davidson’s distinction between the traditional epistemological focus on “*conditions of validity*” which concerns “how one determines that a given statement is true or false”, and the Foucaultian archaeological focus on “*conditions of possibility*” which concerns “how a statement becomes a possible candidate for either truth or falsehood” (Davidson, 2004, xii).

From this historical epistemology, I can extrapolate to introduce our postcolonial times, if not as an episteme, at least as a period problematising ambiguity. Additionally, arguing that the problematisation of ambiguity is postcolonial entails discussing Foucault's dismissal of coloniality in the problematisation of difference since the classical age.

## **1 Xenophobic Knowledge: Two Discursive Practices of Subjectification of the *Xenos***

Analysing xenophobic knowledge at this stage is important for the argument of the thesis. Indeed, I approach xenophobic knowledge (which is twofold) as a dividing practice of subjectification of the *xenos*. This is through those practices which consist in producing a seemingly knowledgeable discourse that the *xenos* is differentiated from the sovereign and the other – and dominated accordingly. While xenophobic knowledge first identifies the *xenos* beside the sovereign and the other, it also forces them into a binary frame of differentiation. This is precisely what I identify as *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance*. Furthermore, it is through the archaeological analysis of xenophobic knowledge that I am able to show how fear can become part of the regularity of a dividing practice of subjectification like xenophobic knowledge. Indeed, fear triggers the articulation of the latter, it even legitimises its constitution because knowledge becomes what makes the *xenos*' threatening ambiguity disappear. In turn, xenophobic knowledge legitimises the persecution of the *xenos*, which complete the annihilation of ambiguity up to the *xenos*' body. Thus, it is through the analysis of xenophobic knowledge that I can show that there is a consistency in the domination that affects some subjects, like the homosexual Arab (cf. Chapter 3), the intersex, and the foreigner (cf. Chapter 5).

*Reconnaissance*<sup>164</sup> and *méconnaissance*<sup>165</sup> are the two discursive practices of subjectification of the *xenos* that, legitimised by fear, have made their way into the field of knowledge. A detour through the French is useful insofar as it allows us to analyse the production of knowledge intensified by xenophobia as a binary practice of disambiguation of the *xenos*. Indeed, instead of *connaissance*, which is one of the possible translations of knowledge,<sup>166</sup> going through *reconnaissance* allows us to show how knowledge production can turn ambiguity into similarity, while *méconnaissance* turns the ambiguous into something different to force the *xenos* into a frame constituted by the oppositional binary. While the ambiguous subject is threatening because they are *neither* similar *nor* different, ambiguity is either apprehended as the unknown or as the undifferentiated, which are both considered threatening. Thus, *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance* turn the *xenos* into a subject who is *either* similar *or* different to make the threat disappear through the systematic reinforcement of a binary foundation for knowledge. Legitimised by fear, xenophobic knowledge legitimises the persecution of the *xenos*, which I introduce in the next part of this chapter.

*Reconnaissance* is also linked to the historical importance of similarity in knowledge production, while *méconnaissance* is linked to the historical importance of difference in knowledge production. This implies returning to Foucault's analysis of the pre-classical episteme of similarity and the classical episteme of difference (Foucault, 2002b). Drawing from this historical epistemology, I introduce our postcolonial times as the period when ambiguity is problematised beside similarity and difference. I also

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<sup>164</sup> If the verb *reconnaître* can be translated into “to recognise”, *reconnaissance* does not mean “recognition” in the sense given, e.g., by Axel Honneth, which implies reciprocity and respect (Honneth, 1996). *Reconnaissance* is not the normative result of an intersubjective relation, but the discursive practice that turns the ambiguous subject (the *xenos*) into a similar one.

<sup>165</sup> The verb *méconnaître* can be translated into “to misread” or “to be ignorant of”, but *méconnaissance* should not be confused with the Lacanian concept of “misrecognition” (*méconnaissance* in French) through which a subject mistakes an identity for her own – like the child through the mirror stage (Lacan, 2001, 1-6). *Méconnaissance* is the practice of subjectification that turns the ambiguous subject (the *xenos*) into a different one.

<sup>166</sup> *Connaissance* rather than *savoir*, unlike Foucault's preference (Foucault, 2014) because the intentionality at work in *connaissance* links xenophobic *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance* to fear (Chapter 3) and xenophobic persecution (Chapter 4, Part 2). In its traditional sense, knowledge-*connaissance* assumes a relation subject-object of knowledge where the transcendental subject reads the already-there object thanks to the consciousness' orientation toward an object. Obviously, a Foucaultian archaeology does not acknowledge intentionality as a characteristic of consciousness. Yet, the pursuit of knowledge intensified by xenophobia and legitimising the persecution of the *xenos*, all because of fear, produces a sort of fixed (constitutive) subject through disambiguation. There is what archaeology allows us to analyse and there is what xenophobia produces effectively.

introduce a postcolonial critique of Foucault's problematisation of difference since the classical age which does not acknowledge coloniality in this epistemological process. This is necessary to articulate the (xenophobic) problematisation of ambiguity as a *postcolonial* matter.

### **1.1 *Reconnaissance*: Knowledge and Similarity**

To articulate the notion of *reconnaissance* as a form of xenophobic knowledge, I found useful leads in Friedrich Nietzsche's and Michel Foucault's works. The very motivation to go through the word "*reconnaissance*" comes from the French translation of *The Gay Science*. In this book, the word *reconnaissance* is used to translate the German *Bekanntschaft* that Nietzsche sees, critically, as the path taken by the nineteenth-century European subject to, so to speak, practice knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) (Nietzsche, 2001, §355). The suffix "*re-*" in *reconnaissance* marks the repetition, the recursiveness, (the illusion of) a second encounter with something or someone we already came across and therefore already know, even when it is not the case. As I explain below, *Bekanntschaft* makes knowledge a practice that turns "the unknown" into "the familiar". This is useful to understand the disambiguating process at work in xenophobia, through which the ambiguous is turned into the similar. That said, in Nietzsche's time, the "unknown" is exclusively linked to difference and the other (Nietzsche, 2001, §355). Resorting to the Nietzschean notion of *Bekanntschaft* to describe what is at work in xenophobia thus requires an extrapolation and a resolutely new term (*reconnaissance*) to discuss what it would mean for ambiguous subjects to be disambiguated into similar ones in our postcolonial times. Another important point brought by Nietzsche is the unequivocal link he draws between knowledge and affect, especially fear (Nietzsche, 2001, §123 and §355; Nietzsche cited in Schrift, 2009, 207), while knowledge is usually linked to reason. In my analysis of xenophobia, fear is indeed what triggers the emergence of a discursive practice like xenophobic knowledge, and even legitimises it since it is supposed to make fear disappear (by turning the unknown and therefore threatening ambiguous subject into an already known and therefore harmless similar one). Finally, Nietzsche sees, in the nineteenth century, the emergence of knowledge (*Erkenntnis* "polluted" by *Bekanntschaft*) as an end to itself – when he argues that it used to be only a means to a greater end, i.e., virtue. Conversely, I only focus on xenophobic knowledge as a

practice of subjectification that follows a strategy of disambiguation, that is, as a means to an end.

Regarding Foucault, as Jacques Bouveresse reproaches him, he sometimes addresses knowledge and truth as one and only phenomenon (i.e., a “weapon for war”) – which is a confusion Nietzsche already criticised a century before (Nietzsche, 2001, §110; Foucault, 2003, 57 and 173; Bouveresse, 2016). This is the reason why, below, I focus more on his notion of tradition (Foucault, 1980a; 2002a). That said, as in Nietzsche’s work, Foucault links tradition and knowledge to a search for similarity, which is very useful for my articulation of the notion of *reconnaissance*. It is all the more important that I can link this tendency to work toward similarity to a pre-classical episteme that Foucault analysed in *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 2002b). This return to a pre-classical episteme of similarity and, in the next section, a classical and colonial episteme of difference is pivotal to my analysis of the postcolonial problematisation of ambiguity.

### ***1.1.1 Friedrich Nietzsche, Knowledge, and the Familiar***

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche distinguishes what knowledge should be from what it generally is. For him, knowledge should be understood as “something striking” which “contradicts my prevalent opinion”, something that should lead us to “discover new truths” and not only to learn the “too many old ones” (Nietzsche, 2001, §25). He adds that to know should be understood as “to view as a problem, to see as strange, as distant, as ‘outside us’” (Nietzsche, 2001, §355). Interestingly, he also gives the following rule for knowledge: “Above all, one shouldn’t want to strip [existence] of its *ambiguous* character: that, gentlemen, is what *good* taste demands – above all, the taste of reverence for everything that lies beyond your horizon!” (Nietzsche, 2001, §373). For Nietzsche, disambiguating the existence thus amounts to producing a “meaningless world” (Nietzsche, 2001, §373). I do not pretend to find the postcolonial and xenophobic problematisation of ambiguity in nineteenth-century philosophy, but this is interesting because the *xenos* is the ambiguous subject whose meaning is synonymous with threat, and ambiguity has a singular political significance.

Opposite to this courageous and never-achieved form of knowledge, Nietzsche describes what knowledge usually is. Because the unknown is threatening, Nietzsche notices that the most common behaviour, which he considers as a “stupid humility”, is to “turn on [one’s] heels” away, “as if intimidated, from the striking thing” (Nietzsche, 2001, p§25). This approach to “the unknown” is interesting for our understanding of the *xenos* as a subject problematised as ambiguous – that is, as a threat. Considering, as Nietzsche seems to regret, that something unknown is threatening is to assume that there is something like a thing to be known before knowledge, that knowledge would be used to “read” this already-there thing and make it less threatening. However, approaching, as I do in this research, knowledge as a practice subjectification that produces its object and produces it as threatening makes it complicated to endorse this point of view. In any case, according to Nietzsche, most people – laymen and philosophers alike – face the threat of the unknown by looking for what is “identical” (Nietzsche, 2001, §110 and §111) or “familiar” in what is unknown – “for ‘what is familiar is known’” (Nietzsche, 2001, §355). However, Nietzsche argues that thinking that there are identical things is erroneous (Nietzsche, 2001, §110) and that “the predominant disposition ... to treat the similar as identical [is] an illogical disposition, for there is nothing identical as such”; even though this disposition “is what first supplied all the foundations for logic” (Nietzsche, 2001, §111).<sup>167</sup>

Nietzsche also notices a common confusion between knowledge and truth. For him, errors can be more fundamental and productive than truth, which is recent in human history and “emerges as the weakest form of knowledge” (Nietzsche, 2001, §110).<sup>168</sup> Mistakes turned into knowledge have even become norms which are used to differentiate what is true from what is untrue, which allows Nietzsche to argue that “the *strength* of knowledge lies not in its degree of truth, but in its age, its embeddedness, its character as a condition of life” (Nietzsche, 2001, §110). I come back to this approach to knowledge to analyse Foucault’s notion of tradition.

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<sup>167</sup> Hence, my privileging of the term “similarity” to the typically poststructuralist “identity” (cf. Chapter 1).

<sup>168</sup> Alan D. Schrift explains that “Nietzsche’s critique of truth is first and foremost a critique of the *value* of truth” (Schrift, 2009, 211).

Once Nietzsche has debunked the confusion between knowledge and truth, he criticises the former as the pursuit of the familiar, or what I call, drawing from the French version of *The Gay Science*, “*reconnaissance*” (Nietzsche, 2017b, §355). Indeed, to explain “the origin of our notion of ‘knowledge’”, “*Erkenntnis*” in the German text, Nietzsche goes through the word “*Bekanntschaft*” (Nietzsche, 2017a, §355). *Erkenntnis* can be translated into “knowledge”, but also into “discovery”, “findings”, “idea”, and “cognition”. On the other side, *Bekanntschaft* can be translated into “acquaintance” and “familiarity”. Thus, if “what is familiar is known”, it is because knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) can be defined as “nothing more than this: something unfamiliar is to be traced back to something familiar [*Bekanntes*]” (Nietzsche, 2001, §355). According to Nietzsche, people turn what they do not know into something that they already know (the familiar) because what is familiar is reassuring while what is unknown is threatening. Thus, for Nietzsche, the “need for knowledge [is] precisely this need for the familiar, the will to uncover among everything strange, unusual, and doubtful something which no longer unsettles us” (Nietzsche, 2001, §355), while knowledge *should* be oriented toward the unsettling. Nietzsche even asks: “Is it not the instinct of fear that bids us to know? And isn’t the rejoicing of the person who attains knowledge just rejoicing from a regained sense of security?” (Nietzsche, 2001, §355).<sup>169</sup> Interestingly, in German, Nietzsche uses “*Fremdes*” (Nietzsche, 2017a, §355), which means “strange” or “alien”, to talk about what has been translated into “unfamiliar” in English. Yet, we know that the stranger is already produced as a threat before being met, so the stranger is actually never unknown, she is already known – and known as a threat (cf. Chapters 2 and 3). Nietzsche thus argues that this is possible because the object of knowledge is brought back to “the idea”, which is always already known. In other words, making the object similar to the idea is the necessary step to knowing this object. In this perspective, obsessed with retrieving security by turning what is threatening into what is familiar, knowledge as *reconnaissance* is unable to orientate itself toward something unknown without turning it at once into something similar.

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<sup>169</sup> Nietzsche also wrote to his friend Franz Overbeck about his excitement to find a “*precursor*” in Spinoza because they would share an “overall tendency ... to make knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] the *most powerful affect*” (Nietzsche, cited in Schrift, 2009, 207), thus linking knowledge to emotions.



This is what happens through xenophobic knowledge for which the *xenos*' ambiguity equates with the unknown, the unfamiliar. If *reconnaissance* is a discursive practice articulating a disambiguating strategy (the xenophobic intentionality), making the *xenos* intelligible as ambiguous, and meaningful as threatening (because unknown), are the conditions of possibility for xenophobic knowledge to turn the *xenos*, in this case through *reconnaissance*, into a similar – known – subject.

### ***1.1.2 Michel Foucault, the Search for Origins, and Tradition***

Michel Foucault was a careful reader of Nietzsche's work and he shared with the latter a close understanding of the pursuit of knowledge. Relative to what I articulate as *reconnaissance*, Foucault states that "Nietzsche speaks of knowledge as lie ... because it distorts reality, because it is perspectivist, because it erases difference, and because *it introduces the abusive reign of resemblance*" (Foucault, 2014, 213, my emphases). Furthermore, Foucault analyses metaphysics and what he calls "the historian's history" under the perspective of a "search for origins" (Foucault, 1980a, 152), which can also help us to understand what is at stake in *reconnaissance*.<sup>170</sup> Foucault indeed analyses metaphysics and the historian's history both as forms of knowledge (sorts of disciplines) and conditions for knowledge production (sorts of theories), and he opposes them to genealogy – which is a methodology he draws from Nietzsche.

Foucault defines metaphysics and traditional history according to their relation to a mythical origin – both the condition of possibility for knowledge and the object toward which it is oriented. Returning to the origin is the task of metaphysics which searches for "a timeless and essential secret", i.e., the truth and perfection of things only retrievable at the moment of their birth (Foucault, 1980a, 142-143). The metaphysician thus "searches for truth in the distant ideality of the origin" (Foucault, 1980a, 145) which is actually very close to the task of the traditional historian, who claims to be absolutely objective. This is possible because the tradition historian believes in an absolute truth and "the nature of consciousness as always identical to itself" (Foucault,

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<sup>170</sup> For Foucault, the historians' history "compose[s] the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself", and it "encourages subjective recognitions and attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past" (Foucault, 1980a, 152).

1980a, 152). Hence, according to Foucault, traditional history depends on metaphysics (Foucault, 1980a, 155).

Thus, knowledge is problematic when it pursues the origins of the object of knowledge – like in metaphysics and traditional history. Looking for origins amounts to looking for what is similar, as Foucault writes: “This search [of origins] is directed to ‘that which was already there,’ the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature, and it necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity” (Foucault, 1980a, 142). For Foucault, the origin is “a category of resemblance” (Foucault, 1980a, 145), which is important to understanding the legacy of resemblance in knowledge production, as analysed below. Acknowledging this metaphysical search for origins helps us to understand the practice of *reconnaissance* as a pursuit of knowledge about the *xenos*, which makes the threat of the non-similar disappear. Indeed, Foucault argues that metaphysics “encourage[s] the consoling play of recognition” while traditional history depends on “the ‘rediscovery of ourselves’” (Foucault, 1980a, 153-154). Incidentally, Foucault reminds us that Plato analysed history according to three modes: history as “reminiscence or recognition”, history as “knowledge” (*connaissance*), and history as “continuity or representative of a tradition” (Foucault, 1980a, 160). Furthermore, Foucault defines tradition in knowledge as what

is intended to give a special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar); it makes it possible to rethink the dispersion of history in the form of the same; it allows a reduction of the difference proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin; tradition enables us to isolate the new against a background of permanence. (Foucault, 2002a, 23)

Thus, contrary to a progressist conception of knowledge which would break the hold of tradition, Nietzsche and Foucault show us that knowledge-*reconnaissance* and tradition have a lot in common. They both are based on similarity (enacted by repetition and, in the case of xenophobia, obsessive repetition) and they both look for similarity. Foucault even identifies specific functions of control through discourse that have similarity as an objective, and which are linked to knowledge production. First, Foucault studies the commentary of the fundamental discourses, which “used to limit the coincidence of the discourse thanks to the play of an identity which would take the

form of repetition and the same” (Foucault, 2009a, 31). Second, he identifies the function of the author, which he analyses as a principle of gathering discourse, of unity and origin of their meanings, as the centre of their consistency (Foucault, 2009a, 28). Finally, he approaches discipline as another principle of control of discourse production through the fixing of “limits through a play of identity which takes the shape of permanent update of rules” (Foucault, 2009a, 37-38). Thanks to archaeology, Foucault notices the tendency of *reconnaissance* to mimic tradition. He also argues that archaeology reveals that “the same, the repetitive, and the uninterrupted are no less problematic than the ruptures ..., far from manifesting that fundamental, reassuring inertia which we like to use as a criterion of change, they are themselves actively, regularly formed” (Foucault, 2002a, 192). This attention to the same as something that is problematised in knowledge production and as something that supports the latter can be linked to Foucault’s analysis of similarity during the pre-classical episteme.

### ***1.1.3 Similarity in Knowledge Production***

According to Foucault, before the classical age, “the knowledge of Western culture” was organised by similarity or “resemblance” (Foucault, 2002b, 19). He insists that the form of knowledge practised until the Renaissance (hermeneutic or interpretation) was not pre-scientific nor non-scientific (Foucault, 2002b, 35-36). The Renaissance knew how to know “rigorously”; the knowledge that was practised then was simply organised through the order of resemblance (Foucault, 2002b, 44). This epistemological order was organised according to a “quest for similarities”, as Philippe Sabot puts it (Sabot, 2006, 52). Foucault distinguishes the four Renaissance modes of knowledge that operated through similarity: convenience, emulation, analogy, and especially sympathy – with its “dangerous power of *assimilating*” – coupled with antipathy (Foucault, 2002b, 21-27). With those techniques, articulated to one another, “the world remains identical; resemblances continue to be what they are, and to resemble one another. The same remains the same, riveted onto itself.” (Foucault, 2002b, 28). Foucault also argues that the Renaissance knowledge is one of “signatures” (Foucault, 2002b, 29) – i.e., the signs used in language and knowledge are part of the world and resemble what they signify (Sabot, 2006, 50). Foucault then states that “the universe was folded in upon itself” (Foucault, 2002b, 19) and that, for the Renaissance

knowledgeable subjects, the world was a set of “*legenda*” (Foucault, 2002b, 44), that is, of things to read, to interpret, under the umbrella of similarity. Sabot adds that “there is a deep mutual belonging between language and the world” (Sabot, 2006, 50). This epistemological understanding of the Renaissance knowledge should be linked to another Foucaultian analysis: that of the “political discourse” of the time. As explained in Chapter 2, before the great political struggles of the English bourgeoisie and French aristocracy in the seventeenth century and the emergence of what Foucault calls the “historico-political discourse”, the main discourse on society was “philosophico-juridical”. It was organised from a univocal and unifying vantage point – at the same time unique and universalist, that Foucault identifies with the ancient philosopher’s viewpoint. Furthermore, this discourse covered any possibility and acknowledgement of conflict (Foucault, 2003, 49-50). Since Foucault thinks of power and knowledge together as a nexus, it could be interesting to analyse simultaneously the relation to Renaissance knowledge with similarity, and the dominion of the philosophico-juridical discourse in politics. How can there be anything but a univocal, apparently pacified, and universalist discourse in politics if “knowledge can only follow the paths of similitude” (Foucault, 2002b, 32)? Therefore, before the classical age, in politics as in knowledge, similarity was what was problematised, both politically and epistemologically.

In accordance with Foucault’s archaeology, the classical age problematised difference (Foucault, 2002b, 55). But it did not mean that similarity ceased to play a role in ordering knowledge. Foucault claimed that, if similitude became a force “outside the realm of knowledge”, it above all became its “indispensable border” that “reside[s] below knowledge in the manner of a mute and ineffaceable necessity” (Foucault, 2002b, 74-75). Similarity becomes “the undifferentiated, shifting, unstable base upon which knowledge can establish its relations, its measurements, and its identities” (Foucault, 2002b, 75). In other words, there is no identification without differentiation, and vice versa. From the classical age, similarity is placed in a binary relation with its opposite – i.e., difference (Foucault, 2002b, 46-47). Thus, pre-classical similarity did not disappear with the emergence of the classical problematisation of difference. On the contrary, it led to the emergence of a binary opposition between similarity and difference. By extrapolation, it can be argued that the postcolonial emergence of the problematisation of ambiguity has not entailed the disappearance of similarity,

difference, or the oppositional binary. On the contrary, *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance* (introduced below) show that ambiguity is problematised *beside* similarity and difference. If the *xenos* is acknowledged as an ambiguous threat to be disambiguated into a similar or a different subject through xenophobic knowledge, it means that similarity, difference, and the oppositional binary are still operating despite the postcolonial and xenophobic problematisation of ambiguity.

## **1.2 *Méconnaissance*: Knowledge and Difference**

### **1.2.1 René Girard, Misapprehension, and Scapegoating**

This section draws from René Girard's notion of *méconnaissance* – “misapprehension” in English (Girard, 2000, 168) – to frame the disambiguating practice at work when xenophobia intensifies the pursuit of knowledge about the *xenos* to turn the latter into a different subject. It does not mean that Girard's theorisation of misapprehension is the prefiguration of xenophobic *méconnaissance*. Furthermore, Girard's constant search for origins accounts for a metaphysical tendency in his work from which I wish to depart, in accordance with Nietzsche's and Foucault's critical legacies. Indeed, Girard tends to see differentiation as binary and binary differentiation as fundamental for any society to be born and to maintain itself, at any moment in history (Girard, 1989, 12-14). I therefore need to discuss his theory alongside Foucault's historicisation of the problematisation of difference from the classical age to make room both for my anti-binary political ontology and the acknowledgement of the postcolonial possibility to problematise ambiguity (cf. below). Also, Girard has a limited understanding of “persecution” that he defines as “acts of violence committed directly by a mob of murderers” or even “acts of violence ... that are legal in form but stimulated by the extremes of public opinion” (Girard, 1989, 12). While he aptly draws a line between *méconnaissance* and persecution, his conceptualisation of the latter is too limiting to help us understand xenophobic persecution, as I show in the next part of this chapter. However, the link Girard draws between misapprehension, fear, and the violent forcing of difference (understood in a binary opposition to similarity) upon a subject (the victim) in the scapegoating mechanism is helpful to analyse xenophobic *méconnaissance*. Moreover, I agree with him that acts of persecution, supported by *méconnaissance*, are legitimate in the eyes of the persecutors, who are therefore “encourage[d] to hide nothing of their massacre” (Girard, 1989, 6). I frame this

phenomenon as legitimisation (Chapter 3) and illustrate it in Chapter 5 when, for instance, I describe how future doctors learn in medicine faculties that it is legitimate to mutilate intersex people.

For Girard, misapprehension is the absence of acknowledgement of violence at the origin of a culture (Girard, 2000, 259).<sup>171</sup> Indeed, every culture would be produced through the sacrifice of a victim – the scapegoating mechanism. The victim of the originary violence is allegedly chosen for their difference compared with the members of the community, while this difference is actually forced upon the victim through the scapegoating mechanism. A culture emerges through the violent forcing of difference upon a victim because, according to Girard, undifferentiation – the excess of similarity between the members of the community – threatens the community to collapse (Girard, 1989). In the case of xenophobia, ambiguity can be – wrongly – apprehended as undifferentiation (cf. Chapters 1 and 3). Xenophobic *méconnaissance* is thus put to use in forcing difference (understood as an already known otherness) upon the *xenos* whose ambiguity is mistaken for a factor of undifferentiation – i.e., a threat of chaos.

According to Girard, religion ritualises and sacralises scapegoating while, at the same time, organising the misapprehension of the originary violence. Girard argues that this misapprehension – which hides “the generative violence” – is necessary for religion, which is made possible by it (Girard, 2000, 310). Everything changes with the emergence of monotheistic religions, and especially Christianity. Indeed, the Gospels have made the persecution of the victim – Jesus Christ – explicit (Girard, 1989, 117-188). They would have, therefore, challenged the fundamental misapprehension of violence at the origin of the community. This claim might thus be used to think of other types of cultural organisation that are not organised through misapprehension. Yet, it is not necessary to link this potentiality of religious/cultural transformation with a “progressist” view, unlike what Girardian theorist Paul Dumouchel does. Dumouchel is indeed also interested in *méconnaissance*, which he sees, first, as an individual ignorance of the fact that people, notably through their actions, are interdependent (a sort of reification) and, second, as a “cultural” phenomenon according to which we dismiss the violence at the origin of our communities (Dumouchel, 2011, 101-104).

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<sup>171</sup> Despite their differences, Girard and Foucault both fought against “the disavowal of violence” (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011), especially in our contemporary societies.

