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## Between Two Worlds: Memory and the French-Algerian (Pied-Noir) Experience

Darian Martinez

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**Abstract:** This paper expands our understanding of colonialism by analyzing the experiences of two French colonists in Algeria and how they were affected by colonialism, Algerian culture, and Independence in 1962. France occupied Algeria for 132 years, so that by Independence, there were more than one million people of French descent in the country. After Algeria claimed its independence, these French citizens, who called themselves “Pieds-Noirs” (black feet), were forced to repatriate to France, a country many had never seen. This research compared and analyzed two autobiographies, *Ma mère l’Algérie* by Jean Pélégri and *Hier est proche d’aujourd’hui* by Jeanne Cheula, using the theoretical approach, “hybridity.” Pélégri was born in Algeria to a farming family. Jeanne Cheula was married to a French government official and moved to Algeria in 1926. This paper argues that colonialism transformed not only the colonized; it also transformed the colonists because they were forced to grow up in a radically different society than that of France. The effects of this transformation endured until long after the French-Algerians were forced to move “back” to France. Thus, colonialism was about more than just colonists functioning as the homogenous product and purveyor of a colonial power’s policy, it was also about how the colonists themselves were transformed by their host culture – in this case, Algeria – and by colonialism, which continued long after French colonial rule ended in Algeria in 1962.

**Keywords:** *colonialism, French-Algeria, Pied-Noir, hybridity*

French colonialism in Algeria began in 1830. As a result, French citizens were encouraged to move to Algeria with a mission to impose French culture, education, and political control on the various groups of native Algerians. This colonial settler occupation lasted 132 years. It led to deep tensions between Algerians who were not of European descent and those who viewed themselves as French Algerians because of their French descent. Algeria gained its independence in 1962 after eight years of violent conflicts, which the French colonialists described as “disturbances” and the Algerians as the “War of Independence.” Meanwhile, other scholars refer to these conflicts as the “Algerian War” (Barclay; Derderian; Duffy; Hubbell; Savarese; Schjott-Voneche; Stora). After Algeria claimed its independence, these French citizens, who later called themselves “Pieds-Noirs” (black feet), were forced to repatriate to France, a country many had never seen. This paper argues that colonialism transformed not only the colonized; it also transformed the colonists because they were forced to grow up in and adjust to a radically different society than that of France. This transformation continued long after Independence

was achieved because the effects endured once the French-Algerians were forced to move “back” to France. Thus, colonialism was about more than just colonists functioning as the homogenous product and purveyor of a colonial power’s policy, it was also about how the colonists themselves were transformed by their host culture – in this case, Algeria – and by colonialism, which continued long after French colonial rule ended in Algeria in 1962.

Since colonialism in Algeria lasted 132 years, most of the Pieds-Noirs were born and raised in Algeria and their families had been there for decades; Algeria was the only homeland they knew. While in Algeria, the Pieds-Noirs often held positions in government, education, and other elite areas of employment. The Pieds-Noirs were also strong proponents of far-right politics, in part because this was pro-colonial and colonialism supported Pieds-Noirs’ livelihoods and their elite status. Once they were forced to leave, they experienced emotional turmoil (Jordi 14). They longed to return to Algeria because they felt alienated from French society and, at the same time, they were yearning for their high status lives.

The term “Pied-Noir,” or “black foot” in English, is a label that was employed after the French Algerians returned to France. The various explanations of the origins of the term are all myths because there is no real documentation of its etymology. Amy Hubbell explained two myths: one is that when the French settlers first arrived in Algeria in 1830, the soldiers wore big black boots; the other is that the French settlers stomped grapes to make wine, which turned their feet black (“(Re)Writing Home,” 21). Although these myths imply that the term came into existence in 1830, the term was not really used until the French Algerians repatriated to France after the Algerian War. “Pied-Noir” became a derogatory term in the years directly following the war because the continental French viewed the French Algerians with disgust due to the failed colonial experience in Algeria (Hubbell, “(Re)Writing Home,” 22). However, once the French Algerians realized the extent of their exclusion from French society, they reclaimed the term as a source of pride in order to unite themselves as a group and to reconnect to their Algerian past (Hubbell, “(Re)Writing Home,” 25