Dumouchel considers that in the long run, misapprehension (or, “mis-knowledge”) precedes knowledge, because “knowledge always constitutes a gain over an original ignorance”, even if he also argues that misapprehension “can never be entirely expelled out of ‘*connaissance*’, or excluded from our knowledge of the world” (Dumouchel, 2011, 100-103).

Yet, in the case of xenophobia, knowledge is not necessarily a gain over ignorance, but a legitimised and legitimising discursive practice of subjectification articulating a disambiguating strategy. The Girardian concept of *méconnaissance* can thus be linked to xenophobic knowledge through the fear of the *xenos* and their ambiguity, apprehended as a form of undifferentiation and a threat of chaos. This fear legitimises xenophobic knowledge and, especially, *méconnaissance*, which disambiguates the *xenos* into a different subject. Misapprehending the originary violence that produces a culture also entails misapprehending our world. According to Dumouchel, it is because misapprehending the originary sacrifice – the originary violent relation among the members of a community and the consequent violent relation between the latter and outsiders – amounts to misapprehending our relations to others (Dumouchel, 2011, 101). The misapprehension of the originary violence thus entails the production of a myth in which subjects are independent from one another, whereas they depend on one another since the originary sacrifice that gave birth to the community. Despite this misapprehension of the relations between subjects, and the effective myth of subjective independence, *méconnaissance* is highly productive. Even if it misapprehends the fundamental relationality of subjects, it still produces differences among them and therefore creates more than religions, but to entire communities. Indeed, it is through the production of difference that every culture can position itself in relation with the others. It is because there are differences that there are relations for Girard; which means that the lack of differentiation would lead to the end of the community (Girard, 1989, 21). For Dumouchel, another form of misapprehension amounts to thinking that the scapegoat deserves their persecution. He argues that it is necessary to allow the transfer of violence onto the victim and away from the community – which, because of undifferentiation, risks experiencing intestine violence (Dumouchel, 2011, 105). Thus, *méconnaissance* consists of forcing difference upon the victim, and therefore believing in their guilt, to trigger the scapegoating mechanism (which is persecution). From the start, *méconnaissance* legitimises persecution.

Through xenophobic *méconnaissance*, the *xenos* is also turned into a different subject because the difference forced on them would replace their ambiguity, which is mistaken for a form of undifferentiation. The *xenos* is guilty because, as a factor of undifferentiation, they represent a threat of chaos. By making them different, xenophobic knowledge makes this threat disappear. Forcing difference upon subjects or culture is forcing the world to conform to our strategy, as Dumouchel argues when he states that *méconnaissance* amounts to “want[ing] the world to conform to what we say or believe” (Dumouchel, 2011, 103).<sup>172</sup> The same thing occurs when xenophobia intensifies knowledge production to disambiguate the *xenos* into a different subject. The world we know is a world organised through the oppositional binary, a world where differentiation allows the members of a community to constitute themselves as similar to each other. Forcing the *xenos* into the oppositional binary makes them conform to a known and reassuring world. *Méconnaissance* and the violent forcing of difference upon subjects are therefore deeply linked for Girard (Girard, 2000, 168). To be sure, Girard’s investigation of the (violent) *origin* of cultures might have led him to reintroduce metaphysics – against which he was nevertheless arguing (Girard, 2000, 91). Furthermore, his conceptualisation of misapprehension risks making us think that it is a misreading of an already-there object which could be known in a better way (Dumouchel, 2011, 100). Yet, I think that Girard’s intuition on *méconnaissance* is relevant when it comes to xenophobic knowledge. Analysing misapprehension and the violent forcing of difference upon subjects as a coherent set of practices of subjectification of the *xenos* allows me to apprehend *méconnaissance* as what disambiguates the *xenos* into a different subject.

As Dumouchel argues, *méconnaissance* should not be approached as a “false or mistaken belief” but through its relation to knowledge (Dumouchel, 2011, 98). As such, it can be transformed, as was the case with Christianity, according to Girard. Once *méconnaissance* is challenged by the monotheist religions, the violent problematisation of difference is revealed and the conflictual distinction between the same and the other loses strength and relevance. Thus, the violent problematisation of difference is not unavoidable. It is only the result of *historical* power relations,

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<sup>172</sup> Whereas “to know” amounts “to adapt or adjust our statements and our beliefs to the world” (Dumouchel, 2011, 103).



according to Foucault, who, contrary to Girard, does not think that the problematisation of difference is atemporal.

### ***1.2.2 Difference and the Oppositional Binary in Knowledge Production***

To understand *méconnaissance* and the disambiguation of the *xenos* into a different subject, it is important to follow Foucault in his analysis of the problematisation of difference within knowledge. While similarity alone was problematised until the end of the Renaissance, Foucault claims that difference started being problematised from the classical age (Foucault, 2002b, 55). Furthermore, with difference – because of its relation to similarity – the oppositional binary also emerges (Foucault, 2002b, 70). Foucault explains that this involves making “the history of order”, i.e., telling “the way a given society thinks the resemblance between things and the way the differences between things can be mastered, can organise in networks, can materialise according to rational schemes” (Foucault, 1994a, 498). When it comes to xenophobia, this is indeed crucial as the *xenos*’ ambiguity escapes the oppositional binary – that is, the political foundation that enhances similarity at the expense of difference. Indeed, the *xenos* is produced as ambiguous (*neither* similar *nor* different) even if, through xenophobia, they end up being disambiguated into *either* a similar *or* a different subject. Moreover, before initiatives like the poststructuralist affirmation of difference,<sup>173</sup> the problematisation of difference is mainly realised at its disadvantage. This is also true for ambiguity, whose problematisation through xenophobia conditions the subjectification of the *xenos* mainly as a dominated threat.

According to Foucault, from the Renaissance epistemological form (hermeneutic), knowledge shifts toward representation, which takes the signs away from the things that they signify (Foucault, 2002b, 47). In Sabot’s words: “The sign does not have to look like what it shows, it has to represent it and to represent the link to what it represents” (Sabot, 2006, 53). Foucault sees Cartesianism as a symbol of “classical thought” which “exclud[es] resemblance as the fundamental experience and primary form of knowledge, denouncing it as a confused mixture that must be analysed in terms of identity, difference, measurement, and order” (Foucault, 2002b, 58). The classical episteme uses different modes of knowledge: *mathesis* – which shows an essential

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<sup>173</sup> Or antiracism, feminism, and so on.

relation to order – and *taxinomia* (Foucault, 2002b, 79) – which carries out three functions according to Foucault: speaking, classifying, exchanging (Foucault, 2002b, 86-232). Classical knowledge is ordered by difference because speaking allows us to name things differently, while classification allows us to sort things in tables according to their differences and exchange allows us to give different values to different things. Obviously, one can only give the same name to similar things, classify in the same “box” things that have the same characteristics and exchange things that have the same value. Yet, knowing through comparison involves acknowledging differences. Thus, classical comparison is conditioned to what Foucault calls “discrimination” which investigates difference, notably by distinguishing things and including them in series (Foucault, 2002b, 61).

There is more. In *History of Madness*, Foucault shows us that difference – in this case, madness – is produced through knowledge as a response to a transformation in subjectification. It is because, in the classical age, the mad is differentiated from the rational subject that knowledge about madness – that is, about difference – becomes possible. The exclusionary relation between the mad and the rational subject produces them as much as it differentiates them. Psychiatry, understood as a productive and sometimes oppressive knowledge about madness (that it considers as a threat), only comes after this differentiation. In a way, the subjectification of the other – here, the mad – becomes the condition of possibility for the problematisation of difference in knowledge production (Foucault, 2006, xxxii).<sup>174</sup> Regarding ambiguity and the *xenos*, this is similar. When the *xenos* becomes intelligible as ambiguous, a non-binary differentiation operates and makes them distinct from the sovereign and the other. Because their ambiguity is read as a threat, xenophobic knowledge articulates to annihilate this threat (see Chapter 5). What the problematisation of ambiguity shows us is that differentiation is not necessarily binary and what the xenophobic problematisation of ambiguity shows us is that this challenge to the binary increases the possibilities of domination legitimised by knowledge.

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<sup>174</sup> Lynne Huffer explains that the mad became an object of knowledge as a contingent result of their exclusion in the seventeenth century, which preceded the constitution of psychiatry as a science. She adds: “This productive transformation of moral negativity into scientific truth assumes, from the start, the *absence* of the point of view of the mad themselves; it is the mute negativity of madness that gives birth, ‘in the silent labour of the positive’, to a scientific view of madness” (Huffer, 2010, 162).

Here also, connecting the classical ordering of knowledge by difference to the political discourse of the time is interesting. From the seventeenth century onwards, Foucault observes the emergence of the “historico-political discourse”, which entails from the start that there are at least two vantage points that face each other (Foucault, 2003, 49). Quite logically, then, if there are two sides in the political relation, it is necessary to be able to epistemologically acknowledge difference, especially since what is implied by the historico-political discourse is that war is a “permanent social relationship” (Foucault, 2003, 49). If, as Foucault states, “to know” in the classical age “is to discriminate” (Foucault, 2002b, 61), then it is only possible to know alongside a historico-political discourse “in which truth functions exclusively as a weapon that is used to win an exclusively partisan victory” (Foucault, 2003, 57). Difference is thus problematised: through discourse, it acquires a form and a content, it becomes politically meaningful in terms of power relations, and this meaning can be known. For instance, difference can signify a threat (cf. Chapter 2). With difference being problematised, Foucault explains that war and knowledge support and condition each other, which turn knowledge into “a weapon in a war” (Foucault, 2003, 173). When Foucault analyses power relations away from a theory of sovereignty toward an approach through relations of domination, he acknowledges that there are adversaries and that history, for instance, is often told by the winner of the war. Thus, despite the two discourses which are present, one is enhanced at the expense of the other. The same thing happens in knowledge production: yes, there are differences, and we cannot make sense of anything if we do not acknowledge them. Yet, what brings order in the field of knowledge is the reign of the same (Foucault, 1994a, 498).

Opposite to this logic, the Foucaultian archaeology strengthens difference epistemologically as much as politically. It acknowledges difference as what “we are”, but also “our reason”, “our history”, “our selves”, i.e., “this dispersion that we are and make” (Foucault, 2002a, 147-148). Thus, archaeology is a methodology for the poststructuralist affirmation of difference since it challenges the oppositional binary. Therefore, the postwar poststructuralist affirmation of difference can be apprehended as one of the possible ways to problematise difference since difference has started being problematised in the classical age. Now, since this emergence is contingent, historical, and historicised by Foucault, difference as what organises knowledge production and what knowledge produces cannot be considered the end point of

theory.<sup>175</sup> If the problematisation of difference has emerged in the classical age, if we can find distinct – even competing – ways of problematising difference, then our postcolonial times can witness the problematisation of ambiguity. An ambiguity which is mainly problematised through xenophobia, which is drawn back toward the oppositional binary because of the xenophobic disambiguating strategy,<sup>176</sup> but which now stands beside similarity, difference, and their binary opposition. Also, the problematisation of ambiguity has been made possible because of such initiatives as the poststructuralist affirmation of difference, which allowed difference to strengthen, to complexify, sometimes even to reverse dynamics of power and, contingently, triggered the emergence of something new in power relations. Now, characterising xenophobia, its problematisation of ambiguity, and the subjectification of the *xenos* as postcolonial entails discussing Foucault’s relative silence about the role of coloniality in the classical problematisation of difference and in the organisation of knowledge. In the seventeenth century, the mad (or the homosexual) was not the only “other” who could have led to the problematisation of difference in knowledge: the subjectification of the colonised subject has also been pivotal.

### **1.3 From the Colonial Problematisation of Difference to the Postcolonial Problematisation of Ambiguity**

If, in Chapter 2, I suggest articulating the notion of racialising xenophobia rather than falling in the trap of endlessly discussing Foucault’s political understanding of racism, confronting Foucault’s epistemological historicisation of the problematisation of difference in the classical age is now necessary. Contrary to what he claimed, the problematisation of difference was not an endogenous European phenomenon. Indeed, it was intrinsically linked with “coloniality”, which Santiago Castro-Gómez defines as “a technology of power that persists today, founded on the ‘knowledge of the other’” (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 276).<sup>177</sup> If ambiguity and xenophobia cannot be understood out of their historicisation in the post-WWII and postcolonial context, the problematisation of difference must be understood as the product of coloniality as much as the product

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<sup>175</sup> Like in William E. Connolly’s work (1995; 1999; 2002), for instance.

<sup>176</sup> And because of the four-century long development, through recursiveness, of the oppositional binary.

<sup>177</sup> Walter D. Mignolo defines coloniality as “the colonial matrix of power” whose logic “translated differences into values” (Mignolo, 2011, xxvii). Drawing from Quijano, Mignolo argues that coloniality is “the darker side of Western modernity” and that it is “constitutive of modernity” (Mignolo, 2011, 3). This is an explicit form of affirmation of difference.

of the Foucaultian classical age (a combination of intra-European race wars and of the emergence of figures of the other – the mad, the homosexual, the delinquent). The fact that colonisation started before the classical age is not the ultimate evidence of this, but it is an element to bear in mind.

Castro-Gómez agrees with Foucault about the role of modernity – “an alterity-generating machine” (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 269) – in the production of difference. Interestingly for the understanding of ambiguity problematised through xenophobia, Castro-Gómez adds that “in the name of reason and humanism, [modernity] excludes from its imaginary the hybridity, multiplicity, ambiguity, and contingency of different forms of life” (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 269). Indeed, something like ambiguity, that which is *neither* similar *nor* different, cannot be made intelligible by modernity which rather problematises difference as a legacy of the classical age (Foucault, 2002b, 48).

Castro-Gómez differs from Foucault about the process which has allowed European modernity to problematise difference to the point where it becomes alterity. He holds thinkers like Foucault accountable for not making coloniality central in generating the other and thinking of difference. Drawing from Aníbal Quijano, Castro-Gómez argues that “coloniality is not modernity’s ‘past’ but its ‘other face’” (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 276), which means that the Western approach to modernity that has consisted in separating the latter from the process of colonisation is flawed.<sup>178</sup> More precisely, he argues that

the social sciences projected the idea of an aseptic and self-generating Europe, historically formed without any contact with other cultures. Rationalization – in a Weberian sense – would thus have resulted from the attribution of qualities inherent to Western societies (the “passage” from tradition to modernity) and not from Europe’s colonial interaction with America, Asia, and Africa since 1492. (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 275)

Castro-Gómez thus sees coloniality as a condition of possibility for rationalisation “in the Weberian sense”. Indeed, the “disenchanted” of the world leading to the emergence of knowledge as a “techno-scientific” practice was a way to cope with the “ontological insecurity” entailed by the encounter with the colonised, constituted as one of reason’s others (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 270). From the very beginning, modern

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<sup>178</sup> See also Barnor Hesse (2007).

knowledge is, at the same time, a product of coloniality and what legitimises it (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 279). This is a step further than Foucault's approach to knowledge as linked to power in a self-generated modern Europe because the other of reason produced by knowledge is not only the mad (Foucault, 2006) or the homosexual (Foucault, 1978), but the colonised. Castro-Gómez argues that the "image of 'rational man' was obtained counterfactually, by studying the 'others of reason': the insane, *Indians*, *blacks*, social misfits, prisoners, homosexuals, the poor", who were themselves "constructed through institutional practices of confinement and sequestration", thanks to social sciences. He adds that "prisons, hospitals, asylums, schools, factories, and *colonial societies* were laboratories from which the social sciences recovered, through its reverse image, the ideal of 'man'", who was typically a "*white*, male, married, heterosexual, disciplined, hardworking, self-controlled subject" (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 279-280, my emphases).

Something Foucault made quite clear was that, from the classical age, (epistemological) discourse is a "violence that we do to things, at least a practice that we impose on them" (Foucault, 2009a, 54). Moreover, he knows that the typical "incitement to discourse" (Foucault, 1978, 17) at the core of disciplinary and biopowers is not neutral nor independent (Foucault, 1978, 71; 2002a, 112).<sup>179</sup> Drawing from this argument, Castro-Gómez states that the project of modernity can be described as the "Faustian drive to submit the entire world to the absolute control of man under the steady guide of knowledge" (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 270). Thus politicised, knowledge is an instrument to "fight a war" to master the world, a war humankind can only win through knowledge of its enemy to submit them to its will (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 270). Now, focusing on the European "encounter" with the colonised, it becomes clear that the knowledge produced about the latter (the other of reason) has not been a peaceful practice but an incredibly violent one. Coupled with coloniality, modern knowledge not only produced difference and the other, but it also dominated them. As Castro-Gómez states, modernity has seen the emergence of a

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<sup>179</sup> To this conception of discourse as violent, Spivak adds the notion of "epistemic violence" through which imperialism and patriarchy combine to prevent subaltern women's discourse from reaching a threshold of epistemologisation. Spivak actually formulates this notion against Foucault, whom she criticises for not questioning his position of Western intellectual, for assuming that he can "represent" the subaltern, for never *thinking* that a subaltern (woman) could be an intellectual and produce knowledge about subaltern *and* Western people (Spivak, 1988).

“power mechanism that constructs the ‘other’ by means of a binary logic that represses difference” (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 269).<sup>180</sup> It was not only about acknowledging the different subject to innocently expand knowledge about the world and its inhabitants, but (according to the dominating logic of the oppositional binary) about reducing all differences in order to produce the modern subject (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 280).<sup>181</sup>

In the binary opposition between similarity and difference made possible during the classical age and through coloniality, difference is problematised to the point of being dominated. Knowledge considers difference to master it, sometimes even to annihilate it. Colonial knowledge reaches this goal through two techniques: exclusion or assimilation (cf. Chapter 2). Hence, Castro-Gómez can argue that colonial politics “normalise” difference and the other by “Westernizing” them (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 276). Those who could not or would not be assimilated had to be killed-excluded. Indeed, the oppositional binary is in itself dominating: the definition of one side of the relation is made at the expense of the other. In this context, knowledge production legitimises domination. Castro-Gómez aptly states that the colonial apparatus makes the differentiation between the coloniser and the colonised legitimate and that social sciences contribute to this legitimisation insofar as they validate scientifically “the exclusion and disciplining” of the others of modernity (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 276-278). Therefore, the classical, colonial, and modern period could not make ambiguity intelligible (let alone known) because they were structured – and therefore limited – by the binary opposition between similarity and difference. Something, or someone, was *either* similar *or* different – and when it was different, it was either assimilated or killed. If difference has been dominated in coloniality and through the classical and modern/colonial knowledge, one can argue that ambiguity is problematised and the *xenos* is persecuted in postcoloniality – a persecution legitimised by xenophobic knowledge.

Now, coloniality has not ended according to Castro-Gómez (2002, 276). It means that difference is still problematised, even if ambiguity is now problematised too. This

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<sup>180</sup> The European is civilised, modern, and rational; the colonised is barbaric, traditional, and irrational (Castro-Gómez, 2002, 278).

<sup>181</sup> For Mignolo, coloniality implies that knowledge is produced to justify “racism and the inferiority of human lives that were naturally considered dispensable” (Mignolo, 2011, 6).

articulation of different discourses and mechanisms is quite close to what was entailed by the passage between the Renaissance and the classical age, which saw the problematisation of difference emerging next to the problematisation of similarity (Foucault, 2002b, 74). While the problematised different subject – i.e., the other (among whom, the colonised) – was either assimilated or killed during colonial times, the *xenos* – i.e., the ambiguous subject – is problematised to be disambiguated into a subject who is *either similar or different*. Disambiguation, which follows from the techniques of killing and deceitful assimilation, is the intentional strategy articulated by xenophobic knowledge and persecution, and it re-articulating it makes the xenophobic apparatus intelligible.

## **2 Xenophobic Persecution: A Non-Discursive Practice of Subjectification of the *Xenos***

This part approaches xenophobic persecution as a violent, non-discursive practice of subjectification of the *xenos* which articulates an intentional strategy of disambiguation. As I illustrate it in Chapter 5, persecution violently represses the *xenos*' ambiguity – which has first been legitimately turned into a threat by xenophobic knowledge. Like xenophobic knowledge, xenophobic persecution is a notion that allows me to show that there is a consistency in the dividing practices of subjectification of some subjects, like the homosexual Arab, the intersex, and the foreigner in postcolonial France. Like xenophobic knowledge, xenophobic persecution also allows me to show how the fear implied by xenophobia takes part in the regularity of such dividing practices. Fear legitimises the constitution of xenophobic knowledge which itself legitimises the use of violence through persecution in order to annihilate the alleged source of fear: the *xenos*' ambiguity. Disambiguating the *xenos* also takes part in the regularity of the practices of subjectification of the *xenos* and it shows two things. First, ambiguity is acknowledged – and acknowledged as a threat – through xenophobia. This means that, in postcolonial times, a subject can emerge beside the oppositional binary – even if it is through domination. Yet, and this is the second point, it does not mean that the oppositional binary ceases to operate. On the contrary, the xenophobic apparatus ends up reinforcing it. Now, returning to violence and repression (through persecution) while drawing from Foucault's theory of power, knowledge, and



the subject, can appear at odds with the common understanding of his work shaped by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2004), who criticised Foucault's apparent dismissal of repression from biopower. If Foucault may not have been explicit enough about the "presence" of violence and repression in the biopolitical practices of subjectification, I nevertheless argue they are never absent from an understanding of postcolonial xenophobic persecution that draws from his work.

## 2.1 The Notion of Persecution

My choice of the term persecution comes from two – apparently – remote sources which allow me to articulate how this practice operate through xenophobia. First, persecution that would come from the realm of madness, as Foucault presented it in a 1963 radio show (Foucault, 1963). Second, persecution linked to historical events wherein groups of people are systematically pursued and harmed for what they are rather than what they do; events analysed by Jaakko Kuosmanen according to what they have in common (Kuosmanen, 2014).

Starting with the persecution felt through madness – that belongs to the everyday of our societies – allows me to position persecution as something less exceptional than the extreme cases that are usually put forward to talk about it – e.g., genocides. Because persecution takes part in the subjectification of the *xenos*, we need to see it as something less remote, less "rare", and more systemic. At the same time, because it is linked to madness, this form of persecution allows me to reinforce the fact that it does not happen to anybody. If only mad people can experience persecutory delusion, only specific subjects are persecuted through xenophobia because they are produced as ambiguous, that is, as a threat. Those subjects are the *xenos*. This is a fundamental difference between persecution and normalisation, the latter applying to anybody (Foucault, 1978; 1995), while the former takes part in the subjectification of specific subjects. Moreover, as Foucault explains, the form of persecution linked to madness establishes a relation between the persecuted and the persecutor that is entirely saturated with "fear and cruelty" in both directions, from one position to the other and back. Foucault explains that "persecution was born in the empty space between madness and reason", the space which *isolates* and "cuts the persecuted off from everyone else" (Foucault, 1963). He adds that, if madness inspires anxiety, reason,

which opposes it, “is not less feared or redoubtable” (Foucault, 1963). The same thing is true about cruelty, which does “not only come from the mad, but also from the warden. Not only from the excluded, but from those who exclude. ... Cruelty is inscribed in the dividing law, in the contact law, between madness and reason” (Foucault, 1963). When attached to an intensity coined as *xenophobia*, this approach to persecution through madness is fruitful. Though I am not trying to introduce xenophobia as a social pathology, the intensification that it implies (cf. Chapter 3) benefits from a comparison with madness through persecution as this “space” (or, practice) saturated with fear and cruelty.<sup>182</sup>

Foucault also explains that it is persecution that produces both the persecuted and the persecutor. And because persecution relates reason to madness – i.e., relates similarity to difference – Foucault’s approach to persecution is an archetype of the poststructuralist literature that analyses the dividing practices of subjectification and affirms difference over identity. Foucault states:

What exists firstly is not the mad, on the one hand, and the non-mad, on the other hand. What exists firstly is their difference. What exists firstly are not the persecutors and the persecuted, it is this empty space where they divide and where, consequently, they come to collide with each other, where they meet. What exists firstly is persecution. (Foucault, 1963)

Persecution is therefore a dividing practice of subjectification, one that follows from the discourses which make ambiguous subjects intelligible/meaningful (political discursive practices) and known (epistemological discursive practices). But there is more. If persecution is saturated with fear and cruelty coming from both sides, and if persecution comes first, I argue that the repartition of the positions produced by persecution (occupied by the persecutor and the persecuted) should not be taken for granted. Indeed, in a society where sanity is the norm, the mad who feels that they are persecuted by a specific persecutor, or even the rest of society, is a threat. In other words, the victim of persecution inspires fear while they themselves feel under threat from their persecutors. Here, we can see that the approach to persecution through

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<sup>182</sup> The link between persecution, intensification, and a form of “madness” (or at least an obsession) is also noticed by Leo Strauss, who approaches persecution as a “compulsion” (Strauss, 2015, 79).

madness is not so remote from a more traditional approach to persecution through historical events.<sup>183</sup>

Intentionality is also at the core of the notion of persecution I try to elaborate here in relation to xenophobia. Before I show it explicitly, I want to follow Foucault who only points at it when he explains that “the world of persecution” is “the world of the exhilarated coincidence and the world of the abolished coincidence” (Foucault, 1963). In persecution, contingency and necessity mix together. This is, according to me, one of the marks of the intentionality displaced from a phenomenological analysis of the subjective consciousness toward a political and epistemological analysis of the strategies articulated through the practices of subjectification. There is what archaeology allows us to understand about those practices – i.e., their contingency – and there are their *effects* – i.e., the sense of necessity and inescapability attached to them. In Chapter 3, we saw that the intentionality of the strategy articulated through the xenophobic practices of subjectification entails that the *xenos* is felt to be the cause of fear. Through intentionality, the *xenos* is seized by a discourse that searches for origins, a discourse of causality and necessity. Foucault shows that, through persecutory delusion, contingent events and phenomena are seized by the delusional subject as, on the one hand, necessarily linked to each other in a causal relation and, on the other hand, entirely deployed around and from herself, as always already linked to herself, as originating in (mostly in opposition to) herself. Through persecution, contingent events cannot be seen as coincidental, even if they are. They appear as if they were inevitable, expected, and orchestrated by the persecutors (Foucault, 1963).

The notion of intentionality is therefore important to understanding the persecution of the *xenos* because it stresses the strategy of disambiguation of the *xenos* articulated through any xenophobic practice. Intentionality shows the orientation toward an object, and that object is an ambiguous and threatening subject (the *xenos*) who is to be disambiguated into either a similar subject (the sovereign) or a different subject (the other). We actually find the intentional character of persecution in its etymology, as Kuosmanen shows. Indeed, when he studies archetypical historical cases of

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<sup>183</sup> Cf. René Girard’s approach to scapegoating, where the weak and helpless victim of persecution is intentionally produced as a threat (Girard, 1989, 55-56).

persecution,<sup>184</sup> he considers that its etymology can help us to understand “what’s so special about” the notion. As he writes, “the term ‘persecution’ derives from the Latin verb ‘*persequi*’ meaning ‘to follow’ or ‘to pursue’” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 130). Importance has to be given to the prefix “*per*” which indeed involves an orientation, a projection. Thus, Kuosmanen aptly comes to the conclusion that, through etymology, persecution reveals “some kind of *directed effort* on behalf of some agents *to* inflict harms on others” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 130, my emphases). The object toward which persecution is directed is a subject who is othered to be systematically harmed. In the case of xenophobic persecution, the object toward which this practice is oriented is the *xenos*, turned into a threat to be disambiguated through practices acting upon their body. Furthermore, for Kuosmanen, the persecuted exists as persecuted only insofar as she is an object produced by a practice that articulates an intentional strategy. This is another mark of the workings of intentionality. Indeed, if Kuosmanen can write that “the religious, ethnic, and social groups [that the Nazis] targeted ... found it hard or impossible to resist their intentions” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 132), it is not only because the Nazis were more powerful than their victims. It can also be interpreted as more evidence that persecution comes before the persecuted and the persecutor. Thus, a victim of persecution cannot escape the intentionality of the strategy of persecution. Reversely, if the *xenos* escapes the intentionally disambiguating strategy of xenophobia, they are no longer persecuted.

Yet, it is true that the persecuted’s difficulty in resisting the persecutor’s intentions has to be understood as the sign of the “asymmetry” of the positions occupied by both of them, an asymmetry that is part of the three components of persecution identified by Kuosmanen. For him, every historical case of persecution has seen the conjunction of those elements: “asymmetrical and systemic threat; severe and sustained harm; and unjust discriminatory targeting” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 130). I only approach these – useful but quite general – components according to xenophobic persecution, which is a non-discursive practice of subjectification, precisely for their institutional and material (bodily) characteristics. First, persecution involves an asymmetrical and

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<sup>184</sup> Which are “the cruel treatment of early Christians in the Roman Empire, the forced deportations, executions and torture of Mennonites, Hutterites, and Huguenots in early modern Europe, the brutalities aimed at the Bahá’í by Iranian and Egyptian officials, and the Nazi regime’s fiercely executed project of annihilating a range of ethnic, religious, and social groups” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 130).

systemic threat... from the point of view of the persecuted. Like Kuosmanen, I approach the practice of persecution from the vantage point of its victim (Kuosmanen, 2014, 132) or, rather, I approach the practice of xenophobic persecution *with* the persecuted – that is, the *xenos*.<sup>185</sup> Then, persecution involves a twofold systematicity. On the one hand, the systematicity of xenophobic persecution is reinforced by the legitimisation resulting from xenophobic knowledge (itself legitimised by fear): persecution forms a system because everything that takes part in it cannot *not* be the way it is, because the way things are in the system conforms to what we know about it. On the other hand, this systematicity involves a “‘widespread’ rather than ‘isolated’” scale of action (Kuosmanen, 2014, 132). This widespread scale does not contradict the isolating function of persecution mentioned above. Rather, persecution always spreads to a collective subject, but produces isolation from the persecuted subject’s standpoint who is thus deprived of her collectiveness.<sup>186</sup> Once again, there is what archaeology allows us to see about a practice and the effects of this practice. Moreover, as xenophobia has emerged in our postcolonial times (that is, a period when disciplinary and biopowers operate), persecution attests both to a biopower, which focuses on populations, and to a disciplinary power which focuses on individual bodies and souls (Foucault, 2003, 245). Finally, like in Foucault’s approach to persecution through madness, the repartition of the positions occupied by the persecuted and the persecutor cannot be taken for granted because of the notion of threat that is linked to xenophobia and persecution. To be sure, the *xenos* is produced as a threat to society and is persecuted to make their threatening ambiguity disappear. Now, if we think *with* the *xenos*, they are the one who faces the asymmetrical and systemic threat. This interchangeability shows that it is always the practice, like persecution, that produces the positions of subjectivity. This means, again, that those positions do not pre-exist the practice and that emotions do not inherently reside in the subjects that occupy them. If the *xenos* is produced as a threat, they actually find themselves under the threat of their persecutors.

Second, Kuosmanen explains that persecution involves unjust discriminatory targeting that focuses on characteristics that are “very hard if not impossible for the victims to

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<sup>185</sup> “With” and not “in the name of”.

<sup>186</sup> See Arendt’s notions of “isolation” and “loneliness” in relation to totalitarian persecution (Arendt, 1994, 179-184).

change”, like “race, religion, nationality, political opinions, gender, and sexual orientation” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 136). In postcolonial France, the homosexual Arab (cf. Chapter 3), the intersex, and the foreigner (cf. Chapter 5) all are persecuted because their “ambiguous” characteristics – which they cannot change – have been produced as threatening. It is through persecution that those characteristics eventually change, because of the disambiguation it entails, even if it means that the *xenos* disappears as such (because they no longer are ambiguous) or dies (and thus, no longer are). Furthermore, Kuosmanen aptly explains that this unjust discrimination involves “a specific failure of human reciprocity” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 138). Incidentally, xenophobia can be said to oppose hospitality since the latter is founded on the reciprocity between the host and the guest (in the ancient *xenia*, the *xenos* was both the host and the guest).

Third, persecution implies severe and sustained harm. Even if this process “may be said to be located ‘somewhere between *threats to life or freedom* on the one hand, and *mere harassment and annoyance* on the other hand”” (Matthew Price, cited by Kuosmanen, 2014, 134), the notion of severity entails again that not anyone faces persecution. Persecution represents “a distinct class of harms” that produce a distinct class of subjects (Kuosmanen, 2014, 130). Xenophobic persecution links this severity – a principle of differentiation – to the intensification (of fear, cruelty, and harm) entailed by xenophobia. Now, the sustainability of the harming process involves that Kuosmanen’s approach to persecution through “the most ‘tragical events’ in human history” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 138) may be counter-intuitive. Indeed, it lets us believe that persecution only occurs in rare and historically delineated (even, short or, at least, past) events. Yet, e.g., the persecution of the Jews in Europe has not been limited to the Holocaust orchestrated by the Nazis (Kuosmanen, 2014, 131). It spread over a much longer time frame and had become, before the extremity of the Holocaust, something inscribed in the everyday of European societies, something terrifyingly banal.<sup>187</sup> The same is true, I argue, about xenophobic persecution. Because it has been legitimised through knowledge and fear, this violent disambiguation is the norm. Finally, the notion of harm itself allows me to link persecution directly to violence but

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<sup>187</sup> This shows the difference between a practice like persecution, whose regularity can be analysed through archaeology, and an event like the Holocaust, whose “irreducible singularity” should always be acknowledged and reconstituted (cf. Cohen and Zagury-Orly, 2021).

also repression. As Kuosmanen writes, “persecutors take control of the life circumstances of their victims in a comprehensive way” and they “possess ... extensive capacities to cause an interruption in their victims’ lives” (Kuosmanen, 2014, 132). Through xenophobic persecution – a “positive” practice because it produces a disambiguated subject – the *xenos*’ ambiguity is repressed. This negative “interruption” is a form of killing as described by Foucault. Thus, persecution allows us to acknowledge the co-existence of positivity (productivity) and negativity (repression) in the same violent practice articulated in our postcolonial times. As argued in the next part, and contrary to what Sedgwick argues, it shows that a Foucaultian analysis does not necessarily entail that repression has been replaced by an exclusively productive (bio)power.

## **2.2 Persecution as a Violent, Productive, and Repressive Practice of Subjectification**

Those notions of violence and repression only make sense regarding xenophobia insofar as they help me to analyse xenophobic persecution as the non-discursive practice of subjectification of the *xenos*, a practice that articulates an intentional strategy of disambiguation. It might be the most determining difference between Sedgwick’s reading of Foucault’s critique of “the repressive hypothesis” and mine (Foucault, 1978; Sedgwick, 2004). If I acknowledge that Foucault may at times not be explicit enough about the “presence” of violence and repression in contemporary practices of subjectification, I do not approach repression for itself, as Sedgwick does. Indeed, Sedgwick reads Foucault’s refutation of the repressive hypothesis<sup>188</sup> as counterproductive to understanding how “modern” and contemporary (bio)power works. She argues that “though he is far from claiming ‘that sex has not been prohibited or barred or masked or misapprehended since the classical age’, [Foucault] is more struck by the proliferation of modern discourses of sexuality than by their suppression” (Sedgwick, 2004, 10). I concur with this statement, particularly to analyse practices of subjectification that articulate, for xenophobic persecution, an

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<sup>188</sup> For Foucault, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are not characterised by their repression of discourses about sex. Rather, he argues that this period shows an “incitement to discourse” about sex – and therefore the birth of sexuality – which characterises biopower (Foucault, 1978, 35). Emerging in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, biopower produces (notably (through) discourses) rather than it represses, and it makes live rather than it kills – which is more characteristic of the sovereign power which operated “alone” until the classical age (Foucault, 1978, 136).

intentional strategy of disambiguation. Indeed, this strategy aims to make the *xenos*' ambiguity disappear and to turn them into a similar or a different subject – whose ambiguity has been repressed. In itself, this repression can already be understood as “positive”: persecution produces a disambiguated subject. Furthermore, to be persecuted as a subject who must be disambiguated, the *xenos* first has to be produced as ambiguous and threatening. In the postcolonial period, we do witness a “proliferation of discourses” about ambiguity and, especially, of xenophobic discourses which produce ambiguity as a threat. This proliferation is the condition of possibility of the repression of the ambiguous subject through a disambiguating persecution.

This perspective would fall among the first category of the taxonomy Sedgwick elaborates to critically describe “the most common ways of (mis?)understanding Foucault’s discussion of the repressive hypothesis”, especially in queer theory. For this so-called group of theorists, “even beyond the repressive hypothesis, some version of prohibition is still the most important thing to understand. But it operates through producing rather than through eliminating things/kinds of persons/behaviors/subjectivities” (Sedgwick, 2004, 11). There is some truth there: when an ambiguous subject is persecuted, they are produced as a disambiguated subject. Yet, xenophobic persecution can go up to the killing of the *xenos* and, in any case, the ambiguity that has been acknowledged as the threatening truth of the *xenos* disappears and, with it, what makes the *xenos* who they are/were. That the repression entailed by xenophobic persecution cannot be understood without acknowledging the productivity of xenophobic discourses and knowledge should be a given. But this does not mean that, on the one hand, all practices of subjectification are repressive or prohibitive.<sup>189</sup> On the other hand, it does not mean that repression cannot end in a pure “elimination” of the *xenos*. Regarding the foreigner and the intersex – studied in Chapter 5 – between 2014 and 2019, 20,000 people died in the Mediterranean sea (ONU Info, 2020), while intersex people face twice the risk of engaging in self-mutilation or committing suicide as the rest of the population (Schützmann et al., 2009; Council of Europe, 2015). In those cases, repression “operates as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence”, as

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<sup>189</sup> The practices of subjectification (or “subjectivation”) which resist disambiguation are essentially productive (cf. Conclusion to the thesis).



Foucault writes, even if one cannot conclude, “by implication”, that repression also entails “an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know” (Foucault, 1978, 4).

If we take Sedgwick’s critique and taxonomy seriously, like Lynne Huffer invites us to do in her own discussion of the queer theorist (Huffer, 2012, 28-29), we have to acknowledge that she raises an important point about Foucault’s theory developed in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*.<sup>190</sup> Sedgwick tells us that Foucault considers that the “would-be liberatory” critique of repression is “a kind of ruse for mandating ever more of the oppressive verbal proliferation that had also gone on before and around it” (Sedgwick, 2004, 10). This comes at a price Sedgwick is not ready to pay, that is, “propagating the repressive hypothesis ever more broadly by means of displacement, multiplication, and hypostatization” instead of “working outside of the repressive hypothesis” (Sedgwick, 2004, 11). Consequently, she sees the emergence of a dangerous moralisation of the political analysis which ends up constituting a totalising system (Sedgwick, 2004, 12). In other words, Foucault’s theory would incorporate any (subversive) phenomenon as having a position already waiting for it in the system.<sup>191</sup> This would make oppressive power inescapable, or at least able to feed on any form of contestation.<sup>192</sup> Furthermore, Sedgwick believes that Foucault does not manage to overcome the “dualistic” relation between repression and liberation – while overcoming the inescapability of binary relations has been her typically queer concern from the beginning (Sedgwick, 1990). Rather than overcoming the dualistic repression-liberation relation by criticising the repressive hypothesis, Foucault (and his followers) would have created a new dualism: “the even more abstractly reified form of the hegemonic and the subversive”, where hegemony represents “the status quo” and subversion is the “purely negative relation to that” (Sedgwick, 2004, 12-13).<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> For Huffer, Foucault is too simplistic in this book especially compared with *History of Madness*, where he shows the coexistence of repression and productivity since the classical age (Foucault, 2006; Huffer, 2010).

<sup>191</sup> Which reminds us of the integration of difference in the oppositional binary.

<sup>192</sup> Foucault nevertheless explains that, if “there is no outside of power”, it does not mean that we are condemned to domination or defeat (Foucault, 1980b, 141-142).

<sup>193</sup> Sedgwick thinks of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (1985), whose theory combining Foucaultian and “neo-Gramscian” perspectives is furthered, among others, by David R. Howarth (2013, 187-224).

This is a powerful critique,<sup>194</sup> but I would argue that it misses the point of the core of Foucault's theory or, to the least, it does not make the latter less relevant for my analysis of xenophobia and especially of xenophobic persecution. I think that this comes from three confusions about Foucault's work. First, Sedgwick understands that Foucault's opposition between repression and liberation is parallel or synonymous to his opposition between repression and the proliferation of discourses (Sedgwick, 2004, 11). Yet, this is not the case. On the one hand, Foucault makes clear that the proliferation of discourses is anything but liberating. In fact, the last sentence of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* states that "the irony of this deployment [of discourse about sexuality] is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance" (Foucault, 1978, 159). If the proliferation of discourses is not synonymous with liberation, then it is not possible to argue that they both oppose repression in the same way. Especially since, on the other hand, Foucault does not approach the proliferation of discourses and repression as mutually exclusive. Historically, they co-exist. It is true that Foucault is not always clear about this when he introduces repression as characteristic of the sovereign power and productivity as characteristic of disciplinary and biopowers (e.g., Foucault, 1978, 148). Yet, if Foucault insists that biopower "doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no" (because it "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse"), he does not exclude the possibility for power to *also* take the form of "a law which says no" (Foucault, 1980d, 119).<sup>195</sup>

To be sure, Foucault replaces an analysis of power through the theory of sovereignty with a theory of relations of domination (cf. Chapter 2). Contesting the common understanding of a power that would exclusively operate through a sovereign and repressive law allows him to reinforce his point in the philosophical and political debate.<sup>196</sup> But nowhere does he argue that repression is no longer a tool of power. What Foucault rejects is an approach to power "whose *function* would be repression" (Foucault, 1980d, 119). Indeed, the use of repression or violence, for instance in xenophobic persecution, is never necessary to biopower but "only" instrumental. Thus,

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<sup>194</sup> One with which Spivak would agree as she argues that "Foucault's work ... is supported by too simple a notion of repression" (Spivak, 1988, 309).

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Amy Allen (2002, 133).

<sup>196</sup> Foucault explains that "we need ... a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty, nor therefore around the problems of law and prohibition" (Foucault, 1980d, 121).

Foucault can write that the passage between repression and productivity “did not come about (any more than did these [sovereign and bio-] powers themselves) without overlappings, interactions, and echoes” (Foucault, 1978, 149). Foucault never removes repression from the picture, and especially not from the contemporary stage of power relations, simply because negative power has not vanished. This is crucial for our understanding of xenophobic persecution as a *postcolonial* practice of subjectification, and it brings us to the second confusion. Indeed, Foucault’s classification of “regimes of power” is not linear. One does not replace the other – which would then disappear. If it is true that Foucault makes the sovereign power the only regime operating before the classical age (Foucault, 2003), he does not make it disappear with the emergence of the disciplinary power (Foucault, 1995), and not either with the emergence, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, of biopower (Foucault, 1978; 2003). The sovereign, disciplinary, and biopowers never cease to interact and to reinforce each other. Foucault explains that, despite the fact that “wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century” and that “never before did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations”, killing is no longer the function of power. Rather, death is “the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations”. Consequently, “life massacres have become vital” (Foucault, 1978, 136-137). What does appear in Foucault’s thought, is the way he reserves the association of the sovereign, disciplinary, and biopowers – or of repression, disciplines, and incitement to discourse – to punctual and extreme cases. The first of them is the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi state (Foucault, 1978, 149-150; 2003, 259).<sup>197</sup> This constitutes, in my opinion, the real limitation. We do not need to wait for a Holocaust to witness such association of qualitatively different powers. There are much closer cases in our postcolonial times, like the persecution of the *xenos*, for instance. As argued below, what links those regimes of power together is their (recourse to) violence, and the latter is regularly present in our societies.

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<sup>197</sup> As Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings explain, for Foucault, “the Nazi state represents ‘the paroxysmal point’ of an interplay between sovereign power and biopower” (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 12). This has to be linked to the Holocaust understood as a condition of possibility for the poststructuralist and Foucaultian affirmation of difference (cf. Chapter 1).

Finally, I argue that what brings Sedgwick away from Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis is her focus on repression as such. Yet, for Foucault, what matters is not a hypothetical passage from one regime of power to the other, which would place repression as "true" in a given period and "false" in another. What matters for Foucault is not so much the disappearance of law and its replacement by norm *for themselves* (Foucault, 1978, 144). All this only matters insofar as it is linked to dividing practices of subjectification. In "The Subject and Power", Foucault explains that "what has been the goal of [his] work during the last twenty years ... has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis". Rather, his "objective ... has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1982, 777). This is what makes Foucault so interesting for this analysis of xenophobia as what intensifies the practices of subjectification – discursive (notably, but not only, through knowledge) and non-discursive (like persecution) – of the *xenos* in our postcolonial times. Repression and incitement to discourse are techniques of subjectification and, as such, they are historical. Maybe this is why repression seems to belong to the past. If what matters for Foucault is to challenge the approach to the sovereign (constitutive) subject, thanks to an analysis of the dividing practices of subjectification, then it is true that repression as what characterises sovereign power might appear less important among the "explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving ... subjugation" (Foucault, 1978, 140). For Foucault, repression "has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others" (Foucault, 1978, 136). Understood in relation to subjectification, repression is not, to quote Foucault, "an abuse, but ... simply the effect and the continuation of a relationship of domination" (Foucault, 2003, 7). Thus, it cannot really be said that Foucault does not manage to overcome repression if he has not tried to do so. Sedgwick's critique surely reveals Foucault's limitation to a "dualistic" approach in political theory. Yet, I do not think that Foucault's binary frame is located in what Sedgwick identifies as the dichotomy between hegemony and subversion (Sedgwick, 2004, 12-13).<sup>198</sup> Rather, I think that dualism or, more precisely, the oppositional binary alone conditions the

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<sup>198</sup> Foucault is interested in "*techniques of power*" which aim at "guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony" (Foucault, 1978, 141). Thus, it is domination that produces *effects* of hegemony. Once again, there is what analysis allows us to see about practices, and there are the effects of those practices.

dividing practices of subjectification in Foucault's thought. Indeed, he only considers a binary opposition, the one I refer to as between the similar and the different (e.g., the French and the stranger). Yet, xenophobia shows us that the dividing practices of subjectification should not only be thought within a binary framework since the *xenos* is the ambiguous subject produced "beside" – as Sedgwick would say (Sedgwick, 2004, 8) – the sovereign and the other. That said, the oppositional binary is still present in xenophobia and especially in xenophobic persecution. Through its intentional strategy of disambiguation, the *xenos* is forced into a position conditioned by the oppositional binary.

Lynne Huffer follows an interesting path when she discusses Sedgwick's critique of Foucault which can help us to support a reintroduction of repression through persecution. Even if I am not fully convinced about her argument that ethics is our only way out from binary (political) oppositions, I concur with her view of politics as always oppositional and, therefore, her invitation to assess Sedgwick's conception of repression critically. Indeed, against Sedgwick and with Foucault, Huffer argues that when talking about politics, when acting politically, "it is nearly impossible not to find ourselves ... acting oppositionally in accordance with a repressive logic", while "repression is based on an oppositional logic – repressed or liberated, no or yes" (Huffer, 2012, 37 and 26). She even adds that "this is powerful stuff – it is queer politics as we know it – and no sexual activist, [her]self included, can simply bypass this repressive structure" (Huffer, 2012, 37-38). I concur with this oppositional – warlike – approach of politics, as it is what Foucault has usefully brought us from the beginning (Foucault, 2003, 15). Huffer nevertheless suggests a way out from this binary opposition. She thinks that ethics, rather than politics, allows us to challenge the dualism between repression and liberation. Indeed, drawing from Foucault, Huffer's ethics of "desubjectivation" would challenge the binary relation between subject and object (of knowledge, but not only), between mind and body, and therefore the binary oppositions that found relations of domination (Huffer, 2010, 23; 2012, 138).<sup>199</sup> She writes that a Foucaultian inspired ethical desubjectivation involves a

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<sup>199</sup> Here, Spivak would strongly disagree, since she criticises Foucault for not actually getting rid of the transcendental or sovereign subject, particularly in knowledge production. She argues that he objectifies "the other" (i.e., the oppressed subjects of his analyses) notably through over-valourising them, and that he never questions his own dominating position as a Western intellectual (Spivak, 1988).

“radical coextensivity with the external world [and] constitutes an opening toward the other” (Huffer, 2010, 244) and she articulates an “ethics of eros” that “would include in its purview not only cognition but also ... the affective and bodily dimension of lived experience” (Huffer, 2010, 222).

If I appreciate this ethical opening of Foucault, which is supported by his late works (Foucault, 1988, 1990), and if I appreciate that there is no way out of *political opposition*, I do not think that ethics is the only way to challenge the *binary framework in politics*.<sup>200</sup> On the contrary, I think that xenophobic discourses, knowledge, and persecution show that the oppositional binary can be and *is* challenged on the political level. The *xenos* is produced as an ambiguous subject beside the similar and the different subjects. The fact that the *xenos*, because they are ambiguous, is produced as a threat is politically meaningful (they threaten the oppositional binary, understood as a political foundation) and has the political consequence to make them risk persecution. Xenophobia shows us that politics is indeed about opposition, but that opposition is not necessarily binary. To be sure, Huffer points at it in her critique of Sedgwick when she reminds us that “biopower is based on a scalar logic of gradation” and that it “extends rather than negates the logic of repression” (Huffer, 2012, 26). While extending the political oppositional logic of repression, biopower allows more than two positions (repressed/liberated) to emerge. As a matter of fact, if the *xenos* is repressed, there are other subjects that, without being persecuted, are not necessarily liberated. Biopower allows a “neither... nor...” position to emerge. In a biopolitical society, as Foucault explains, most of the practices of subjectification are conditioned by normalisation, which is neither a form of liberation nor a form of repression similar to xenophobic persecution. This is what allows Huffer to state that, since the classical age, “repression and productivity work in tandem” and that an othered subject like “the sexual deviant is both the victim of repression and an invention of power conceived in its productive dimension” (Huffer, 2010, 80-83). Importantly, repression works over the subjectification of some subjects more violently than on others. As Huffer explains, “marginalised people, including women, are caught in mechanisms of subjection and subjectivation” (Huffer, 2010, 27). In the case of the *xenos*, all the practices of subjectification that are *intensified* by xenophobia (discourses – including knowledge

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. Wendy Brown’s concern about what she calls “a turn to ethics” at the expense of a more ambitious political theory (Brown, 2011).

– and persecution) are significantly more violent than those faced by more “regular” subjects, according to the regulative norms which are characteristic of our biopolitical societies for Foucault (1978, 144). Thus, while arguing that the only way out from binary oppositions is ethics, Huffer actually acknowledges that political oppositions are not mandatorily binary, that there can be more than two positions in dynamics of domination. This is what I intend to show with the specific domination – persecution – of the *xenos* that is to be thought beside the specific domination of the other *and* beside the normalisation of every subject through disciplinary and biopowers.

Elsa Dorlin also brings to our attention the fact that, according to the subject to which they are intentionally oriented, some practices of subjectification are more violent than others. Foucault is known to have shown that between the early stage of the classical age and “our modernity” (characterised by the emergence of biopower), violence and cruelty would have decreased in the operation of power. Opening *Discipline and Punish*, the stark comparison between the 1757 public execution of the regicide Robert-François Damiens<sup>201</sup> and the timetable of a youth detention centre established eighty years later is meant to signify the importance taken by a productive power and the proportional weakening of a bloody repression. Foucault intends to show that from one instance to the other, what is at stake is no longer the defence of the sovereign thanks to repression (negative power), but the subjectification of everyone through disciplines (positive power) (Foucault, 1995, 1-8). In response to this, Dorlin opens her own book with the report of another horribly cruel and violent public execution, happening in Guadeloupe in 1802, and staging the death of Millet de la Girardière – a colonised man. Millet de la Girardière is locked up in a cage, in a public square, where he has to stand “with his legs straight” above a sharp blade, to avoid being cut by it. Because he cannot eat nor drink (food and water are kept in sight but out of reach), his forces weaken, which makes him fall on the blade, provoking “cruel and deep wounds. ... Stimulated by the pain, [he] stands up and falls back again on the sharp blade, which hurts him horribly. This torture lasts three or four days” (Dorlin, 2017, 5). While, according to Foucault, the nineteenth century witnesses a decrease of violence in the practices of subjectification (which has nothing to do with a humanitarian concern), Dorlin shows that it is not the case for every subject. When colonised subjects are

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<sup>201</sup> A long and extremely violent torture-like punishment which consisted of burning and mutilating Damiens, before tearing him limb from limb.

concerned, extreme violence continues to be regularly used. In that sense, violence says more about the persecuted than it says about the persecutor because it is an integral part of the former's subjectification. As Dorlin argues, Foucault's account of Damians' torture shows that his body is only the stage where the sovereign's power functions. On the contrary, in Guadeloupe, the audience comes to see Millet de la Girardière's body react and fight back, but also bleed, suffer, and eventually die. Violence no longer shows the sovereign's force; it becomes part of how a black man becomes a subject. Dorlin explains that violence "produces a *subject* whose power to act is 'stimulated' to seize it in its heteronomy; and, even if this power to act is entirely oriented toward the defence of life, it is reduced to a mechanism of death to the benefit of the colonial penitence apparatus" (Dorlin, 2017, 6-7).

If we extend this reflection to xenophobia, persecution plays the function of producing a disambiguated subject through the intensification of violence against the *xenos*' body. As I show in Chapter 5, the medical discourse articulated in French faculties of medicine aims to disambiguate the intersex by *mutilating* them into typical men or women. The juridical discourse of the discipline "Law of Foreigners" produces the foreigner as a subject who can be, and eventually is, *removed* from the national territory – which involves actual deportation, but also administrative detention, unfair treatment, and systematic violence and harassment from the police. On one side, what Dorlin shows us is that incorporating physical violence into specific non-discursive practices of subjectification is less exceptional than what Foucault might have implied when focusing on the Holocaust. Violence affects more subjects more frequently than just during this type of extreme events. On the other side, it does not mean that people who are not produced as intersex – i.e., typical men and women – or as foreigners – i.e., French nationals and strangers living abroad – do not face practices of subjectification that can deploy some degrees of constraint. However, only the *xenos* finds their self subjugated through the intensification of violence entailed by legitimised xenophobic persecution.

For instance, Frazer and Hutchings explain that the classification of subjects as "normal" or "deviant" implies that they submit to different "modes of conduct, standards of action and behaviour" which can either be judged "acceptable" or "unacceptable". They add that, once categorised as such, the deviant is legitimately ill-



treated by the positions of subjectivity that are located at the junction of power and knowledge (doctors, prison guards, or law makers, for instance) (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 7). Thus, according to Frazer and Hutchings, Foucault does not really disavow violence in the relations of power operating during modernity. On the contrary, they argue that he “is concerned to debunk modernity’s ... disavowal[] of [its] own violence” (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 13). For instance, Foucault makes clear that the practice of discourse itself should be apprehended as “a violence that we do to things, in any case as a practice that we impose on them” (Foucault, 2009a, 55). Additionally, even if it is not as explicit and theatrical as in public torture, violence is present in disciplines and biopolitical norms. As Frazer and Hutchings state, the “alleged pacifism” which make us feel like modernity has disavowed violence “is possible only because of the violence of discipline” (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 7). According to them, Foucault approaches violence as what links the sovereign, the disciplinary, and the biopowers together *insofar as* they are all considered under the perspective of subjectification (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 9). Like repression, violence should also be apprehended as “positive” or, in Frazer’s and Hutchings’ words, “as a productive practice. Ultimately it is what violence does, not what it is, that is important” (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 15). Moreover, because it is linked to subjectification and because practices of subjectification are always historical, Foucault’s conceptions of “violence and politics can only be understood in the context of embodied experience and practice, in the worlds of historical subjectivities” (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 18). For Frazer and Hutchings, if Foucault distinguishes sovereign and biopowers it is not, therefore, to make the former violent and the latter non-violent. Rather, it is because he thinks that violence is, in one case, necessary for (sovereign) power to operate while, in the other, it is contingent and instrumental (Frazer and Hutchings, 2011, 13-16).<sup>202</sup> In other words, it is part of historical practices of subjectification that articulate intentional strategies. Consequently, at the opposite side of the subjectification of the *xenos*, we could imagine practices that do not operate through violence – e.g., hospitality.

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<sup>202</sup> Johanna Oksala shares this perspective on Foucault’s conception of violence and on the importance to think “the points of tension as well as the points of coincidence between biopower and sovereign power”. She significantly adds that “biopolitical violence must pass through the regime of knowledge/power and it must be given a scientific legitimacy that is compatible with the aims of biopolitics” (Oksala, 2010b, 39-42).

## Conclusion

This chapter introduces xenophobic knowledge and persecution as practices of subjectification of the *xenos* which articulate an intentional disambiguating strategy. Xenophobic knowledge is a discursive practice that is legitimised by fear, that has reached a threshold of epistemologisation, and that can be analysed through its two main forms called *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance*. Through the former, the *xenos* is turned into a similar subject and, through the latter, into a different subject.

Persecution is a violent non-discursive practice legitimised by xenophobic knowledge which represses the ambiguity of the *xenos* to turn them materially (physically) into a similar or a different subject. Through xenophobic knowledge and persecution, the *xenos* is legitimately forced into a framework conditioned by the oppositional binary.

Xenophobic knowledge and persecution are practices which pertain to our postcolonial times and reveal the postcolonial problematisation of ambiguity, on the political and epistemological levels. This problematisation of ambiguity follows from the pre-classical problematisation of similarity and the classical problematisation (conditioned by coloniality) of difference.

In Chapter 5, I illustrate the regularity of xenophobic knowledge and persecution through an archaeology of the practices of subjectification of the intersex and the foreigner in France, through their subjectification as *xenos* in the medical and juridical discourses taught in universities.

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## Chapter 5

# **An Archaeology of Xenophobia in French Academia: The Subjectification of the Intersex and the Foreigner through the Xenophobic Apparatus**

### **Introduction**

This chapter illustrates the workings of the xenophobic apparatus, unpacked in Chapter 4, through an archaeological analysis of two instances of xenophobic knowledge produced in postcolonial France and, more precisely, in French academia today. I study the subjectification of intersex people through the medical discourse and the subjectification of the foreigner through the juridical discourse taught in French universities.

I argue that those discourses are xenophobic because they produce the intersex and the foreigner as *xenos*, that is, as subjects whose ambiguity is produced as a threat (through pathologising for the intersex and policing for the foreigner). Because they are threats, their subjectification also goes through the discursive practices of *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance* to legitimise their persecution, which aims to disambiguate them (into a typical man or a typical woman for the intersex; into a non-national abroad for the foreigner). Pathologising and policing<sup>203</sup> are the techniques which produce the intersex and the foreigner as threats. They thus legitimise the production of xenophobic knowledge which legitimises the persecution of the intersex and the foreigner, respectively through mutilation and removal.

The choice of those two xenophobic discourses is intentional. First, if we can acknowledge their emergence rather early in the post-WWII period in Western countries,<sup>204</sup> those discourses become significantly legitimised in the postcolonial

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<sup>203</sup> Produced as an ambiguous threat to public order, the foreigner is indeed “policed” (cf. 2.4).

<sup>204</sup> Even though the medical interventions on atypical sexual characteristics and the principles of the law of nationality emerge in the nineteenth century, the articulation of consistent discourses – as knowledge – took more time. Regarding the intersex, the so-called “John Hopkins paradigm” is

period in France, and especially from the 1970s (Lochak, 1985; Petit, 2018). Second, law and medicine are familiar fields of exploration for an analysis that draws so much from Michel Foucault's work. They are milieus where a powerful knowledge articulates and a knowledgeable power operates. There, a discourse that seems ahistorical – because allegedly true – is articulated, which makes it likely to be intensified by a dehistoricising and reifying xenophobia (cf. Chapter 3). This means that law and medicine faculties are interesting spaces for the analysis of the way xenophobia works. As Foucault explains, the role of power in practices of knowledge like psychiatry and medicine is obvious because their epistemological productions are “linked with a whole range of institutions, economic requirements and political issues of social regulation” (Foucault, 1980d, 109). Medicine and law faculties are also institutions of legitimisation of violence against ambiguous subjects like the intersex and the foreigner. When it comes to the production of xenophobic knowledge, legitimised by fear and legitimising the persecution of the *xenos*, they constitute an interesting fieldwork. First, because, as Foucault explains, “the ‘political economy’ of truth” depends on the scientificity of discourse articulated; it is triggered by “economic and political incitement”; it is “produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)”; and it is at the centre of political debate and conflict (Foucault, 1980d, 131-132).

Second, because, as François Debrix and Alexander D. Barder argue, scientists and their institutions are “biopolitical agents/agencies of fear production”, as much as police forces or bureaucrats, because they do not reject “unlimited violence” or “generalized condition of terror”. Debrix and Barder add that, there the alleged source of fear has changed with the emergence of biopower: the fear of violent death has been replaced by a fear of a diminished life for “normal people” which would be caused by the very existence of “the ‘wrong’ people” (Debrix and Barder, 2011, 401). The role

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elaborated in the 1950s. It theorises the “optimum gender of rearing” system and was characterised “by early treatments and surgeries (before two years old and again during adolescence to trigger and control puberty); an absolute secret about intersex condition; the isolation of the child from their fellows; the use of a pathologising and stigmatising vocabulary regarding the child’s inborn sexual characteristics; a limited and partial information given to the parents; and their association to the lies and the secrets about the child” (Petit, 2018, 8-9). Regarding the foreigner, the law of nationality is codified (that is, turned into a legal code) in 1945 while significant international treaties are signed in 1948 (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and 1951 (the Refugee Convention).

of universities in this task is central. Furthermore, analysing the medical and juridical discourses together allows me to reinforce a point made in the previous chapter: repression does not disappear with the emergence of biopolitics. While the medical discourse is traditionally approached as a symbol of productive biopower, law is usually approached as a symbol of sovereign power. Analysing their joint articulation in our postcolonial times allows me to show that the two logics are not exclusive and still work together today when they are, for instance, intensified by xenophobia.

The two cases of xenophobic discourses that I study in this chapter are produced and transmitted in French universities. The first part analyses the medical discourse on the intersex that I find in the so-called *Epreuves Classantes Nationales* (or ECN),<sup>205</sup> which must be taken at the end of the second cycle of medical studies, to pass the *Diplôme de Formation Approfondie en Sciences Médicales* (or DFASM)<sup>206</sup> and to start the residency. The ECN is the only national examination for medicine students in France *per se*, and some of the items listed for it relate to the intersex.<sup>207</sup> Intersex could be described in two ways, sometimes complementary, sometimes opposite according to the discourse. On the one hand, intersex is a variation of sexual characteristics that are not typically masculine or feminine. On the other hand, intersex is the political identity of people who have been persecuted through medical interventions to “correct” their sexual variation.

Of course, there is already rich literature on the intersex. All those works are important pieces of research that show what can be done against the persecution of intersex people. They accompany the struggles of intersex people and are sometimes conducted by them. The first type of literature is interested, through identity politics, in the designation’s plurality (intersex as an identity or intersex as a – medical – condition), the emergence of the intersex movement, its dynamics of alliances with feminist and LGBTI movements (with the introduction of the letter “I” in the acronym), and its autonomisation from them (Guillot, 2008; ISNA, 2008b; Rubin, 2015; Petit, 2018). The second literature is interested in the demedicalisation of intersex – which validates

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<sup>205</sup> In English, the National Ranking Tests.

<sup>206</sup> In English, the Diploma of Advanced Medical Studies.

<sup>207</sup> This specific test will be replaced by a new one in September 2021, in conformity with the reform of the medical studies undertaken since 2019.

that intersex is first and foremost a medical question – notably through its strong focus on the notion of informed consent and the development of a patient-centred practice (Karkazis, 2008; MacKenzie, Huntington and Gilmour, 2009; Kraus, 2015; Carpenter, 2016). The third literature focuses on intersex as an issue of human rights. It tackles alternatively the right to integrity, the right to private life, the right to not be discriminated against and, as a consequence, the possibility for the intersex people to claim rights and reparations from people and institutions (even states) (Carpenter, 2016; Moron-Puech, 2017; 2018; Rubin, 2015). This literature assumes that intersex is a question to be primarily dealt with by law. All three categories have been influenced by feminist and queer studies. As I have argued in Chapter 1, my approach to the intersex differs from a queer perspective that understands the intersex through the lens of a complex and heterogeneous difference. To be sure, a queer discourse aptly argues that the intersex demonstrates that no one can be said to be a typical man or a typical woman. Yet, despite the relevance of this perspective, I rather approach the intersex as a *xenos*, that is, an ambiguous subject produced as a threat for being neither typically man nor typically woman, but as existing beside them.<sup>208</sup> This is, I argue, the effect of xenophobia when it comes to the intersex: contrary to a queer perspective, it does not question the ground of the two typical genders, but it problematises a third category precisely to force it into the frame produced through the oppositional binary.

The second part analyses the juridical discourse on the foreigner at work in the discipline “*droit des étrangers*”, or “law of foreigners”, which is taught in most of the French faculties of law. Through an analysis of handbooks explicitly titled on the issue of the law of foreigners and written by the specialists of the discipline, I show how the foreigner is produced through postcolonial xenophobia and, therefore, how they both differ from the stranger and racialising xenophobia analysed in Chapter 2. While the stranger is produced as a threatening other (different subject), the foreigner is produced as a *xenos* – i.e., a threatening ambiguous subject. Danièle Lochak, one of the founders of the discipline in France (Lochak, 1985) has already formulated a reflective piece on the “teaching” of the discipline by going through handbooks of “Fundamental

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<sup>208</sup> I am aware of the difficulty in using “ambiguity” when it comes to intersex people, notably because of the history of the term which pathologises their condition. Yet, my non-binary ontological commitment to describe the in-between position occupied by the *xenos* in general through “ambiguity” does not aim to reinforce a pathologising dynamic.

Liberties” (Lochak, 2011). There, she makes important points when criticising the positivist approach at work in the discourse “law of foreigners” and the conventional “political” statements claimed by the jurists who wrote the handbooks. I would like to complement this opening by analysing the regularity of the discursive practice that, I argue, reveals itself to be xenophobic. To carry out such an analysis, I draw from Oliver Le Cour Grandmaison’s work on the colonial law implemented in the former French colonies (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010). In this book, he shows how colonial law, which was taught at university, has produced a subject – the indigenous – who lived under a permanent state of exception (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 9). He also analyses the crucial role of the administration and the typical repetition of (racist) statements within the law, notably through administrative decrees (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 20), something I also find in the law of foreigners – except that the statements are xenophobic.

More than the disciplines they represent (medical and legal studies), I am interested in the regularity of those discourses which I constitute as original “archives”, that Foucault defines as the level “of a practice that causes a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated” (Foucault, 2002a, 146).

## **1 The *Epreuves Classantes Nationales* in the French Faculties of Medicine: Xenophobia and the Medical Discourse on the Intersex**

### **1.1 Constituting an Archive of the Medical Discourse on the Intersex in French Academia**

In France, every student who follows a medicine degree has to go through a national examination during the sixth year of their studies. The so-called *Epreuves Classantes Nationales* (or ECN) must be taken at the end of the second cycle of medical studies, to pass the *Diplôme de Formation Approfondie en Sciences Médicales* (or DFASM) and to start the residency, which is linked to the speciality chosen by the student according to their rank at the end of the ECN. The ECN is the only national examination for medicine students in France *per se*, since every other examination is

run and assessed by each of the country's thirty-seven faculties of medicine. Of course, there is a standardisation of the studies and the assessments throughout the medical degree and across the territory, but the ECN is the only tool that has been thought to verify that every medical student (i.e., future doctor) in France who is about to start their residency can demonstrate that they have received the same foundation of knowledge.

It is a crucial issue if one considers the importance of knowledge in the medical practice, if one considers the level of demand attached to medical knowledge and practice, if one considers the matter of life and death often related to the medical practice, and, as a consequence, the political power of medicine if one follows a Foucaultian biopolitical approach (Foucault, 2003, 254). It is such a critical – and political – issue that the content of the DFASM, and therefore the list of what is to be known to pass the ECN, is the object of a ministerial order, jointly signed in 2013 by the representatives of the ministers of Higher Education and Research, of Social Affairs and Health, and of Defence (Légifrance, 2013). This ministerial order and its annex specify the “generic skills” that a sixth-year medicine student should possess, what are the “general objectives” of the degree and, most importantly, what should be covered and assessed as a “core curriculum”. There are thirteen course-units that are made of 362 “items”, which must officially all be known to pass the ECN (Légifrance, 2013).

Some of those items deal with the intersex. Whether implicitly and through generalisations when it comes to the relationship between the doctor and the patient – Item 1 (Lazarus, 2016) – or more explicitly focused on what is framed as a pathology like cryptorchidism – Item 48 (CEEDMM, 2016a) – the medical discourse produces statements that take part in the subjectification of the intersex people. The sources for this discursive analysis are of three types.

First, in direct relation to the ECN, I have opted for the handbooks or resources written by the members of the professional colleges of specialists, which are the most influential academics and practitioners in their respective fields. Regarding the intersex, I mainly use the materials written by the National College of Academic Paediatricians – which take care of Item 31: “Evaluation and treatments for the



newborn delivered at full term” (Bourrillon et al., 2014); the College of Academics in Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolic Diseases – which takes care of the items 47; “Normal and pathological puberty” (CEEDMM, 2016b), 48: “Male genito-scrotal pathology: cryptorchidism” (CEEDMM, 2016a), and 244: “Gynecomastia” (CEEDMM, 2015); the French College of Urologists – which takes care of Item 56: “Normal sexuality and its disorders” (Ouzaid and Giuliano, 2016); and the National College of Academics in Psychiatry – which takes care of the items 57: “Subjects in precarious situation” and 59: “Knowing the bases of the classification of mental orders, from children to elders” (Amad et al., 2014). This selection is not arbitrary, it follows the occurrence of the intersex subject in the material, even if, as explained below, the word intersex is never used there.<sup>209</sup>

Second, the items 14 “Lifelong training and education” (PrepECN and Laurent, 2018) and 323 “Regulatory framework of the therapeutic prescriptions and recommendations for good uses” (PrepECN and Navidi, 2018) require knowing the regulation of the *Haute Autorité de Santé* (or HAS),<sup>210</sup> a so-called “independent administrative authority” in charge of assessing “healthcare products, procedures, services and technologies from a medical and economic standpoint for reimbursement decision-making purposes”, recommending “good clinical practices and facilitating their implementation through tools, guidelines and methods”, and assessing and improving the quality of care in hospitals and clinics (HAS, 2017). The HAS’s recommendations are fundamental in France – they set the rules then followed by the practitioners. Those decisions and recommendations are highly criticised by the intersex activists (CIA, 2018) and by human rights defenders (Moron-Puech, 2018, 83). I focus on the *Protocoles Nationaux de Diagnostique et de Soins* (or PNDS)<sup>211</sup> that have formulated recommendations on diagnosing and treating congenital adrenal hyperplasia (HAS, 2011), Turner syndrome (HAS, 2010), and androgen insensitivity (HAS, 2017), which are diseases related to the intersex condition.

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<sup>209</sup> For the general course-units (patient-doctor relation, patient’s rights, and so on), which *de facto* concern the intersex as a “patient”, I used a typical handbook designed for the ECN examination by a doctor specialised in public health and practicing at the Hôtel Dieu university hospital in Paris (Lazarus, 2016), and a specialised website created for the sole purpose of the ECN (PrepECN, 2017), which is run by a neurosurgeon who works at the Kremlin-Bicêtre university hospital in Paris region.

<sup>210</sup> In English, the High Authority of Health.

<sup>211</sup> In English, the National Protocols of Diagnosis and Treatments.

Finally, I studied the integration of the intersex into nosographic systems, like, as required in Item 59 (Amad et al., 2014), the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic And Statistical Manual Of Mental Disorders* (or DSM-5) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) and the eleventh edition of the International Classification of Diseases (or ICD-11) published by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2018). First, within the DSM-5, the intersex is considered as a form of “gender dysphoria” because, apparently, their “gender at birth is contrary to the one they identify with” (APA, 2013). This constitutes an important difference with a “simple” incongruence between one’s so-called anatomic sex and their gender identity (which, in itself, has no psychiatric interest): the DSM-5 underlines the “clinical significance” of gender dysphoria (Kraus, 2015, 1153), which is linked to the individual’s “clinically significant distress associated with the condition” (APA, 2013). It means that the intersex and their condition are the “origins” of the problem. Second, within ICD-11, the intersex is classified as a disorder of sexual development (DSD), a concept that has emerged as a result of the Chicago consensus in 2005, when some intersex activists, like the members of Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), pushed the doctors gathered at a professional congress to adopt it as an umbrella notion rather than any other specific designation (Guillot, 2008, 39-40; Carpenter, 2016, 75). This is precisely an input of Foucaultian archaeology to be able, through the diversity of cases of disorder of sexual development (over 30 units) and gender dysphoria (seven units, including the specifications), to identify the object of a specific discourse and to name it as an ambiguous and threatening subject: in this case, the intersex.

## **1.2 The Object of the Xenophobic Medical Discourse: The Intersex**

Following the methodology described in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2002a), I, therefore, intend to demonstrate that the medical discourse on the intersex which irrigates the French faculties of medicine has a specific regularity that can be defined as xenophobic. From the production of the object of the discourse to the enunciative types linked to the positions of subjectivity, and from the dissemination of concepts to the articulation of a disambiguating strategy, the subjectification of the intersex by the medical discourse follows rules that need to be analysed.

The intersex is produced as ambiguous because they are *neither* typically masculine *nor* typically feminine, which is critically different from the older term of “hermaphrodite” – now rejected by the intersex community because of the stigma attached to it (Guillot, 2008) and which described a condition *both* masculine *and* feminine. The ambiguity of the intersex is simultaneously produced as a threat through their pathologising. Thus, legitimised by fear, the xenophobic production of knowledge about the intersex develops, notably through the practices of *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance* which respectively aim to disambiguate the intersex into a typical man (the sovereign, the similar subject in a patriarchal society) or a typical woman (the other, the different subject), in conformity with the xenophobic intentionality. I unpack this reasoning by section 1.6, where I discuss the disambiguating strategy articulated by the medical discourse on the intersex.

### **1.3 The Enunciative Types of Statement on the Intersex: Intervention as the Rule**

The medical discourse on the intersex is formulated through diverse “enunciative types of statements”, which are the “elementary unit[s] of discourse” (Foucault, 2002a, 91) and which operate within a “domain”, that Foucault defines as being “made up of all the formulations to which the statement refers (implicitly or not), either by repeating them, modifying them, or adapting them” (Foucault, 2002a, 111). The (university) medical field works with this definition. For Foucault, these statements must be analysed according to their “enunciative function” which “relates them to a field of objects; ... opens up for them a number of possible subjective positions; ... places them in a domain of coordination and coexistence; [and] in a space in which they are used and repeated” (Foucault, 2002a, 97 and 119).

In the case of the medical discourse on the intersex, the statements take, for instance, the forms of purely educational material, with key notions isolated to stress their importance, like for the items which compose the first course-unit titled: “Learning the medical practice and the interprofessional cooperation” (Légifrance, 2013). If we focus on items 1 to 8, the students browse through themes that put the emphasis on the

respect of the patient's will and rights, on the necessity to take them into account in the medical practice, and on the imperative that the patient should never be hurt.<sup>212</sup>

Importantly, explicitly stating those themes has seemed necessary, though those general and abstract notions are left undeveloped, summarily defined, and taken for granted. Moreover, as soon as they are stated, they are conditioned by exceptions whose opportunity is assessed by the doctors themselves: when there is an "emergency", when the patient is underaged, when the patient is "unable to express their will", and so on (PrepECN, 2017d). Furthermore, the circumstances when the doctor is authorised to not respect the great principles are not detailed. What characterises an emergency? How to decide that someone is unable to express their will? In fact, the respect of the patient's will – whether in the framework of "shared medical decision" or when it comes to "informed consent" – appears as an obstacle to the doctor's practice.

Therefore, instead of seeing the situations when the doctor is able to not respect the patient's will as exceptions to the rule, it might be useful to see the doctor's sovereign and unaccountable practice as the rule, and the concessions in terms of respect of the patient's will as the exceptions. This way, it is only when the doctor considers that it is not urgent or that their patient is able to express her will that they can search for her informed consent, and respect it if need be.<sup>213</sup>

In terms of enunciative function, those statements simply orientate the medical practice toward systematic intervention on the intersex's bodies. This "norm" spread from the

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<sup>212</sup> "The respect of the human being's dignity"; "non-discrimination"; "informed consent" (Lazarus, 2016, 10), "the shared medical decision" (Lazarus, 2016, 12); the Hippocratic Oath; the "French professional values", i.e. "the primacy of the person ..., freedom, [and] independence"; so-called "new values" such as "partnership with the patient" (PrepECN, 2017e); the principles of "medical reasoning": from the "hypothetico-deductive reasoning" to "immediate recognition", to the newly integrated "evidence-based medicine" (PrepECN, 2017c); the "patient's safety", which stands on the "*Primum non nocere*" ("First, to do no harm") principle and on a WHO's measure which forbids any "potential or useless violation related to medical treatment" (PrepECN, 2017b); "medical deontology", defined as the "science of duty" formalised through "great principles" like "non-malfeasance", "beneficence", "equality", "autonomy", and "information"; "medical ethics", which is defined as "the science of moral" and built upon actual laws and the notion of respect of "human dignity and the human body", "private life", "human life and the patient's will", "mental and physical integrity" (PrepECN, 2017a); "the patient's collective and individual rights", which includes the access by the patient to her medical record, the respect of her informed consent and right to be informed in the first place (PrepECN, 2017d).

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Canguilhem who criticises doctors for not taking into account their patients' knowledge of what is happening to them (Canguilhem, 1989, 93).

United States to Europe in the 1950s (Guillot, 2008, 42), ironically shortly after the 1947 Nuremberg Code initiated international debates and recommendations about (free) consent related to medical and research experimentations on the human being (Fagot-Largeault, 1994). Following Foucault, the archaeological approach undertaken here “tries to define not the thoughts, representations, images, themes preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses, but those discourses themselves ... as practices obeying certain rules” (Foucault, 2002a, 2). It is not about revealing what is implied, but about analysing what is the rule.

Another form of “enunciative types” is found in the more detailed material written by the colleges of specialists in each branch of medicine. As the students enter the second course-unit and those that follow, they discover more specialised thematics which, as expected, need more precision. Regarding the intersex, I focus on the second course-unit: “From conception to birth; Woman’s pathology; Heredity; The child; The teenager”, the third one: “Ageing; Vulnerability; Mental health; Addictive behaviours”, and the eighth unit: “Circulation; Metabolisms” (Légifrance, 2013). In these course-units, the statements vary between in-depth pedagogical material – to be able to recognise a so-called “normal” condition – and guidelines to diagnose pathological conditions and prescribe treatments (Bourrillon, Benoist and Delacourt, 2014; CEEDMM, 2016b; Ouzaid and Giuliano, 2016).

Thus, Item 31, covered by paediatricians, teaches students that there should be “automatic screenings” for every newborn, and that they can lead to the detection of diseases like congenital adrenal hyperplasia (Bourrillon, Benoist and Delacourt, 2014). This disease is defined as “an inherited autosomal recessive disease, associated most of the time (95%) to an enzymatic deficiency of 21-hydroxylase, which leads to a flaw in synthesising cortisol and aldosterone, and, indirectly, to an excessive production of testosterone”. This definition is followed by the list of “syndromes” which might lead the doctor to diagnose congenital adrenal hyperplasia after a series of screenings and tests. In this case, the syndromes are considered equally serious whether it is multiple vomiting because of salt-wasting or so-called “virilisation of external genital organs visible from birth (clitoridean hyperplasia, fusion of the labia majora)”. Those “suspect” signs are confirmed by blood screenings which allow the doctor to interpret a “too high rate” of 17-hydroxyprogesterone. The section ends on short guidelines for

treatment which include “lifelong and daily prescription” of hormones in a “substitutive role to hold the excessive production of testosterone” and “therapeutic education regarding the disease, the treatment and its adaptation according to specific events (stress, infection, surgery)” (Bourrillon, Benoist and Delacourt, 2014).

On surgery, it is useful to refer to the HAS’s PNDS mentioned above (HAS, 2011). Indeed, among the numerous medical acts recommended after the diagnosis of a congenital adrenal hyperplasia, some of them being necessary for the patient to live, the students can find recommendations for so-called “reconstructive surgeries of the anomalies of the girl’s external genital organs (virilising form)” to treat the intersex’s “genital organs malformations”. For example, “in the first months of life”, the doctors are recommended to proceed to the “reduction of the clitoris size”, a “vaginoplasty”, “the reconstruction of the labia”, “vaginal dilatations” with “vaginal dilators kits” (which basically are dildos that parents have to use on their children), but also to hormonal therapies (HAS, 2011).

The enunciative approach is formally similar in the items covered by the endocrinologists (CEEDMM, 2015, 2016a, 2016b), in those covered by the psychiatrists (Amad et al., 2014), and in the one covered by the urologists (Ouzaid and Giuliano, 2016).

#### **1.4 The Positions of Subjectivity and the Intensification of Xenophobic Statements: Repetition by Interchangeable Doctors**

This similarity between specialists of different medical sub-fields leads me to another important element of the Foucaultian regularity of discourse: the “positions of subjectivity”, which are only noticeable if one focuses on the enunciative function of the statements (Foucault, 2002a, 60). According to Foucault, archaeology allows us to free the analysis from the transcendental subject who would be the origin of the discourse, who would see what already is and would simply express it through representation (Foucault, 2002a, 61). Foucault argues that “the subject of the statement is distinct in everything – in nature, status, function, and identity – from the author of the formulation. ... It is an empty function, that can be filled by virtually any individual

when he formulates the statement” (Foucault, 2002a, 105). With archaeology, what matters is the position rather than the subjectivity (Foucault, 2002a, 56).

Regardless of their speciality, the doctors tend to produce the same discourse, whether they transmit their knowledge to students, recommend specific practices to their peers, or formalise disease classifications. This comes from the fact that those who teach and research at university are the same people who treat and cure in the hospitals, who also are the same invited by (international) institutions to create or update standardised tools of classification. Moreover, the professors (highest rank at university) are usually the most eminent doctors who practise in the most renowned hospitals, which are university hospitals. But what they state, and how they state it, is eventually more relevant than who, individually, makes the statement.

According to Foucault, it does not mean that “who talks” is irrelevant, but only if we consider the function rather than the subject. In other words, the doctors do not exist prior to the medical discourse. If the status of the doctors – analysed through their statements – entails skills and knowledge, if it links them to institutions, systems, and pedagogic norms, if it relies on legal conditions that allow them to practise medicine and to extend their knowledge, if it situates them in a system of differentiation, if not anyone can produce medical statements, it is not tied to something like their alleged individuality, but rather to the sites from where they speak (university, hospital, private practice, and so on) (Foucault, 2002a, 55-57). Despite what their academic journey might make us (and, more importantly, them) think, despite the importance of specialisation in their respective fields, despite their recognised social and political roles, the doctors simply occupy positions and are therefore interchangeable amongst themselves.

Xenophobia entails intensification notably through the repetition of discourses – which is constitutive of their materiality, according to Foucault (2002a, 114) – and this is proved by the analysis of the medical discourse on the intersex. Despite the fact that the discourses studied here have made their way to the field of knowledge, there is a form of irrationality that results from this intensive recursiveness or, at least, something that makes xenophobia a troubling intensity in which the limit between

rationality and irrationality blurs.<sup>214</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that every student would be in a position to know (even mechanically or “by heart”), let alone understand and master, the 362 items of the ECN which, furthermore, should be completed by the many recommendations of the HAS, the 28 sections of the ICD-11, and the 22 parts of the DSM-5.

It is also hard to imagine that there would not be a single contradiction among those statements, e.g., between informed consent and (unnecessary) “urgent” surgery on a newborn. In any case, according to Foucault, contradictions should not be overcome by a superior truth but, rather, acknowledged as part of the regularity of the discourse. Indeed, contradiction is one of the ways for statements and concepts to relate to each other (in opposition to validation, for instance). For Foucault, contradictions too have an enunciative function: they allow “a reorganisation of the discursive field ... but without anything being modified in the system of positivity of the discourse”; they can even have “a critical role: they put into operation the existence of the ‘acceptability’ of the discursive practice” (Foucault, 2002a, 172-173). For Foucault, contradictions can also be seen as evidence of ideology, which does not question the objectivity or scientificity of the discourse: “the role of ideology does not diminish as rigour increases and error is dissipated”, he writes (Foucault, 2002a, 205). The medical discourse can thus contain contradictory statements, it does not mean that it cannot reach the threshold of epistemologisation where knowledge is deployed. Furthermore, as knowledge, medicine is a “field of coordination and subordination of statements in which concepts appear, and are defined, applied and transformed” (Foucault, 2002a, 201) which leads me to the study of such concepts in the medical discourse on the intersex.

### **1.5 The Concepts of the Medical Discourse on the Intersex: Different “Diseases” and Similar “Treatments”**

In the material written for the student to prepare their ECN, the medical discourse on the intersex is particularly productive in terms of concepts. In items 31, 47, 48, 56, 57,

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<sup>214</sup> Foucault talks about “a rationality which ... will basically be more and more abstract, more and more bound up with fragility and illusions, and also more closely bound up with the cunning and wickedness of those who have won a temporary victory” (Foucault, 2003, 55).



59, and 244, the students encounter terms that are directly linked to a so-called specific physiopathological condition,<sup>215</sup> others which are more general and introduced as psychopathological,<sup>216</sup> but not a single occurrence of the term “intersex”. There are other cases that are not covered by the ECN, which are listed by doctors (WHO, 2018) as much as by intersex people themselves (ISNA, 2008a).

Three sorts of criteria allow us to differentiate those concepts. First, some are presented as pathologies while others rather seem to be manifestations of pathologies. For example, on the one hand, the Klinefelter, Turner, and Muller syndromes are so to speak “proper” pathologies, and so is congenital adrenal hyperplasia.<sup>217</sup> On the other hand, micropenis and gynecomastia are not described as pathologies, but are signs of a physiopathological condition: e.g., a micropenis can occur in cases of hypogonadotropic hypogonadism (CEEDMM, 2016b, 2016a). Second, those concepts have different consequences: some of them are rare and imply serious conditions with lethal consequences, like the congenital adrenal hyperplasia (Bourrillon, Benoist and Delacourt, 2014), while others are completely benign and widely spread, like gynecomastia (CEEDMM, 2015). Finally, they all have different causes, whether hereditary (Bourrillon, Benoist and Delacourt, 2014; CEEDMM, 2016b), hormonal (CEEDMM, 2015, 2016b, 2016a), psychopathological or social (Amad et al., 2014), multifactorial (CEEDMM, 2015), and/or idiopathic (CEEDMM, 2015, 2016b) – which means that the cause is unknown. How, then, could all those different concepts, which entail different experiences and seem inscribed in different systems of causality, be considered as parts of the same discourse, could tend toward the same object?

According to Foucault, the archaeological analysis does not require a focus on “the laws of the internal construction of concepts” (Foucault, 2002a, 67). He adds: “if the

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<sup>215</sup> “Congenital adrenal hyperplasia” and “anomaly of sexual differentiation” (Bourrillon, Benoist and Delacourt, 2014), “Turner syndrome” and “clitoromegaly” (a big clitoris) (CEEDMM, 2016b), “Klinefelter syndrome” (CEEDMM, 2015, 2016b), “cryptorchidism” (the absence of one or both testicles in the scrotum) and “micropenis” (CEEDMM, 2016b, 2016a), “androgen insensitivity”, “Muller syndrome”, and “hypospadias” (when the opening of the urethra is not situated on the head of the penis) (CEEDMM, 2016a), “hermaphrodite phenotype” (Ouzaid and Giuliano, 2016), “sexual ambiguity” (CEEDMM, 2015), “gynecomastia” (when men grow breasts), “hypogonadotropic hypogonadism”, and “hypergonadotropic hypogonadism” (CEEDMM, 2015, 2016b, 2016a).

<sup>216</sup> “Precariousness”, “exclusion”, “distress”, “suffering”, and “mental disorders” (Amad et al., 2014).

<sup>217</sup> This understanding of the concept spreads beyond the medical community. For instance, some people affected with congenital adrenal hyperplasia founded an organisation of *patients*, which demonstrates that they understand themselves as ill (Surrénales, 2018).

information content and the uses to which it could be put are the same, one can say that it is the same statement in each case” (Foucault, 2002a, 116-117). In contrast with traditional epistemology, archaeology is the “preconceptual” analysis of discourse (cf. Introduction), which means that it focuses on the relations between the concepts – what Foucault calls their “anonymous dispersion” – rather than on their “immediate description” (Foucault, 2002a, 67-68).

Regarding the concepts produced by the medical discourse about the intersex, it means that the discursive regularity cannot be found in the nuances between a pathology or its syndromes, or along a scale of seriousness, or within cause-and-effect relations. On the contrary, Foucault argues that “to constitute an archaeological history of discourse, ... one must free oneself of ... the linear model of speech ..., in which all events succeed one another, without any effect of coincidence and superposition” (Foucault, 2002a, 187).

Rather, the regularity of this discourse is found in the analysis of the treatments recommended for each of those conceptualised “diseases” (WHO, 2018). Indeed, all the cures include the correction of the intersex, that is, the correction of the so-called variation of their sexual characteristics, or again, the annihilation of their threatening ambiguity. This is often undertaken at the same time as vital surgery acts.

Thus, the HAS recommends, as part of the cure against congenital adrenal hyperplasia, to impose on a newborn whose “clinical condition is satisfactory” – whose life is not threatened – a series of acts and treatments that are therefore not necessary in terms of health or survival. Among them, the future doctors can find: a hormonal therapy that the patient will have to follow their whole life and different surgery acts that have to be done “in the first months after birth” with the following justification: “The essential reasons for this choice of age are the availability of the genital tissues when the reparation is done prematurely and integrally, and the minimisation of the psychological consequences for the child and their relatives” (HAS, 2011).

Those acts spread from “the opening of the vaginal cavity”, which is a vaginoplasty, to the reduction of the clitoris, to the correction of the shape of the labia minora and majora. They are usually followed by vaginal dilatations, at first realised by the parents

on their children with medical dildos, without, so it seems, risking this time to provoke “psychological consequences for the child and their relatives” (HAS, 2011). As part of the cure against androgen insensitivity, the HAS also recommends to “optimise the vaginal cavity to allow a qualitative sexuality” – read “heterosexual” – thus assigning not only the gender identity but also the sexual orientation.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, according to the situation, it recommends a gonadectomy to avoid virilisation,<sup>219</sup> a vaginoplasty, vaginal dilatations, a testicular lowering surgery, a penis straightening or enlargement, a phalloplasty, a gynecomastia reduction, and so on. The HAS adds that the “surgeries can sometimes be deferred until the child is of age to contribute to the question and decisions regarding their body”, which demonstrates that the respect of informed consent is not the rule, but the exception (HAS, 2017).

Despite the fact that gynecomastia can develop for two third of newborns, 30%-70% of teenagers, and half of seniors, it has to be corrected through hormonal therapy or surgery if it is persistent. Gynecomastia can be associated with Klinefelter syndrome, hypogonadism, or androgen insensitivity; and its correction is often part of a series of other interventions, presented as vital. Thus, unnecessary interventions are realised simply because the doctors cannot lose the opportunity to correct a variation of sexual characteristics, even benign. There, it is no longer a question of acting on the cause of the disease – especially when gynecomastia is regularly idiopathic: 25% of the cases of gynecomastia have an unknown cause, which makes it difficult to act upon any (CEEDMM, 2015).

What links all those concepts is therefore that every cure intends to correct a sexual variation considered as abnormal, that is, above or below a statistically determined average, as noticed by Georges Canguilhem (Canguilhem, 1989, 151-181) and Foucault (Foucault, 2002a, 57). This recourse to the average as a reference of normality clearly shows in the uses of the prefixes “hypo-”, to signify deficiency, and “hyper-”, to signify excess (Canguilhem, 1989, 42). In the case of gynecomastia,

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<sup>218</sup> See also Karkazis (2008, 250).

<sup>219</sup> Some intersex people assigned as women at birth have typical male gonads in their body (e.g., there are cases of women with cryptorchidism). While their testicles play a role in their development (notably their puberty), the gonadectomy entails a lifelong and daily substitutive hormonal therapy to compensate the loss of those gonads. In the cases where a “virilised girl” is diagnosed with cryptorchidism, the treatment “must” occur “without waiting for the results of the blood screening” (CEEDMM, 2016a).

which itself is described as “a hyperplasia of the mammary tissue”, despite its high frequency at every stage of a man’s life and its harmlessness, the doctors argue that “it is legitimate to associate its observation to the research of a pathology” (CEEDMM, 2015). This categorisation of any intersex condition as a pathology brings me to another element of Foucaultian archaeology: the strategy.

### **1.6 The Intentional Strategy at Work in the Medical Discourse on the Intersex: Disambiguation through Pathologising and Mutilation**

For Foucault, a strategy is not to be confused with the “expression of a world view” nor with a “preliminary or fundamental” choice that would precede discourses (Foucault, 2002a, 77). Rather, re-articulating the strategy of a discourse allows us to answer the question “how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?” (Foucault, 2002a, 30). It allows us to understand “the role played by the discourse being studied in relation to those that are contemporary with it or related to it” and, finally, it allows us to formulate “the *function* that the discourse under study must carry out *in a field of non-discursive practices*” (Foucault, 2002a, 74-75). As Foucault argues, an apparatus (which associates discursive and non-discursive practices of subjectification) “is essentially of strategic nature” (Foucault, 1980c, 196-197), which means that it is through the analysis of the intentional strategy articulated through practices of subjectification that we can make sense of, in our case, the xenophobic apparatus. Therefore, when it comes to the xenophobic medical discourse studied here, the strategy is to disambiguate the intersex into either a typical man (the sovereign) or a typical woman (the other). This disambiguation is undertaken materially, at the level of the body, through the persecutory mutilation of the intersex, which has been legitimised by their pathologising (the form taken by their production as a threat).<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Pathologising is a practice whose deployments could lead to an entire archaeological investigation, notably in terms of “correlations”, which Foucault define as “relations of subordination or complementarity” between practices (Foucault, 2002a, 179). Indeed, to access affordable treatment, whether hormonal, psychological, or surgical, intersex people – like trans people – often have to validate their own pathologising. They thus face an imperative to choose between their body condition (which needs to be pathologised to access care) and their activist identity and discourse which claim that there is nothing “wrong” with them. This imperative to choose is similar to “the trap” faced by the homosexual Arab in postcolonial France (cf. Chapter 3).

The individual body of the intersex is produced as a threat by the medical discourse because, unmutated (i.e., ambiguous), they cannot be straightforwardly identified through an unequivocal “sex” and because they challenge the standards of reproduction, which are two biopolitical matters of population management. This is because, as Foucault argues, sex is problematised politically because it is “at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population” (Foucault, 1980d, 125). Thus, identification and reproduction both become biopolitical obsessions of the medical discourse on the intersex.<sup>221</sup> This discourse entrusts the doctor with noticing a so-called “anomaly of sexual differentiation” at birth “to avoid declaring the newborn’s sex erroneously” to the civil register (Bourrillon, Benoist and Delacourt, 2014) and regularly refers to infertility as a risk or a pathological sign (CEEDMM, 2016b, 2016a; HAS, 2017). Understood as a *xenos*, the intersex is persecuted through xenophobic discourses to, ultimately, conform to the imperative of a binary system of sex/gender.

This pathologising production as a political threat has recently been made explicit when the *Cour de Cassation*<sup>222</sup> ruled against the claim of an intersex person to inscribe a “neutral sex” on their identity documents. The reasoning behind this decision was that “the duality of the statements in relation to sex in the civil register certificates pursues a *legitimate* goal because it is necessary to the [French] social and juridical organisation, of which it is a founding element” and that “the rules of French law are based on the sexual binary” (Cour de cassation, 2017, my emphasis). Despite the court’s acknowledgement of the physical and psychological ambiguity of this intersex person, they have to be disambiguated into a typical man or a typical woman to ensure the safety and conservation of the French “social and juridical organisation” and of “the rules of French law”. This also shows the productivity of the xenophobic apparatus, which crosses different types of discourses (medical and juridical, for instance).

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<sup>221</sup> An obsession that can be qualified as persecutory when 2% of the 714,029 children born annually in France (in 2019) are estimated to bear atypical sexual characteristics (Blondin and Bouchoux, 2017; INED, 2021).

<sup>222</sup> In English, the Quashing Court, which is the civil equivalent of the Supreme Court in France.

Finally, as mentioned in Chapter 3, xenophobic disambiguation often tends toward the disambiguation of the *xenos* into a different subject (the other). Intersex people are indeed more often mutilated into typical women than into typical men. The doctors justify this practice by their assessment of the size of the (micro)penis and, above all, by referring to the “practicality” of creating a vagina rather than a penis (Karkazis, 2008, 113-114). Some doctors declare bluntly that “it’s easier to dig a hole than build a pole” (Reardon, 2016), or that “it’s easier to subtract than it is to add” (Human Rights Watch, 2017). This must help us to understand that acknowledging xenophobia does not mean discarding other lasting relations of domination. Indeed, it might not be only because of practicality that intersex people are more often mutilated into women. Making them join the side of women (the other), who are subject to sexist domination, also reinforces the domination of men (the sovereign).

We see here how disambiguation inherits from the techniques of killing-exclusion and deceitful assimilation (cf. Chapter 2). Disambiguated into a similar subject, the *xenos* is allegedly assimilated as a sovereign, although the situation of an intersex mutilated into a man shows that this assimilation is only deceitful (they are never considered as a “true” man). Furthermore, disambiguated into a different subject, the *xenos* suffers killing-exclusion as much as the other (woman). Actually, the intersex mutilated into a woman suffers a double exclusion: sexism and, among women, another exclusion for not being a “true” woman either. The same tendency can be observed regarding the foreigner produced through the xenophobic discourse at work in French faculties of law. Indeed, they are much more disambiguated into a non-national living abroad (the other, the different subject) than they are into a French (the sovereign, the similar subject in France).

## **2 The Discipline “Law of Foreigners” in the French Faculties of Law: Xenophobia and the Juridical Discourse on the Foreigner**

### **2.1 Constituting an Archive of the Juridical Discourse on the Foreigner in French Academia**

In France, there are at least 25 academic institutions that teach a discipline named *droit des étrangers*, or “law of foreigners”, at a master or other specialising level (the so-

called two-year *Diplôme d'Université*, or “University Degree”).<sup>223</sup> The majority of those institutions categorises this discipline as belonging to public law, others classify it under international and European law (with elements of public and private law), few of them consider that it belongs to private law, and even fewer that it is rather a matter for political sciences. Most of the time, the law of foreigners is a course unit within the whole master’s degree. In one university (Toulon), the “practice of the law of foreigners” is at the core of the whole specialisation of the master students (Université de Toulon, 2019), while two universities have created University Degrees focused on the law of foreigners (Université Lyon 2, 2016; Le Mans Université, no date), and one institution offers short trainings, as part of lifelong learning, on the law of foreigners within the politics of immigration (Sciences Po Lyon, no date).

In most of the course programmes available online, the “job prospects” listed are: lawyers, judges, NGOs, humanitarian sector, international institutions, civil service, research. The “homogeneity” of the discipline across the country is thus less obvious than in the case studied above, where a national examination must be taken, and passed, by every student who wants to become a doctor. For this reason, I focus my analysis not so much on the degrees themselves, but on a selection of the few handbooks which explicitly use the notion of “law of foreigners” for what they consider a (sub-)discipline or, at least, in an attempt to give coherence to a juridical discourse, understood as a form of knowledge as much as a practice (itself officially applied consistently on the national territory).

Legal studies are regularly updated to take into account changes in law, which is actually voted in Parliament, turned into administrative acts, and enforced by the state through its jurisdictions and administration. This is why, for example, the codes – penal code, civil code, or, linked to our topic, the *Code de l’entrée et du séjour des étrangers et du droit d’asile* (or, CESEDA)<sup>224</sup> – are edited every year. For that reason,

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<sup>223</sup> In 2019: Aix-Marseille université, Université d’Angers, Université de Bordeaux, Université de Bretagne occidentale, Université de Caen Normandie, Université catholique de Lyon, Université de Bourgogne, Université de Grenoble Alpes, Le Mans université, Université de Lille, Université Lumière Lyon 2, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3, Université 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Université Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis, Université Paris-Nanterre, Université Paris-Sud, Université Paris 13, Université de Pau et Pays de l’Adour, Université de Picardie Jules Verne, Université de Poitiers, Université de Rennes 1, Sciences Po Lyon, Université de Toulon, Université de Toulouse 1 Capitole, Université François-Rabelais de Tours.

<sup>224</sup> In English, the *Code for the Entry and the Residence of Foreigners and the Right of Asylum*.

the selection of handbooks on which I focus were almost all published or edited around 2011 (Aubin, 2011; Tchen, 2011; Ribémont, 2012; Vandendriessche, 2012) and 2015 (Jault-Seseke, Corneloup and Barbou des Places, 2015; Tandonnet, 2015).<sup>225</sup>

Indeed, under Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency (2007-2012), a law was voted in 2011 which dramatically modified the foreigner's conditions of entering and residing in France, notably by transcribing three European directives into French law (like the notorious "Return Directive"), but also by making it harder to legally enter and reside in the national territory: the law implemented Sarkozy's "chosen immigration" policy by favouring "skilled" foreigners over those with few qualifications; it increased the legal duration of administrative detention, it restricted the humanitarian conditions invocable to reside in France; it made it possible to create temporary and expandable "holding zones" all over the territory; it targeted specific populations (e.g., the Roma people) in including more criteria in the definition of a threat to public order likely to lead to expulsion; it put more constraint around the evidence of "republican integration"; and it enhanced the possibilities to recourse to a specific removing measure: the *Obligation de Quitter le Territoire Français* (or, OQTF)<sup>226</sup> and turned it into a central administrative tool (Légifrance, 2011). A similar, although less significant, thing happened in 2015, when a law on asylum rights was voted (Légifrance, 2015).<sup>227</sup>

Contextualising the 2010s in France is also important to understanding the law of foreigners because of other political – and not exclusively juridical – phenomena. When Sarkozy's government passed its 2011 law, it was actually the third one to be voted since 2006, when Sarkozy was the ministry of Home Affairs. Those laws were voted with the intention to restrict the possibilities to enter the national territory and make a regular residence in France more difficult. They showed a shift in the way to perceive and talk about immigration by pretending to act upon it through law,

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<sup>225</sup> Except Danièle Lochak's book, published in 1985. Below, I explain why I am also interested in it.

<sup>226</sup> In English, the Obligation to Leave the French Territory.

<sup>227</sup> A new law has been voted in 2018 (Légifrance, 2018; Vie Publique, 2018), which has been criticised as "flawed" and "shameful" by Human Rights Watch for "undermining asylum seekers' rights" (Marquis, 2018). James McAuley also thinks it constitutes a "crackdown on migrants" (McAuley, 2018). Few publishers have yet had the time to update their handbooks to incorporate the changes the law entails, especially since the updated version of CESEDA following this law has been published on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021. Therefore, I focus on the material published during the 2010s.



following Sarkozy's notorious 2010 "discourse of Grenoble", written with the help of Maxime Tandonnet, the author of one of the handbooks studied here (Tandonnet, 2015).

Finally, from 2011, with the Arab Springs – happening partially in former French colonies – and from 2015, with the perception of a so-called "refugee crisis", immigration became even more central to the political debate than what it already was since the mid-1970s (cf. Chapter 2). In 1974, the French government officially "closed the borders", which means that the organised immigration of workforce, initially required to rebuild the country, was put to an end. Then, in 1980, the "Bonnet law" was voted to repress undocumented immigration, notably by introducing expulsion and administrative detention in French law and affirming the control of the administration over immigration, notably by creating a national office for immigration (Légifrance, 1980).

In fact, the relationship between the law of foreigners and immigration (from the phenomenon to its perception and the politics of immigration) is important to articulating the archaeology of the law of foreigners. Indeed, it allows us to show that law, often conceived as the repressive or constraining tool of a negative power, takes part in practices of subjectification, that is, in a productive power.

First, it seems that the law of foreigners organises a discursive tension between immigration, understood as a political matter, and law, understood as a dispassionate discipline. The first paragraph of Xavier Vandendriessche's book – who is so recognised in the field that he was invited by the publisher Dalloz to comment and annotate the CESEDA (Dalloz, 2017) – starts as follows: "If the law of foreigners constitutes first and foremost a juridical discipline which entails the application of an arsenal of legal rules which are more and more complex and intertwined, immigration also shows a political and passionate aspect which has made it a recurring debate in French society for about thirty years" (Vandendriessche, 2012, 1). The other authors operate a similar association early in their reasoning (Aubin, 2011, 7; Tchen, 2011, 5; Ribémont, 2012, 12).

Second, jurists referred to the law of immigration before switching to the law of foreigners, as recalled by Emmanuel Aubin (2011, 27). The former focuses on the integration of the foreigner who resides in France – referred to as “the immigrant” – and therefore explicitly sees assimilation and, further, naturalisation as the natural outcome of immigration (Aubin, 2011, 27). In that respect, it can be argued that the immigrant’s fate, within the juridical discourse, is to become national, and that the law of *immigration* has a lot to do with the law of *nationality*.<sup>228</sup> This law was codified in 1945 while, a few months after, a simple ordinance was adopted to regulate the entry and residence of foreigners by the provisional government in power after WWII (Légifrance, 1945).<sup>229</sup> This shows a difference in the intentional strategy articulated by a discourse that focuses on nationality and another which focuses on the foreigner.

Aubin indeed suggests that the 1980s shift from the law of *immigration* to the law of *foreigners* reveals a passage from “objective law” to “subjective rights”<sup>230</sup> – i.e., a passage from a normative law, a set of rules of conduct which regulate social relations, to prerogatives that are recognised and claimable by individuals placed under the protection of the state (Aubin, 2011, 34). From immigration (a movement of people which entails relations) to foreigners (who are subjects), there could have been a change of object, and therefore of discourse. While the immigrant was not explicitly central to the former discourse (because their telos was to become national through naturalisation), the foreigner seems to be the core of the new discourse.

What is certain, then, is that we went from a discourse of regulation to a discourse of subjectification. However, as Danièle Lochak argues, it would be a mistake to think that, through this transformation, the foreigners would have been produced as a “subject of rights”.

The rules applicable to foreigners are singular: the foreigner rarely appears as the subject of rights who owns subjective rights, but more often as the object of rules which serve the hosting state’s interests. The denial of subjective rights and the instrumentalisation of objective law mean that law

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<sup>228</sup> There is still a trace of this genealogy in two handbooks studied here which integrate the law of nationality to their title, alongside the law of foreigners (Jault-Seseke, Corneloup and Barbou des Places, 2015; Tandonnet, 2015), and in the CESEDA itself, which covers some juridical elements of the law of nationality in one appendix (Daloz, 2017).

<sup>229</sup> Codification happens when the whole body of juridical discourse is turned into a code.

<sup>230</sup> In French, the words law (as a discipline and a norm) and right both translate into *droit*. The objective law and the subjective rights then read as follow: “*droit objectif*” and “*droits subjectifs*”.

loses its protective dimension and only is a means to control and subjugate the immigrant population. (Lochak, 1985, 207)

This quote reinforces Lochak's argument according to which the sub-discipline "law of foreigners" would have been transferred from international private law to public law (which reflects the contemporary repartition in the universities mentioned above). To be more specific, Lochak uses the word "condition" of foreigners when she studies the grasp international private law used to have on the matter, and "law" of foreigners when she describes the current mastery of public law upon this question (Lochak, 2011). Lochak explains that this transfer shows that we have given up a discourse centred on the foreigners' possibilities to exercise specific rights and liberties in a country which is not theirs (possibilities which entail international relations and agreements between countries – the domain of international law) for a discourse that focuses on the "administrative regime" (the domain of public law) which makes conditions of entry, residence, and removal tougher than before the mid-1970s (Lochak, 2011). But, more problematically I think, Lochak also argues that this transfer of the law of foreigners from international private law to public law comes from the fact that there would be fewer and fewer differences between the nationals' rights and the foreigners' rights (Lochak, 2011), notably, as Vandendriessche also argues, thanks to the application of international conventions like the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (or, ECHR) (Vandendriessche, 2012, 28). I come back to the apparent positive consequences of the internationalisation of the law of foreigners below.

A few introductory words on Danièle Lochak's work are necessary, here. A former academic at the University Paris Nanterre, Lochak also was, from 1985 to 2000, the head of one of the main non-profit organisations dedicated to helping foreigners to claim their rights and to force the state to respect the law: the *Groupe d'Information et de Soutien des Immigrés* (or, GISTI).<sup>231</sup> It was created in 1972, on the model of the *Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons*<sup>232</sup> in which Michel Foucault took part in the 1970s. In a lot of aspects – among which an honorary publication (Champeil-Desplats and Ferré, 2007) – Lochak is seen as the academic who actually founded the discipline

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<sup>231</sup> In English, the Group of Information and Support for Immigrants. One can notice that the shift from the immigrant to the foreigner had not yet taken place in 1972.

<sup>232</sup> In English, the Group of Information about Prisons.

“law of foreigners” in France. Her referential book published in 1985, *Etrangers: de quel droit?*,<sup>233</sup> is incidentally cited in every bibliography of the handbooks selected here, except Tandonnet’s, which is not surprising given his political orientation. It has therefore been more than thirty years that degrees, seminars, and modules have been shaped as part of the law of foreigners, with, somehow, a persistence of the critical perspective injected by Lochak from the very beginning. It has also been thirty years that generations of students have been choosing this pathway precisely because of its critical mindset to be able, as a lawyer or an activist, as a civil servant or a researcher, to help foreigners against a repressive state apparatus which disrespects human rights. It might therefore seem problematic for me to step into the academic debate arguing that the discourse “law of foreigners” is xenophobic. But there is a distinction to be made between, on the one hand, the *intention* and political consciousness at work in academic and political works like Lochak’s, or those of the people – academics, students, activists – who have delved into the breach that she has contributed to opening, and, on the other hand, the *intentionality* at work within the strategy of the very discourse that other people (politicians, the administration, judges, and so on) also use. No disrespect against individuals – genuine admiration would be more accurate – but an attempt to analyse a discourse with critical distance. Precisely, a xenophobic discursive practice which becomes more powerful every time people who are anything but xenophobe find no other means but to use it (in court, for example).

## 2.2 The Object of the Xenophobic Juridical Discourse: The Foreigner

After this contextualisation of the law of foreigners, the archaeological work can start. The object of discourse, i.e., the foreigner, is the non-national who (intends to) enter(s) the national territory and who can be legitimately removed from there because they have been produced, through policing, as a threat to public order. If one needs to go through the production of concepts and the articulation of the strategy to fully understand this argument, it was first necessary to sum it up in this way to be able to position the foreigner, as produced by the law of foreigners, next to the other figures that penetrate this discourse.

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<sup>233</sup> The title plays on the polysemy of the word “*droit*” in French. In English, it would therefore translate as *Foreigners: in what right/from which law?*

Indeed, contrary to what Lochak argues, who is in line with the CESEDA in that sense,<sup>234</sup> the foreigner is not “the Other” (Lochak, 1985, 14; Aubin, 2011, p.18), nor “the alterity” nor “the extraneity” (Lochak, 1985, 9) because the foreigner is not only the non-national who lives abroad. There are people who could simply be named non-nationals and would therefore represent the other, but the law of foreigners does not say a word about them because they do not (intend to) enter the national territory – they stay abroad. In other words, the foreigner is not produced through a binary opposition to the French, even though they are not similar to the French since they do not have the French nationality and since they are not taken into account by the national law (the expression of national sovereignty).

Additionally, the foreigner produced by the law of foreigners should not be confused with the immigrant. Indeed, as outlined above, the law of foreigners – because of its roots in the law of immigration and its links with the law of nationality – produces the immigrant as the non-national who tends to become national or, at least, citizen. This has been particularly true since the European integration started, with European immigrants becoming “European citizens” everywhere in the European Union, including France (Vandendriessche, 2012, 16). But it was already the case with the possibility of being naturalised: a naturalised (former) non-national is still an immigrant for the law of foreigners (Vandendriessche, 2012, 2; Tandonnet, 2015, 8-9).<sup>235</sup>

Finally, the foreigner cannot be identified as the notion who would sublimate or transcend the national and the non-national, the sovereign and the other – that is, the Man of the rights of Man. The law of foreigners is far from being universalist despite its alleged Christian genealogy (Aubin, 2011, 20; Tandonnet, 2015, 11). The foreigner is not “the Man” because all their human rights are conditioned to the safeguard of public order. The foreigner is not “the Man” also because, and this allows me to round things up, human rights only apply unconditionally to the non-nationals if they stay abroad. Hence, the numerous military interventions abroad justified in the name of the defence

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<sup>234</sup> The Article L111-1 of the CESEDA states that: “Are considered as foreigners, in the present code’s sense, the people who do not have the French nationality, either because they have a foreign nationality, or because they do not have any nationality.” (Daloz, 2017)

<sup>235</sup> This shows the persistence of deceitful assimilation.

of human rights while their non-application (when it comes to foreigners) on the French territory does not entail the same reaction.

Thus, the foreigner is neither the perfect opposite of the national nor are they similar to them. As developed below, the foreigner is not a national because they can be removed, and they are not a non-national because, again, they can be removed.<sup>236</sup> The foreigner is not even this inherent part of alterity that we would all have in us. Like the intersex produced through the medical discourse, the foreigner produced by the juridical discourse is the *xenos*, i.e., the ambiguous and threatening subject: the non-national who enters the national territory and who can therefore be removed from it. Below, I demonstrate the discursive regularity leading to the xenophobic subjectification of this foreigner.

### **2.3 Types of Statements and Positions of Subjectivity: Questioning Positivism and the Hierarchy of Norms to Acknowledge the Administrative Power**

First, it is necessary to analyse the enunciative types and positions of subjectivity at work in the law of foreigners. The handbooks themselves are written through a positivist approach which consists of compiling all the effective statements at work in the law of foreigners and, according to some of the authors, the non-discursive practices that would follow from them (Aubin, 2011, 28) – even if it is not always the case (Lochak, 2011; Tchen, 2011, 137).

Aubin “pragmatically” justifies the use of positivism which, according to him, “does not have to be the enemy of human rights” (Aubin, 2011, 26). Indeed, the *intention* of most of the authors selected, their students, and the practitioners who read their works, is *to know the law* to help foreigners claim their rights in front of the state. So, to make this *knowledge* available, the authors might as well adopt a positivist approach. This can be seen in the categorisation of the sources undertaken by all of them: from the international conventions to the study of the administrative practices, with, in the middle, the French Constitution(s), the laws voted in Parliament, the ministerial acts, and the jurisdictional decisions.

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<sup>236</sup> Removal thus shows the persistence of killing-exclusion.

Through this list of statements, we can have a better idea of the range of positions of subjectivity that handle the law of foreigners: it is vast. International organisations, governments, parliaments, politicians, administrations, judges, lawyers, activists, non-profit organisations, the foreigners themselves, academics, students, and so on. In front of the diversity of entities involved in, as Foucault puts it, the “dispersion” of the discourse (Foucault, 2002a, 53), it is impossible to think of a transcendental subject who would be the origin of the discourse, which in turn would only be the expression of what he, individually and subjectively, sees and thinks. In Foucault’s words, the subject of the statement “is not ... the cause, origin, or starting-point of the phenomenon of the written or spoken articulation of a sentence; nor is it that meaningful intention which, silently anticipating words, orders them like the visible body of its intuition” (Foucault, 2002a, 107). The positions of subjectivity of the law of foreigners are numerous and diverse, which entails that the statements produced through this discourse are likely to be repeated a lot.

The handbooks studied here are themselves evidence of the recursiveness of xenophobic discourses (because they compile all the statements together), but oppressive legal orders are generally characterised by their repeatability, as the law of foreigners shows well.<sup>237</sup> Before the emergence of this discourse, i.e., between 1945 and 1980 (35 years), there have only been 11 modifications of the 1945 ordinance on the entry and residence of foreigners which served as the referential text. In comparison, between 1981 and 2018 (37 years), there have been more than 35 reforms regarding immigration and asylum (Tchen, 2011, 5; Ribémont, 2012, 13). It is common to talk about “legal inflation” or “frenzy” (Tchen, 2011, 5) in front of this intensification of the legislative production – which does not even cover the administrative outcomes of such repetitions.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> As Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison shows, the arbitrary and authoritarian characteristics of the colonial order come from the excess of colonial laws, not their absence. He analyses the “chaos of ephemeral decrees, which repeat or abrogate themselves” and argues that decrees take the upper-hand above the too-numerous, instable, and contradictory laws. According to him, “the singular order [of colonial law] relies on this very disorder” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 18-26).

<sup>238</sup> Drawing from Foucault (2002a, 116-117), I argue that, if the laws are different, in the sense that they “reform” one another, they do repeat the statements which regularly produce the foreigner in a xenophobic way.

Aubin also notices that there are also “overabundant jurisdictional decisions”, and for a reason (Aubin, 2011, 27). In 2019, the law of foreigners provided 41% of the disputes in front of the French administrative tribunals (that is, 94,260 petitions and 88,861 rulings), 51% of the disputes in front of the administrative courts of appeal, and 20% of the dispute in front of the *Conseil d’Etat* (Conseil d’Etat, 2020).<sup>239</sup> Also, the *Cour Nationale du Droit d’Asile* (or, CNDA)<sup>240</sup> is the first administrative jurisdiction in France, with 66,464 rulings in 2019 (CNDA, 2021).

Despite the fact that the law of foreigners is made of those numerous and repeated statements, the academics’ reflexivity on this discourse is to turn it into a stable element in front of the always changing, often overlapping, sometimes contradictory, political discourses on immigration. Whereas the law of foreigners is precisely produced through this overwhelming repeatability, they paradoxically see it as a guarantee of stability, a tool to dispassionate a burning debate (Aubin, 2011, 7; Vandendriessche, 2012, 1; Tandonnet, 2015, 4). One symbol of this would be the codification of the law of foreigners, which resulted in the publication of the first code dedicated to this question, the CESEDA, in 2005 (Tchen, 2011, 3; Ribémont, 2012, 12). Codification is indeed generally seen as a process of simplification of law (Deumier, 2018). However, it could also be seen as the acknowledgement of the impossibility to enforce a simple and uniform law (in French, *droit*) of foreigners because it makes administrative (i.e., executive) uses triumph over laws (in French, *lois*). In other words, it consecrates the power of practices over the power of principles.

It does so through the production of administrative documents which, contrary to the division suggested in the handbooks, is truly what organises the statements of the xenophobic discourse on the foreigners. On top of the classification implied through the structures and outlines of the handbooks and of the code itself (which separates legislative and regulatory measures, and isolates the international agreements and conventions in appendixes) (Dalloz, 2017), one can find the international conventions, especially the 1950 ECHR and the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

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<sup>239</sup> In English, the State Council, which is the public/administrative law equivalent of the Supreme Court and which is also, problematically, the government legal advisor.

<sup>240</sup> The National Court of Asylum Rights is the administrative court of appeal which judges the decisions of the administration in charge of granting the right of asylum, the refugee status, or the subsidiary protection in France, the *Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides* (or, OFRPA).



(or, Geneva Convention). Indeed, they would give more rights to foreigners to challenge the administration. Whether it allows the recognition of a right specific to foreigners (the right of asylum, and the possibility to receive a refugee status), the recognition of human rights that would also apply to foreigners, or even the extension of citizens' or nationals' rights to the foreigners, the internationalisation of the law of foreigners would have been beneficial to the foreigners themselves (Aubin, 2011; Tchen, 2011; Ribémont, 2012; Tandonnet, 2015).

Yet, the conventions are rather vague in the sense that they rarely define the principles they proclaim to respect the sovereignty of each signatory nation-state (Tchen, 2011, 24; Vandendriessche, 2012, 41). Thus, they need to be transcribed into national laws or translated into jurisdictional decisions. As for the laws, it is true that some of them were voted to comply with the international conventions (after Geneva for refugees, New York for children's rights, Roma for the ECHR, etc.). However, the French law (*loi*) itself has actually little direct impact when it comes to the law (*droit*) of foreigners. Indeed, in its Article 37, the 1958 Constitution (the supreme law) does not indicate the condition of foreigners as included in the "domain of law (*loi*)" (Conseil Constitutionnel, 1958).<sup>241</sup>

In other words, the law (*loi*) only produces statements about the nationals, not about the foreigners, unless it is forced to do so. Indeed, the law of foreigners will always favour an administrative decision of removal (ban, detention, obligation to leave the territory, expulsion) over a criminal sentence pronounced in front of a court, which would then rule according to the national law (*loi*). This is actually validated by the European Court of Justice, which ruled in 2011 that, even though the states are free to make the undocumented entry and residence criminal offences, criminalising it should be kept for recidivism or manifest refusal to be removed (Tchen, 2011, 142-143). Thus, despite the so-called legislative inflation related to the foreigners, the law (*loi*) – like the international conventions – stays quite vague about the law (*droit*) of foreigners. It leaves it to executive acts (decrees, ordinances, or orders) to actually state the rules. Finally, the jurisdictional decisions only react to administrative acts, which therefore should be regarded as their condition of possibility.

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<sup>241</sup> Cf. Sophie Wahnich's work (Chapter 2): the law (*loi*), as conceptualised since the French Revolution, has always been the discourse of the exclusively French political project (Wahnich, 2010).

To sum this up, despite the traditional hierarchy of norms displayed in the law of foreigners, the statements that constitute this discourse rather show that its regularity is much more dependent on the administrative acts (and the documents then produced) than on the international conventions. A regularity that is well expressed by the codification of the law of foreigners, since it especially values the regulatory uses of the law. Through its very title, the *Code of the Entry and Residence of Foreigners and of the Asylum Rights* also organises the similarity between any foreigners and asylum seekers as the following pre-conceptual analysis shows.

#### **2.4 The Concepts of the Juridical Discourse on the Foreigner: Documents, Removal, and Public Order**

There are indeed three concepts produced (or appropriated) by the law of foreigners which contribute to the subjectification of the foreigner as a *xenos*: the administrative document, removal, and public order. First, the very ownership of a document (and, thus, the difference between documented and undocumented foreigners) and the type of document that the foreigner owns are crucial. Indeed, the law of foreigners develops a lot on the major difference between documented and undocumented foreigners and what it entails in terms of rights and life conditions.

For example, unless the foreigner applies for asylum or is an EU citizen, the undocumented entry into the national territory is considered a criminal offence (Tchen, 2011, 142; Ribémont, 2012, 27; Vandendriessche, 2012, 134). Also, the undocumented foreigner cannot work (Aubin, 2011, 286; Jault-Seseke et al., 2015, 661) nor apply for social benefits (Aubin, 2011, 301; Tchen, 2011, 69).<sup>242</sup> Above all, the undocumented foreigner can be removed without condition by any of the available administrative means: ban, detention, obligation to leave the territory, expulsion (Tchen, 2011, 106; Ribémont, 2012, 128). The arbitrary detention (without a trial), normally unconstitutional, is possible for the foreigner precisely because the law (*loi*) does not apply directly to them (Tchen, 2011, 128). Additionally, the Article 5 of the ECHR confirms the legality of the deprivation of liberty for a person who tries to enter illegally on the territory or for a person who is facing expulsion. Thus, in 2019, 70,000

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<sup>242</sup> Even if they can claim an emergency state medical aid, the AME (but only under specific conditions).

foreigners were imprisoned in France – 16,398 in prisons and 53,273 in administrative retention centres (Cimade, 2020; Ministère de la Justice, 2020).

Also, the law of foreigners lists all the different documents that a foreigner can own, the conditions to own them, and the rights attached to them. The longer the authorisation to stay, the more rights attached. Thus, the Provisional Authorisation to Stay (or, APS) delivered to the asylum seeker only makes the presence regular because they are documented, but opens few rights. Then, the different visas, the short term (one-year) residence card, the (ten-year) residence card, the republican identity card, the European blue card, and so on, are analysed one by one. They all seem to define the figure that a foreigner can present: they are children, students, refugees, family members, ill people, “skilled” workers, European citizens – and the law of foreigners individualises them according to the document they own, which gives them a status and the possibility to claim specific rights. The discourse even seems to organise a hierarchisation of the different foreigners, according to the documents and the rights attached to them. As Vandendriessche puts it, “some foreigners are less foreign than others” (Vandendriessche, 2012, 2).

One can see in this reading the legacy of the law of immigration, which used to give to the immigrant a natural outcome: becoming a national, through integration and naturalisation. For instance, people who studied in French schools abroad can enter the national territory and reside in it more easily (Vandendriessche, 2012, 88). Through *reconnaissance*, this disambiguation of the ambiguous foreigner into the sovereign (similar subject, the French) almost answers to a completely different logic than the contemporary xenophobic practice. Archaeology indeed invites us to reverse the perspective to see this system of categorisation through documents as structured, not by a regime of rights since *all of them* are conditioned to authorisation and do not stand in front of public order, but by a regime of removability.<sup>243</sup>

As argued below, removability is the significant element of regularity that allows the different categories of foreigners to belong to the same discourse. Removability is the contemporary outcome planned for the foreigner by the juridical discourse through

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<sup>243</sup> The opposite form of disambiguation, this time through *méconnaissance* and into the other, that is, into the non-national abroad.

*méconnaissance*. While “leaving the territory is mainly voluntary”, Tchen notices that “the issue of the foreigners’ leaving has been associated exclusively with the issue of the administrative police . . . , as if the end of a residence was necessarily carried out by an obligation to leave the territory or an expulsion”. It shows “a concern of the public authorities”, which not only are obsessed with the foreigner’s departure but need to consider themselves as initiating it (Tchen, 2011, 93).

Thus, the main concept produced by the law of foreigners is indeed the removal. Like the document and public order, it is thought of as an administrative concept which contributes to the subjectification of the foreigner. Like the document, it takes different forms, from bans (ban of entry, administrative ban of the territory, ban of return), to administrative detentions (in holding zones, administrative detention centres, and “hosting” centres for asylum seekers), from the OQTF to expulsion. As Tchen notices, none of those dispositions simply “represses a behaviour” (Tchen, 2011, 106 and 113), which would imply a link with the law (*loi*). They all are productive “preventive measures” (Vandendriessche, 2012, 166) which assess and police the “dangerousness to come” of the foreigner (Tchen, 2011, 114). Whether the foreigner has a document or not, whether they are present on the territory regularly or not, they are removable.

The law of foreigners as it is taught seems to concede removability as obvious and indisputable for the undocumented foreigners, thus creating an apparent commonsensical division with the documented foreigners for whom the removability would be the sign of an abuse of power from the state, of “an exorbitant prerogative insofar as it can damage a foreigner’s ‘individual freedom’” (Tchen, 2011, 44-45). However, even if the child’s interest must prevail at all times according to the New York Convention, they can be and are removed (Ribémont, 201, 182 and 98; Vandendriessche, 2012, 10-12), even when the ten-year residence card should be renewed by right, its holder can be and is removed (Tchen, 2011, 65; Vandendriessche, 2012, 81), even if France must grant asylum to freedom fighters or persecuted people, the refugee can be and is removed (Vandendriessche, 2012, 73), even if there is a principle of free circulation and non-discrimination in the European Union, the European citizen can be and is removed (Ribémont, 2012, 41).

Therefore, the regularity of the subjectification of the foreigners is much more linked to removability. The numerous statuses granted by the administration, through the deliverance of documents, should only be considered as the exceptions to the rule. This removability allows the creation of a state of exception to the law everywhere the foreigner is. This is particularly well illustrated by the creation of temporary, itinerant, and expandable holding zones, made possible by the 2011 law.

The holding zones used to exist in international areas (like airports). In 1992, they appeared on the national territory, but only close to airports, international stations, and border posts. Since 2011, they can be created every time and everywhere ten or more foreigners have been “found”, and they can expand up to the nearest border post (Tchen, 2011, 46; Ribémont, 2012, 44-45). Contrary to the administrative detention centres and the hosting centres for asylum seekers, the holding zones allow the foreigners to leave “freely”, but only because leaving the zones entails that they leave the national territory (whereas leaving the other centres would mean re-entering the national territory) (Tchen, 2011, 128).

The administrative measures of removal, and therefore the respect of the foreigner’s rights which is secondary to them, are conditioned to the policing of the foreigner, that is, to their production as a threat to public order, which is the third concept disseminated by the xenophobic juridical discourse. Public order is indeed a central concept of the law of foreigners, but it is the less defined of all, as Tchen notices (Tchen, 2011, 14). It is a historical condition to enter the national territory and reside on it (Tchen, 2011, 3; Tandonnet, 2015, 13), but this long conceptual life has not made it clearer. The Constitutional Council has indeed acknowledged the importance of this concept by stating that the foreigner is to be taken into account by the administrative authority and that their rights and movements have to be considered according to the notion of public order, but has not defined it either (Vandendriessche, 2012, 8).

What can be said, however, is that, according to the law of foreigners, the foreigner is necessarily more threatening to public order than the national because, according to a 1993 decision of the Constitutional Council, “the foreigners are being placed in a different situation compared with the nationals’ one” (Tchen, 2011, 95). Because the national is protected by the law (*loi*), the administration cannot remove them if they

become a threat.<sup>244</sup> On the contrary, one could argue that the foreigner is considered to be a threat to public order from the start, even if they did not commit any crime. This is precisely what entails their removability. By conditioning the foreigner's entry and residence on the national territory, public order conditions the very subjectification of the foreigner who, if they are removed, are disambiguated into a non-national abroad (into the other). Therefore, the conceptualisation of the foreigner as an essential threat to public order, without defining public order, allows me to contest the effectiveness of the principle of non-discrimination or equality (Jault-Seseke et al., 2015, 637). Officially, in conformity with Article 1 of the 1958 Constitution, discrimination cannot be based on origin, race, or religion (Conseil Constitutionnel, 1958). The only discrimination against a foreigner should be grounded on "objective criteria" and "in direct relation with the very object of the law" (Vandendriessche, 2012, 9). This should result in the fact that "a principle of equality and non-discrimination with the French nationals rules the foreigners' stay" (Tchen, 2011, 69). Yet, the law does not actually state anything on the foreigner, since it leaves them to the administration.

This leads to what could appear as a paradox, stated by Lochak: "international law, while evolving toward more equality between the condition of foreigners and the condition of nationals, does not claim the illegality of the discriminations based on nationality" (Lochak, 1985, 93) or, again, "international law does not contest discriminations between nationals and foreigners as not legitimate. It considers them as natural and resulting from the juxtaposition of statist legal orders" (Lochak, 1985, 103). Instead of a contradiction, one could see there the regularity of the law of foreigners: a law (*droit*) without any law (*loi*), a discourse that *knows* where it belongs (outside the law (*loi*)), a permanent state of exception which subjectifies the foreigner as an ambiguous and therefore threatening subject. As Foucault writes, archaeology analyses "deliberate and methodical exclusion" rather than "lacuna, omission, and error" (Foucault, 2002a, 176). Incidentally, it is very telling to see that Article 16 of the ECHR asserts very bluntly the legality of the restriction of the foreigner's political activity without regarding it as a violation of freedom of speech, reunion, or

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<sup>244</sup> Hence, in 2016, the failed and shameful attempt of the French government to pass a bill that would have stripped French-born bi-nationals of their French nationality if they had been convicted for terrorist activity.

association, nor a discrimination based on national origin, while it strictly forbids them for nationals (Vandendriessche, 2012, 21). This is one of the many situations of overt discrimination based on nationality that the law of foreigners never contests, according to the theoretical choices that, as a discursive practice, it has formulated.

### **2.5 The Intentional Strategy at Work in the Juridical Discourse on the Foreigner: Disambiguation through Policing and Removal**

Indeed, Foucault argues that one way to analyse the strategy at work within a discourse is to refer to the theories articulated by it, which are not to be mistaken with “a fundamental *project*” or a set of “*opinions*” (Foucault, 2002a, 78). As analysed above, juridical positivism has a crucial importance in the formation of the law of foreigners as a xenophobic discourse. It does not prevent the handbooks’ authors from being critical at times, but they authorise themselves to be so only in their introductions, where they contextualise the law of foreigners as an oppressive practice (Aubin, 2011, p.17-42; Tchen, 2011, 3-6; Ribémont, 2012, 11-24; Vandendriessche, 2012, 1-3; Jault-Seseke et al., 2015, 1-14).

The rest of the time, when the discourse introduces its concepts and its sources, it rather appears as a form of independent truth, unsurpassable, which entails that the only sensible and efficient relation toward it would be to *acknowledge* it to use it at its fullest. Presented as the only (current) possible way to deal with a foreigner, the law of foreigners legitimises their persecution through removal because the intentional strategy at work in this discourse aims at disambiguating them.

Thus, this discourse organises a subjectification project that should make critical thinking necessary, since it polices the foreigner to remove them, and thus disambiguates them into a non-national abroad.<sup>245</sup> The xenophobic juridical discourse on the foreigner acknowledges them as a *xenos*, i.e., an ambiguous subject – neither national nor non-national – but who has become a threat to public order simply by entering the national territory (thus demonstrating the *xenos*’ agency). This

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<sup>245</sup> The foreigner is policed materially through the (non-)deliverance of documents which are only accessible to foreigners (not to nationals, of course, and not to non-nationals who stay abroad, obviously).

xenophobic discourse produces the foreigner as an ambiguous threat in the main objective of disambiguating them into a subject who no longer constitutes a threat. This is achieved mainly through removal, which is in itself a telling example of the articulation, within a xenophobic apparatus, of discursive and non-discursive practices.

One could also take into account the articulation with other discursive practices, like racist discourses, when the administration, supported by the law of foreigners, organises a so-called “chosen immigration” of only “skilled and talented” workers which, in practice, aims to reject the foreigners coming from the former French colonies and other countries from the global South. We can also see the legacy of a colonialist discourse articulated with xenophobia in the very transfer of the state of exception associated to the foreigner from what used to be the colonies to the national territory – with a “simple” reversal of the relation to territoriality. As Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison shows, during colonisation, the colonisers were the exceptions on a territory entirely governed according to colonial law (*droit*) (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2010, 13), whereas, today, the foreigners are the exceptions on a territory governed according to the national law (*loi*).

Incidentally, the entry and residence of foreigners in the overseas territories still ruled by France today were organised by texts written at the time of colonisation until the 2000s (Tchen, 2011, 17). Furthermore, in 2019, 26,906 foreigners (half of total number of detained foreigners in France) were detained administratively – without trial – on the island of Mayotte, which belongs to Comoros and is occupied illegally by France (Cimade, 2020, 13). This shows how much the law of foreigners is territorialised compared to the law of nationality, with the *jus sanguinis* operating since the Ancien Régime (Aubin, 2011, 20).

Finally, one can acknowledge an articulation between homophobia and the xenophobic juridical discourse on the foreigner when, for example, Article 8 of the ECHR – which normally acknowledges the “right to respect for private life and family life” – is appreciated differently if the foreigner is in a homosexual relationship. Indeed, the law of foreigner, notably through the European Court of Human Rights (allegedly more “tolerant” than the other positions of subjectivity involved), will be more attentive to



about the “stability” and the “reality” of the “cohabitation”, and will assume more easily a “relation of dependence, especially a pecuniary dependence” in the case of a homosexual so-called mixed couple (Vandendriessche, 2012, 30).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter illustrates, through an archaeology of two academic discourses, what xenophobia does when it pervades the field of knowledge production. Studying the medical discourse on the intersex and the juridical discourse on the foreigner taught in French universities, it shows that those xenophobic discourses contribute to the legitimate production of those ambiguous subjects as threats (through pathologising and policing) and their persecution through mutilation and removal.

Through the constitution of original archives, I also acknowledge the emergence of what Foucault calls an “enunciative homogeneity” which, I argue, is xenophobic (Foucault, 2002a, 162-163). This xenophobic enunciative homogeneity is situated, not only in space, i.e., in French universities, or in France in general, but also in time. Xenophobia has indeed emerged as such after WWII and has become significantly powerful in our postcolonial period.

That said, I follow Foucault’s advice not to turn what archaeology allows us to analyse – here, xenophobia – as “the spirit or science of a period” (Foucault, 2002a, 176). I do not either turn xenophobia into the constitutive element of our postcolonial “episteme”. However, I argue that, at least, a powerful xenophobic apparatus operates today.

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## Conclusion

# From Xenophobia to Hospitality?

### 1 Xenophobic Subjectification and Binary Politics in Postcolonial France

Through the analysis of the xenophobic apparatus operating in academia in postcolonial France, the role of xenophobia in the subjectification of the *xenos* becomes clear. As shown in Chapter 5, the intersex and the foreigner are both produced as ambiguous, that is, respectively, neither typically masculine nor typically feminine and neither national nor non-national living abroad. Through xenophobia, this ambiguity is not only acknowledged, but it is also turned into a threat. In the cases of the intersex and the foreigner, this production of ambiguity as a threat goes through pathologising and policing. First, through pathologising, variations of sexual characteristics become a pathological condition that puts the intersex's life in danger, but it also jeopardises reproduction and identification through binary sexual differentiation – which then puts society as a whole in danger. Second, through policing, the non-national's entry on the French territory threatens, a priori, public order and therefore society.

Those threats allow the pursuit of a xenophobic knowledge about the intersex and the foreigner, notably through the academic discourses taught in medicine and law faculties. Because this knowledge is produced to annihilate the threats that the intersex and the foreigner allegedly pose to society, it is legitimised. Xenophobic knowledge first confirms that the intersex's and the foreigner's truth is a threatening ambiguity – knowledge, like politics, cannot stand what is unknown or what is perceived as a chaotic undifferentiation. Additionally, knowledge violently extracts what it needs from a subject (their so-called truth) to master them. Second, xenophobic knowledge initiates, through *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance*, the intersex's and the foreigner's disambiguation into one of the two opposite elements produced and acknowledged through the oppositional binary: respectively, a dyadic man or woman and, mainly, a non-national back abroad. Finally, because xenophobic knowledge has demonstrated that the intersex's and the foreigner's ambiguity threatens society, their persecution is

legitimised to complete their disambiguation. The intersex is thus systematically mutilated while the foreigner is systematically removed so they are no longer ambiguous and therefore no longer threatening. Thanks to this illustration, the usefulness of the analytical notions “*xenos*”, “xenophobia” (once reworked away from racialisation), and “ambiguity” can be appraised. Without them, the specificity of the subjectification of those ambiguous subjects is lost in the middle of the practices of subjectification that problematise difference to the point where a subject considered as different is, at the same time, produced as a threat and dominated (cf. Chapters 1 and 2). Yes, the *xenos* is “different” (rather, “differentiated”), but they are above all neither similar nor different, that is, neither one thing nor its opposite in a society where (political) opposition has historically been thought of, practiced, and reproduced as binary (cf. Chapter 2). This means that, in a Western postcolonial society like France, difference overwhelmingly opposes similarity in a binary way while, at the same time, the subjectification of the *xenos* shows that differentiation and political opposition are not exclusively binary.

This periodisation of xenophobia as postcolonial is crucial to judging its analytical usefulness. Indeed, the *xenos*, xenophobia, and its problematisation of ambiguity could not have emerged before the end of WWII, the first generation of poststructuralists’ reflection about the Holocaust, and, later, the waves of decolonisation and the impact they had on the former imperial European countries (cf. Chapter 3). I come back to this emergence below, but the *xenos*, xenophobia, and ambiguity are notions that allow us to avoid the dehistoricisation which represents a risk for any ambitious political theory – contrary to most of the poststructuralist literature gathered in this research. Indeed, the poststructuralist literature which focuses on practices of subjectification and affirms difference over identity has the tendency to articulate a paradigmatic theoretical figure of “the other” whose subjectification is decontextualised throughout the analysis. Kristeva’s stranger gives way to her more “transhistorical” (and therefore dehistoricised) “strangeness”, Deleuze’s nomad disappear to the benefit of a “pure difference”, and Bhabha’s hybrid colonised subject and hybrid coloniser end up indifferent to the (post)colonial context to turn into a universal hybrid figure. Despite the initial grounding of those “different subjects” in politics and history, most of the poststructuralist literature focusing on subjectification and difference cares less and less about historical and historicised relations of power to conceptualise their “other”.

This might be because they “ontologise” difference (making it primary) so much that they depoliticise and dehistoricise it.<sup>246</sup> Only the queer, through most of queer theory, manages to stay explicitly political and historical. Only the queer brings us back inevitably to the 1980s-1990s in the United States, when and where the HIV/AIDS epidemic was raging and institutional homophobia prevented decent care for seropositive people. Only the queer stays significantly associated with the subversion of the historical relations of forces operating in a delineated “field” of practice and theory – i.e., sexuality (cf. Chapter 1). It is precisely for those reasons that another notion than the queer is necessary to analyse the subjectification of ambiguous subjects in postcolonial times. Indeed, the *xenos* and ambiguity are also found beyond the field of sexuality, as the case of the foreigner shows (cf. Chapter 5).<sup>247</sup> Moreover, because they are mainly produced and problematised through xenophobia, the *xenos* and ambiguity cannot be approached as subversive notions, tools, or “realities” – while the queer unapologetically and efficiently subverts a straight world (cf. Chapter 1).

Furthermore, the poststructuralist conceptualisations of the other that I have discussed here are all articulated through binary differentiation. The stranger opposes the citizen, and our inner strangeness opposes our (desperately unreachable) certain identity. The nomad opposes the sedentary, and being is always already becoming. Even the notions which are explicitly constructed to challenge binary differentiation end up reproducing it. For instance, the hybrid subject opposes the subject who think of himself as pure or, in Kolozova’s words, the “nonunitary and unstable subject” opposes the “unitary and stable subject” (Kolozova, 2014, 17). When the queer is meant to challenge the binary oppositions man/woman or heterosexual/homosexual, she ends up opposing the straight or the homonormative subject (cf. Chapter 1). Additionally, the hybrid and the queer deploy an *ambivalence* which allows them to cross the frontier between one thing and its opposite, occasionally or constantly. This in-between position is not an actual third one that points to something that was not intelligible before, but the possibility to travel from similarity to difference and back. Doing so, the hybrid and the queer unintentionally contribute to strengthening the exclusivity of binary differentiation through its repetition – even though they repeat the oppositional binary

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<sup>246</sup> See Leys’ critique of such an ontologisation of difference in Connolly’s work (Leys, 2011, 451-452).

<sup>247</sup> Analysing the subjectification of the Afropean could also demonstrate this (cf. Miano, 2020; Pitts, 2020).

in a “parodic way”, as Butler puts it (Butler, 2006, 76). Conversely, the *xenos*’ ambiguity demonstrates that the identities produced through practices of subjectification and processes of differentiation are not only fluid and equivocal, like the poststructuralists have wished. The *xenos* is the ambiguous subject positioned *beside* the sovereign (similar subject) and the other (different subject), in between them, but immanently to them. The *xenos* does not replace the sovereign and the other altogether, nor do they embody them both (cf. Chapters 1 and 3). Not everybody is an intersex, despite the fact that we might all be able to position ourselves on a line representing variations of sexual characteristics, from the typical (and non-actual) woman to the typical (and non-actual) man – which, it is true, would make the ideal-types woman and man irrelevant, useless, even erroneous. The persecutions through mutilations that intersex people suffer throughout their lives show well that this is not the case. They show, however, that the intersex is problematically *neither* typically masculine *nor* typically feminine – and not *both* a man *and* a woman. The intersex is therefore not *ambivalent* but *ambiguous*. And so is the homosexual Arab man and the foreigner in postcolonial France.

Rather than making the division, the opposition, the frontier between one thing and its opposite blurry (like hybrid and queer ambivalences do), ambiguity, because it is historically mainly problematised through xenophobia, solidify the positions of the sovereign and the other. Ambivalence and ambiguity also have a different analytical purpose. Indeed, being neither similar nor different, the ambiguous *xenos* shows that such positions have a material reality, while the ambivalent queer and hybrid show that those positions are constructed and can therefore be challenged because they have no “real” ground. Additionally, the xenophobic subjectification of the *xenos* solidifies the positions of the sovereign and the other because xenophobia entails that the *xenos* must be disambiguated into a similar or different subject, thus demonstrating their reality once more (cf. Chapters 3 and 5). This is not to say that queer and hybrid theories are “wrong” in arguing that the positions occupied through binary differentiation are constructed and that the consequential relations of power can therefore be challenged. This is to say that, despite this invaluable input, occupying those positions have consequences. For the other, it involves a whole range of dominations; for the *xenos*, xenophobic persecution.

It can therefore be argued that xenophobia eventually strengthens binary differentiation through disambiguation, which is especially important in a political and archaeological perspective, since disambiguation is the intentional strategy articulated through any xenophobic practice. It could even be said that xenophobia reinforces the oppositional binary, since the *xenos* is more often disambiguated into the other (different and dominated subject) than into the sovereign (similar and dominating subject). Yet, it must be kept in mind that, first, xenophobia produces an ambiguous (and threatening) subject beside the similar and different subjects, beside binary differentiation and the oppositional binary (cf. Chapters 3 and 5). This argument depends on acknowledging the emergence of xenophobia, the *xenos*, and the problematisation of ambiguity in our postcolonial times *and* on acknowledging that all three have only become intelligible for political theory from this period (cf. Chapters 3 and 4). This double process draws from Foucault's historical epistemology which allows him to acknowledge the emergence of many figures of the other together with the problematisation of difference in the classical age. According to him, if difference has been problematised, it is because figures of the other – like the mad or the homosexual – have been produced, through binary differentiation, in opposition to figures of the sovereign – like the rational subject or the heterosexual. The practices of subjectification that have been conditioned by the oppositional binary and have structured this political foundation are the conditions of possibility of the problematisation of difference.

The latter has historically reached an extreme point for the poststructuralist literature which focuses on subjectification and difference: the Holocaust. As a response to this dramatic event, poststructuralists have affirmed difference over identity in the hope that our Western societies would witness a distinct, competing form or problematisation of difference, one that does not consider difference as a political problem and, at the same time, that puts identities under scrutiny. With the poststructuralist difference (joined by anticolonial, feminist, and other forms of affirmation of difference over identity), a competition between forms of problematisation of difference emerges. As Fredric Jameson notices, “there is a ‘difference’ ... between one's being condemned to be identified as a member of a group and a more optional choice of the badge of group membership because its culture has become publicly valorised” (Jameson, 2005, 341). Yet, if they oppose each other,

those forms of problematising difference still demonstrate “a generalized sensitivity ... to breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous ..., to Difference rather than Identity, to gaps and holes rather than seamless webs and triumphant narrative progressions, to social differentiation rather than to Society as such and its ‘totality’” (Jameson, 2005, 167-168). Yet, the extreme instance of problematisation of difference that the Holocaust constitutes (and to which we can undoubtedly add colonisation and its share of massacres – cf. Chapters 2 and 4) and the following affirmation of difference over identity are not enough for postcolonial xenophobia, the subjectification of the *xenos*, and the problematisation of ambiguity to emerge. As Jameson argues, the post-WWII period has seen the development of late capitalism whose “cultural logic” – i.e., postmodernism – is characterised by a “totalising process” entailing “the incorporation of the structural other or excluded of a given system by endowing it with a name drawn from the terminological field of the system itself” (Jameson, 2005, 159 and 239). In other words, alongside the affirmation of difference – which implies resistance to domination – our postcolonial times have acknowledged difference as a core element of the oppositional binary and integrated (an affirmed) difference to the system it nevertheless simultaneously aims to subvert. Thus, the oppositional binary – which enhances similarity at the expense of difference – is strengthened and subjects that are neither similar nor different are perceived as threats to this political foundation which henceforth assumes no “outside”. As shown in Chapter 3, the homosexual Arab starts being problematised as ambiguous (neither homosexual nor Arab) once the Arab man’s difference has been asserted (as re-masculinised and beyond the homo-hetero binary). The intersex, when women’s difference (from men) has been thought in political terms. The foreigner, after the human rights of the non-national abroad have been stated officially (cf. Chapter 5).

As for the problematisation of difference in the classical age, the problematisation of ambiguity is made possible by the acknowledgement of ambiguous subjects and their production as threats to society. The homosexual Arab starts being problematised from the Algerian independence in 1962 and the xenophobic discourses that take part to his subjectification as a *xenos* are consistently articulated at the beginning of the 1970s (Recherches, 2015; Mack, 2017; Shepard, 2018). The intersex condition starts being pathologised in the 1950s and their persecutions through mutilations are systematised in the 1970s (Guillot, 2008; Karkazis, 2008; Petit, 2018), while the foreigner becomes

an ambiguous threat in the mid-1970s, a decade before the juridical discourse about them is laid out in academia (Lochak, 1985; 2011; Laurens, 2009). It is because the *xenos* is subjectified beside the similar and different subjects – that is, beside the oppositional binary – that their ambiguity is acknowledged and produced as a threat at once. Then, a xenophobic knowledge about them constitutes itself – legitimised by the threat they represent and legitimising their persecution to annihilate it (cf. Chapter 4). The notion of ambiguity is necessary for this knowledge to emerge (as a response to the threat that the unknown and the chaotic undifferentiation would pose to knowledge and politics), but it is also necessary for us to understand what leads to the persecution of the *xenos*, as the production of the *xenos* as ambiguous is followed by their disambiguation. Similarly, the notion of xenophobia shows useful to understand the production of the *xenos* and their ambiguity as threatening. Without them, the specificity of the former’s subjectification escapes us. This subjectification is conditioned by the xenophobic apparatus studied in this thesis (cf. Chapter 4). Xenophobic knowledge goes through the disambiguating discursive practices of *reconnaissance* and *méconnaissance*. Legitimised by them, xenophobic persecution operates as diverse non-discursive practices, like mutilation and removal, which systematically go through institutionalised, material, and embodied means and results that do not necessarily involve discourses – even if they are prepared by the discursive (and not only linguistic) production of the *xenos* as ambiguous and threatening.

The link between discourse and materiality (embodiment) is always already operating – notably through repetition and intensification – as Foucault (2002a, 114) and Sara Ahmed argue (2014, 216). Yet, methodologically, it makes sense to argue that this is through emotions that the passage from discourse to materiality is made possible. Indeed, in the case of xenophobia, it is through the intensification of fear that xenophobic discourses stick the sign threat to the *xenos*’ body and repeat it so much that it becomes its only legitimate meaning. It is also through this intensification of fear that the constitution of a xenophobic knowledge is legitimised and, in turn, legitimises xenophobic persecution that affects the *xenos*’ bodies (cf. Chapters 3 and 4). This discursive-emotional production is therefore neither synonymous with an ontology (ambiguity is not the ontological character of the *xenos*, it is “only” how they are problematised) nor a political identity. As shown in the next part of this Conclusion, to resist xenophobia, the homosexual Arab, the intersex, and the foreigner do not need



to identify as a *xenos*, which is “only” the analytical notion used in this research to understand their subjectification.

## 2 Resisting Xenophobia and Mediterranean Hospitality

This last part opens the analysis of xenophobia undertaken in this research by introducing a film made by Sido Lansari, entitled *Les Derniers Paradis*,<sup>248</sup> in which he articulates a form of resistance to the xenophobic disambiguation that strikes homosexual Arab men in postcolonial France (Lansari, 2019). An artistic piece on its own, *Les Derniers Paradis* can nevertheless be seen as a response to the already-mentioned 1973 issue of Felix Guattari’s journal *Recherches*, entitled “Three Billion Perverts: The Great Encyclopaedia of Homosexualities”, edited by the radical left queer organisation Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action (FHAR) (Recherches, 2015).<sup>249</sup> Analysing this film, I thus acknowledge the fact that the *xenos* is not solely conditioned by xenophobia. This, even if, as I wrote in the Introduction, a proper analysis of the resistance to xenophobia is situated outside the scope of this research.

Before delving into the film, I need to assemble a few elements regarding the Foucaultian conception of resistance. For Foucault, the relationality of power entails that it depends “on a multiplicity of points of resistance”, which are as plural, “irregular”, “mobile and transitory” as power relations. They are inscribed in networks and sometimes competing with each other as much as “their irreducible opposites”. Those resisting elements are neither passive nor solely reactive compared with power. Rather, they “play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations”. This also means that, contrary to other conceptions of emancipation or even resistance (from Marxism to psychoanalysis through branches of feminism and antiracism), Foucault’s resistance cannot be found in one place (actual or symbolic) or one subject (individual or collective). Conversely, resistance produces “cleavages in a society”, it “fractur[es] unities”, it “passes through apparatuses and institutions”, it “traverses

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<sup>248</sup> In English, “The Last Paradises”. Unless specified otherwise, the quotes cited here are from Lansari’s film (2019).

<sup>249</sup> In what follow, I refer to them as “the authors” because none of the texts were signed to circumvent the criminalising of homosexuality.

social stratifications and individual unities”, but it never identifies with them (Foucault, 1978, 96).

Thus, Lansari’s film does not pretend to show *the* way homosexual Arab men in postcolonial France *should* resist xenophobic practices of subjectification and their disambiguating strategy. Rather, it introduces us to one specific resistance to xenophobia, one that has taken part in the subjectification of Lansari’s character whose name is Sami. Indeed, *Les Derniers Paradis* tells us the “almost-true story of Sami”, a young Moroccan gay man who grew up in Casablanca and then moved to Marrakech where he formed a strong and caring network of friends among his hairdresser colleagues, but also “fags, transvestites, dykes, and whores at bargain prices”. In Marrakech, Sami meets a young French man, Daniel, whom he falls in love with and follows to Paris. There, in the old imperial country, immersed in Daniel’s social environment, he experiences what I analyse as xenophobia, and he is partly subjectified by it. “Partly” because Lansari also tells us about a form of resistance, which has, in Foucault’s words, traversed Sami to “remould him” away from the disambiguated subject that the xenophobic apparatus operating in postcolonial France intends to produce. As Foucault writes, resistance allows us to see that “there has never existed one type of stable subjugation, given once and for all” (Foucault, 1978, 97).<sup>250</sup>

Importantly, a Foucaultian approach to resistance does not necessarily involve the identification of an explicit political strategy articulated through concerted actions of rebellion, revolt, or revolution. Colin Gordon explains that Foucault has dissociated resistance from his approach to political strategies through the regularity of practices of subjectification. This is partly what differentiates Foucault from a Marxist approach to resistance (Gordon, 1980, 256). In other words, Lansari does not need to introduce his character (or himself) as an anti-xenophobic activist<sup>251</sup> for us to appreciate the practices of “subjectivation” that are effectively resisting xenophobia.

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<sup>250</sup> Wendy Brown notices that “Foucault’s depiction of the unsystematic interplay of discourses that potentially converge as well as conflict with one another means that domination is never complete, never total, never fully saturating of the social order” (Brown, 2008, 71).

<sup>251</sup> Especially since the notions of xenophobia and the *xenos* are analytical and not political (cf. Chapter 1).

It is in that sense that Foucault states that practices of resistance should not be understood as necessarily taking part in “radical ruptures, massive binary divisions” (Foucault, 1978, 96), which does not mean that his approach to politics through war is no longer valid. Simply, the analysis of practices of resistance should not result in an artificial and damaging act of ensuring consistency among them. The subjectification of Sami does not pretend to serve as a liberatory model because it is the product of different practices – “a differential of subordination and subjectivation”, as Étienne Balibar writes (2003, 17) – which all articulate different strategies that cannot be assumed to aim at the same direction. Indeed, as Wendy Brown argues, resistance’s “practitioners often seek to void it of normativity to differentiate it from the (regulatory) nature of what it opposes” (Brown, 1995, 34) – i.e., relations of power.

Brown sees this refusal of normativity, associated with the fact that “resistance is an effect of the regime it opposes”, as the evidence that the Foucaultian notion of resistance should be understood as pertaining to “an analytical strategy rather than an expressly political one” – mainly because resistance is useful to Foucault first and foremost as a catalyst to analyse power mechanisms (Brown, 1995, 34). In that sense, Brown sees resistance as a set of practices “at best politically rebellious; at worst, politically amorphous” (Brown, 1995, 34). Furthermore, Brown aptly explains that “resistance is by no means *inherently* subversive of power” (Brown, 1995, 34, my emphasis). It obviously reflects the fact that the *xenos*’ ambiguity is not inherently subversive, in contrast with the poststructuralist difference affirmed over identity (cf. Chapter 1). That said, as an analytical notion/strategy, resistance is useful for understanding what is at stake politically in Lansari’s film. Sami’s subjectification goes through the practices articulated as a xenophobic apparatus that operates in postcolonial France. The fact that he resists it, as Lansari shows, indeed informs us on the mechanics of such apparatus *and* it ends up offering us the possibility to witness one of the possible ways to subvert it. Of course, Brown is also right to criticise a moralistic approach to resistance and power according to which the latter would be understood “as bad or that which is to be overcome” and the former as “that which is good, progressive, or seeking an end to domination” (Brown, 1995, 34). Both interpretations are indeed foreign to Foucault’s work. But the singular case of Sami’s resistance can allow us to approach good and bad away from morals and closer to Friedrich Nietzsche’s and, even, Baruch Spinoza’s respective political thoughts.

If the typically poststructuralist conflation between Spinoza (especially his *conatus*) and Nietzsche (especially his “will to power”)<sup>252</sup> has been criticised as a confusion,<sup>253</sup> it is important to understand that it has been productive for our understanding of resistance. To be sure, it has mainly been Gilles Deleuze’s deed (Deleuze, 1983; 2003), but Alan D. Schrift argues that Foucault would have had a lot to say in common with his friend’s reading of Spinoza and Nietzsche (Schrift, 2009, 213). Schrift thus explains that Spinoza and Nietzsche understand the notions of good and bad according to “our nature”. For the former, what is good “increases our power to act” while what is bad “diminishes” it. For the latter, especially once he is read by Deleuze, ethics tells good from bad according to what allows or prevents one from “doing what one is capable of doing” (Schrift, 2009, 208-210).<sup>254</sup> Therefore, Sami’s resistance could be said “good” insofar as it is understood as allowing this figure of the *xenos* to, in Spinoza’s words, “persevere in [their] being” (Spinoza, 1996, III 6). Opposing the xenophobic apparatus operating in postcolonial France which aims at disambiguating him, Sami might be seen as a resistant subject because he perseveres in his ambiguity, even if this ambiguity is not an ontological character. Indeed, despite the good/bad vocabulary used here, we must keep in mind the political rather than ethical or even ontological implications for resistance, because good and bad are here always thought of in terms of power relations. As Schrift argues: “for Spinoza, what ultimately mattered was not the metaphysics or epistemology, but politics, specifically, the intervention into the political so as to increase the amount of joy and decrease the sadness” (Schrift, 2009, 212).

As a matter of fact, a xenophobic apparatus, increasing the *xenos*’ sadness and decreasing their joy, operates in postcolonial France, particularly since the 1970s. As a reminder, the title of the most problematic part of the 1973 issue of *Recherches* was “Arabs and Fags”. The conjunction “and” was deliberately used in a xenophobic and disambiguating way. It meant that this part would tackle the topic of the relations between Arabs (who could not be homosexual) and fags (who could not be Arab). Every text that forms this part makes clear that talking about a homosexual Arab is

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<sup>252</sup> See Shannon Sullivan (2011, 233).

<sup>253</sup> See Jan Rehmann (2016, 399-411).

<sup>254</sup> Cf. also Sullivan (2011, 236).

nonsensical, according to the white gay cis men who wrote them. As the title of the most notorious text made explicit, there were, on the one hand, “the Arabs” and, on the other hand, “us”, i.e., white gay men (Recherches, 2015, 10).<sup>255</sup> One of the authors argues: “For them [the Arabs], the homosexual relation is the same as the relation with women” (Recherches, 2015, 17), while another one tells this story: “I had this experience with an Algerian, a law student to whom I used to make love. I felt he was so Europeanised that I stopped. He was asking this question to himself: ‘Am I homosexual because I fuck with this boy?’ He was asking this question as a European, so I stopped” (Recherches, 2015, 20). On the one hand, we can see disambiguation operating through *méconnaissance* and, on the other hand, a disambiguation through *reconnaissance*.

Forty-six years later, Lansari ends his film with the reformulation of the title used in *Recherches*. There is no longer the statement of an exclusionary relation, but a choice: “Arab or Fag”, followed by another alternative: “Leave or Stay”. The link between Lansari’s rewriting and *Recherches*’ heading is obvious because he uses the same font as the journal’s. Sami, Lansari’s character, is confronted with that choice because he can feel that in France, xenophobia is very powerful when it comes to his subjectification. He knows that as long as he stays there, disambiguation can be forced upon him. Because of disambiguation, he can no longer be a homosexual Arab – a *xenos* – that is, neither homosexual (because he is not white) nor Arab (because he does not live “beyond” the homo/hetero binary and because he receives during sodomy). The choice between staying in France or leaving the country, probably to go back to Morocco even if it is not specified, has to be made according to the potentiality to persevere in his ambiguity.<sup>256</sup> This choice to leave postcolonial France where the xenophobic apparatus operates can find elements for decision in what Sami has already experienced. Sami actually has a name, and he is proud of it. The narrator says: “He likes his name, enough to seize every opportunity to make it clear”. This might seem meaningless, but the contrast with the 1973 issue of *Recherches* is once again telling. In this issue of Guattari’s journal, edited by the FHAR, the homosexual Arabs have no

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<sup>255</sup> Entitled “The Arabs and Us”, this text is the transcript of an unbearable conversation between white radical gays about the (sexual) relations they have with homosexual Arabs.

<sup>256</sup> Gordon explains that a Foucaultian approach to resistance allows us to analyse those practices of departure, or “evasion or defence”, with the same force of “politicisation” (Gordon, 1980, 257).

name, they are only referred to as “Arabs”, “Berbers”, “Kabyles” (Recherches, 2015). In this instance like in most of the cases when xenophobia is involved, the *xenos* is disambiguated into the other, the different subject (cf. Chapter 3).

Through this absence of names, the authors can avoid talking to homosexual Arabs and including them in a conversation that concerns them too. In a foreword to the issue, one of the authors states that the topic “homosexualities, today, in France” entails “questioning ordinary methods of research in human sciences which, with the excuse of objectivism, are very cautious to establish maximum distance between the researcher and their object”. That said, he also considers that “it is not enough to ‘give voice’ to the concerned subjects” to produce critical research (Recherches, 2015, 2). If it can be argued that it is not enough to give voice to (Arab) homosexuals to analyse their subjectification and (Arab) homosexualities, it should nevertheless at least be done. However, this minimum requirement of the analysis is nowhere to be found in the 1973 issue of *Recherches* when it comes to the homosexual Arabs – the texts are only saturated with “the voices” of the white radical gays. The only moment when homosexual Arabs take part in the conversation transcribed in the text “The Arab and Us” is when the group of French men move their conversation to a bar (Recherches, 2015, 25-27). Before the transcript of the only “conversation” they have with “two or three young Arabs” (who still have no names, not even initials like those used to preserve the white men’s anonymity), a text has been inserted: “It seemed relevant to many of the participants in the conversation that a similar task [conversing] should be done in the presence of Arab boys. We went, equipped with a tape recorder, in an Arab café situated on Rue des Vertus where L. knew people” (Recherches, 2015, 25).<sup>257</sup> There, they ask homosexual Arabs outrageous questions about their (lack of) ability to have sex with French men without any money involved. A homosexual Arab answers: “To make love for money means that you do not want to make love. I swear, if I am attracted to the boy and if he is cute, making love to him; it is for my pleasure and his pleasure, to make love...” (Recherches, 2015, 25), but he cannot finish his sentence. Indeed, one of the authors interrupts him and says to the others (not even addressing their interlocutor): “He does not want to say it”, thus discarding his answer, clearly because it does not match with his own discourse (Recherches, 2015, 25). It is also

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<sup>257</sup> This turn of phrase is significant for what follows: the conversation is made *in the presence of* Arab boys, but not *with* them.

explicit when another one tells this story: “The [Arab] electrician offered me his love and I refused it. It questioned my habits with Arabs” (Recherches, 2015, 14). On the other side, Lansari centres his narrative on Sami’s vantage point. Sami has a name, we know how old he is when the story starts, we know the colour of his hair, where he grew up, what sort of music he likes, what he thinks, what he feels, when he is in love and when he is not anymore. Sami is a subject, not only the object of the story a group of radical gays tell each other.

Lansari also tells us how much Sami is made uncomfortable by the fetishising of homosexual Arabs by white gays, which manifests itself in two ways. First, through the constant, repetitive, stereotypical, and misinformed way of talking about them. Lansari tells us: “Sami did not understand their [Daniel’s friends’] obstinacy to talk relentlessly about the Arab men they met”. Second, through the objectification of the homosexual Arabs and the reduction to their penis – i.e., their fetishisation. As one of the authors of *Recherches* briefly recognises: “But can we be sure that they like it, that is, to only be considered as dicks which get hard? The fact that we talk about them as if they were objects, sex toys. They are aware of it...”, which unfortunately does not stop him from continuing to do so (Recherches, 2015, 15). This awareness, quickly concealed and even denied, is crucial in Sami’s subjectification as a *xenos* resisting xenophobia. While the authors in *Recherches* consider that an Arab man cannot be politicised, articulate a discourse, or intellectualise his condition, Sami develops knowledge about his situation and white gays. This knowledge is much more grounded and much less stereotypical than the one the latter pretends to possess about Arab men in general.

For the authors of *Recherches*, the homosexual Arabs with whom they like having sex cannot “express with words” (Recherches, 2015, 17), they “do not know how to handle speech” or “true speech” (Recherches, 2015, 37), they do not have any “intellectual distance” (Recherches, 2015, 18), they need to be educated by white men about sex and politics and to have sex with the latter to free themselves, notably from Islam (Recherches, 2015, 20-27). The authors of *Recherches* obviously dehumanise the homosexual Arabs with whom they have sex. One of them says: “We are and will stay intellectuals who perform submission to savagery, to the beast. ... I surrender to the Arab beast” (Recherches, 2015, 18); when another one argues: “If I try to establish

a dialogue, it is to humanise [the Arab]” (Recherches, 2015, 21). Yet, Sami challenges this discourse at every stage of his life. Significantly, he does it especially when it comes to his relations with white gays. Here, Elsa Dorlin’s phenomenology of the prey can be helpful (Dorlin, 2017, 167). Indeed, even in Morocco, Sami “knows how to play” with white gays, i.e., he knows what the latter expect from him and what type of reactions such behaviour or such discourse will trigger in them. This means that he can perform “the local guide when he has to”, but also “the Muslim friend when he [can] get something out of it”. He even knows “how to use the exotic fetish for his benefit” because he has learnt “not to be taken for a fool, to know boys like” them.

Of course, as Dorlin reminds us, the “negative care” put together by “the prey” does not mandatorily mean that the relation of domination disappears or reverses, on the contrary (Dorlin, 2017, 163). As Sami acknowledges, he is “fully dependent on Daniel” when they move to Paris. But this acknowledgement, this awareness about his situation, this ability to be reflexive, this deliberate exposure of his vulnerability, all this challenges the xenophobic discourse of the authors of *Recherches*. And this knowledge produced from the vantage point of the dominated is what allows Sami to confront Daniel’s friends, notably regarding “their revolutionary tirades about Arabs – a sort of justification of their sexual relations”. For instance, “when some of them claimed that Arabs were their allies for struggle, [Sami] answered: ‘Your main ally is their misery’”. That said, Sami’s resistance to xenophobia does not only go through discourse, but also through what he does and, relatedly, the type of alliances he forms. Contrary to what is expected from him because he is an Arab man, Sami likes to be penetrated during sodomy, he is effeminate, and he lives in solidarity with women. Additionally, he makes all those characteristics compatible with identifying unapologetically as Arab. Despite the “trap” set through xenophobia between being Arab and being penetrated in male homosexual intercourse (cf. Chapter 3), this is how Lansari has shaped Sami. If Daniel’s friends “had nicknamed him ‘Sami, the Arab’s son’”, they were nevertheless constantly “reminding him that he was unlike the others. ... Since when were the Arabs effeminate ephebes? For Daniel’s friends, the Arabs were the top fuckers and them, the fags, were the bottoms”.

This xenophobic discourse is rationalised as follows: since Arab men cannot be homosexual, those who have sex with other men do it because they seek a substitute



for a woman that they can penetrate. One of the authors of *Recherches* argues: “They see us as women” (Recherches, 2015, 10), while another one remembers that “When I blow [Arabs], they put a pillow on [my penis] to hide it. This is the code” (Recherches, 2015, 16). Similarly, rather than acknowledging what homosexual Arabs say, think, or how they act, they keep on acting to disambiguate them into different subjects, e.g., when one of the authors of *Recherches* tells this story: “I met one [Arab] who wanted so bad that I fuck him .... He wanted it so much, he was offering his ass, it was unbelievable. I did not do it” (Recherches, 2015, 13). Thus, Sami is not where white gays expect him, up until his position in sexual relations. In the same logic, Lansari made his character effeminate, from a young age. When he was a child in Casablanca, Sami used to tie one of his grandmother’s scarves around his head to pretend he had long hair. Then, he would also dance as if he were one of his Arab female icons, Samira Ben Said. Thanks to the fact that his name is “phonetically free from any virility”, he is incidentally “open to bear many female derivatives like Samia, or Soumaya, [or] Samira.” Later on, after moving to Marrakech, he would even go out dressed as a woman to “Le Onze”, a local club open to queer people like him. Lansari calls this place “the Mecca for sissies”.<sup>258</sup> All this can be seen as instances of Sami’s resistance to the disambiguating strategy at work in the white gays’ xenophobic discourses.

But Lansari goes even further and challenges another form of disambiguation, this one as much rooted in France as in Morocco. He tells the story of Sami being introduced by his boss, Reinette, to Doctor Burou. This so-called “celebrity doctor” was himself famous because he operated on transwomen in Marrakech. In this episode, Reinette begs the doctor to be kind enough “to help” Sami to transition in order “to save him”. Indeed, the belief that (Arab and/or Muslim) men who receive during sodomy are actually women trapped in men’s bodies has been widely spread. It is reinforced by an alleged tolerance that Muslim societies would encourage regarding transwomen. The disambiguation rationale operates here because if a man likes to be penetrated, he must be a woman. After all, a true man cannot possibly like it. But, as Lansari makes clear, there is a difference between being a man who loves men and being assigned a gender

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<sup>258</sup> The simple fact that this club exists challenges the xenophobic discourse according to which Arab men cannot be homosexual. Yet, this is “rationalised” by FHAR members who argue that it is a matter of context: in France, Arabs are not homosexual but women-less frustrated straight men, while in Morocco, all Arabs are bisexual (Recherches, 2015, 35).

at birth that does not correspond to the one someone identifies. If both can be analysed as challenges to virility and the sexual binary, when Sami finds himself in front of a mirror in Doctor Burou's surgery, he realises that he loves his male body and neither wants nor needs to go through a sex reassignment "to bypass the taboos of his needs". Despite this clear distinction between his life and the experiences of transwomen, Sami still forms alliances with women. For instance, when he was a child in Casablanca, he had a secret pact with his grandmother that protected each other. They would wait to be alone, so no one could judge them, and she would help him to tie one of her scarves around his head to look as if he had long hair. She would also pretend that she did not see him dancing "like Hind Rostom" while listening to the radio. In exchange, even if this might sound childish (which Sami was back then), he would "leave her to her fussiness" – which meant that she was frenetically putting the house upside down every day to clean it entirely, a task traditionally (even if because of sexism) attributed to women. Later, when he moved to Marrakech, he became close to women like his boss, Reinette, and to others at the "place of serenity, the heaven of peace" that was the club "Le Onze". Much later, after breaking up with Daniel, while he is still in Paris, "he becomes close to a group of girls that he has met at work or in bars". He adds, significantly: "At least they knew who Hind Rostom was". In contrast, his boyfriend Daniel is only surrounded by men. This fictional group of friends, whom Lansari sarcastically calls "intellectuals" is very loyal to the male members of the Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action (FHAR) at the time they edited the 1973 issue of *Recherches*. Indeed, while radical lesbians co-founded this organisation in February 1971, about fifty of them broke away as early as April 1971 – to found the "Gouines Rouges" (Red Dykes) – because of the male members' "Arab obsession" and misogyny (see Shepard, 2018, 77).<sup>259</sup> Finally, the solidarity Sami feels with women is tightly linked to his experience of Arabness, while the authors of *Recherches* convince themselves of knowing so much about Arab men that they contest the "authenticity" or the reality of Arabness when it comes to the subjectification of Northern Africans

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<sup>259</sup> As Lansari shows in his film, male members of the FHAR even distorted a feminist tool for the sake of shocking bourgeois morals and making themselves appear more radical than their "sisters". In April 1971, 343 feminist women signed a manifesto revealing that they already had an abortion, which was illegal at the time, to push for its legalisation. In the media, those women were called "343 sluts", an insult they twisted and appropriated for their struggle. In the same month, while those women were still stigmatised for talking about their illegal abortions, the male members of the FHAR published a text which began as follows: "We are more than 343 sluts. We've been bugged by Arabs. We're proud of it and we'll do it again. Sign and circulate this petition. ... And discuss it with Arab Comrades" (Shepard, 2018, 75).

immigrating from the former colonies. That Arabness could have been articulated by the colonised themselves to resist colonialism, does not seem to be an option. Indeed, in a text entitled “The ‘Arab’ Sex”, the author argues that “the North African workers that we meet in Paris and elsewhere are not ‘Arabs’ but, more often, Berbers who are more or less Arabised and Islamised”. He also calls for getting rid of “notions as absurd as ‘the Arab nation’, ‘the Arab revolution’, and more generally of pan-Arabism which is as fake as Zionism” (Recherches, 2015, 33).

The authors of *Recherches* not only doubt the reality of Arabness, they despise it. Another author indeed writes about a film on the life of the prophet Muhammad: “I’m bored, it is almost as unbearable as Umm Kulthum’s music. I think they will accuse me of being racist because I confess my hostility to Arabo-Islamic culture” (Recherches, 2015, 38). On the contrary, Lansari not only resists the xenophobic disambiguation of homosexual Arabs but he also resists the racist subjectification of Arabs by asserting the materiality of Arabness in general and his character’s concrete Arabness in particular. Indeed, if Sami can argue that Samira Ben Said “is the biggest artist of the Arab homeland”, it is because there is such a thing as an Arab homeland to him. Incidentally, when Sami describes what it means to be Arab, he simply states: “Being Arab means what MBC broadcasts, i.e., Samira the Moroccan, Warda the Algerian, Latifa the Tunisian, Angham the Egyptian, Ahlam the Emirati, Rawal the Kuwaiti, and Nawal the Lebanese”. This list made of the names of Arab *female* singers is a way for Sami to resist Daniel’s friend’s xenophobic discourses on what an Arab man should represent. He places himself under those women’s protection and makes them embody Arabness. Through his film, Lansari offers us an opportunity to see how ambiguity can be embodied in a non-xenophobic way. A homosexual Arab who confronts xenophobic discourses, Sami is indeed a *xenos* who resists disambiguation.

It might thus be interesting to think of this resistance to xenophobia as articulating a practice of hospitality. Indeed, the ancient Greek practice of hospitality – in which the host and the guest, although distinct, were both named *xenos* – was called the *xenia*. Yet, it might also be interesting to follow Walter Dignolo’s call to acknowledge what he frames as “the colonial difference”, which implies that ancient “Greece is only a European legacy, not a planetary one” and that, therefore, it “can no longer be the point of reference for new utopias and new points of arrival” (Dignolo, 2002, 86-89). While

“modernity (and obviously postmodernity)<sup>260</sup> maintained the imaginary Western civilization as a pristine development from ancient Greece to eighteenth-century Europe, where the bases of modernity were laid out”, Mignolo aptly argues that “the conceptualization of the modern world-system does not locate its beginning in Greece” (Mignolo, 2002, 60). This entails that the practices of hospitality that could resist xenophobia in a postcolonial setting should be thought outside of a genealogical frame that goes back solely and directly to ancient Greece.

In Lansari’s film, Sami crosses the Mediterranean Sea, from Morocco to France, where he is confronted to xenophobic practices of subjectification. Lansari suggests that he goes back to Morocco to escape xenophobia, thus making the journey another time, from the former colonial metropole to the former colony. So why not hospitality considered in Mediterranean terms? Of course, Sami’s is a particular story. Yet, given the tremendous stories of people crossing the Mediterranean Sea from South to North – sometimes dying there in the hope of a better life on the other shore, in any case always facing a non-hospitable European context there – thinking of a Mediterranean hospitality would allow us to articulate a powerful practice against xenophobia that would acknowledge Mignolo’s colonial difference. It would also “de-link the Greek contribution to human civilization from the modern ... contribution”, and allow non-Westerners to reappropriate the Greek legacy to disturb the classical tradition (Mignolo, 2002, 90).

Away from the *xenia*, a Mediterranean hospitality would not assume that the host is mandatorily European and the guest necessarily non-European.<sup>261</sup> A Mediterranean hospitality would thus allow the *xenos* to persevere in their ambiguity, to experience differentiation and reciprocity *beside* the oppositional binary, to resist (post)colonial dominations and xenophobic persecution. A Mediterranean hospitality would be more political than ethical. Drawing from Ida Danewid, it would not presuppose an ontologically vulnerable generic and “abstract humanity”, with some people simply

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<sup>260</sup> If Jacques Derrida is not a “postmodernist”, it would be interesting to confront his approach to hospitality (Derrida, 2000) to Mignolo’s call, even if, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says, Derrida might be one of the few poststructuralist thinkers to “articulate[] the *European* Subject’s tendency to constitute the Other as marginal to ethnocentrism and locates *that* as the problem with all logocentric ... endeavors .... *Not* a general problem, but a *European* problem” (Spivak, 1988, 293).

<sup>261</sup> To echo Spivak’s contention that the intellectual is not necessarily a European man and can also be a subaltern woman (Spivak, 1988).

lucky and others unlucky, and the need for the lucky ones to feel empathy and generosity for the unlucky. Rather, it would work from an explicitly “historical humanity” and it would imply raising “questions of accountability, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform ” (Danewid, 2017, 1681-1683). A Mediterranean hospitality would not seek to “erase history”, but rather to “account for ... colonial history and the way in which it continues to structure the present” (Danewid, 2017, 1680).

More than “simply” political, this Mediterranean hospitality would also articulate what Danewid, after Hannah Arendt, calls a “politics of justice” rather than a “politics of pity” (Danewid, 2017, 1681).<sup>262</sup> Indeed, its role would not be to reproduce, in postcolonial times, the modern/colonial emergence of the European sovereign subject on the back of all his others. A Mediterranean hospitality would not, in Danewid’s words, “reproduce a narrative of European goodness and benevolence” and it would not be “concerned with saving Europe for itself” by using the migrants’ dead bodies. A Mediterranean hospitality would not allow Europeans to pretend that they are deeply empathetic to the fate of Southern migrants, and that this empathy is part of their culture or identity (Danewid, 2017, 1682).<sup>263</sup> Danewid thinks that this entails getting rid of the very term “hospitality” because it would only serve “a colonial and patronising fantasy of the white man’s burden – based on the desire to protect and offer political resistance *for* endangered others”, and because it would only be used to make sure that “the migrant’s status as a stranger is secured” (Danewid, 2017, 1675-1681). If this decision comes from an acute analysis of the current situation, I want to argue that considering a Mediterranean hospitality necessarily involves acknowledging this critique.

Now, as this research shows, politics goes through opposition and therefore differentiation. Therefore, a Mediterranean hospitality does not give up on political opposition (and therefore conflict) nor on the very possibility to differentiate. Rather,

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<sup>262</sup> Arendt actually opposes “pity” to “solidarity” (Arendt, 1990, 88), the latter making the necessity of true reciprocity explicit in (Mediterranean) hospitality.

<sup>263</sup> Danewid explains that left-wing activists and academics usually focus “on migrants that are *dead*, with sentimental stories of innocent children washed up on shores, and with mothers who drown while giving birth – that is, with bodies that cannot speak back” (Danewid, 2017, 1682-1683). A Mediterranean hospitality entails reciprocity and therefore a living interlocutor.

it acknowledges that political opposition and differentiation are not necessarily binary, like the subjectification of the *xenos* – whose ambiguity is produced as a threat through xenophobia – shows. If xenophobia emerges when ambiguity starts being problematised (mainly through xenophobia itself) in our postcolonial times, a Mediterranean hospitality can resist the xenophobic problematisation of ambiguity. Indeed, it offers possibilities to differentiate out of the oppositional binary, without reproducing its dominating character on another level, while acknowledging and taking advantage of a political opposition and differentiation which is explicitly anti-binary.

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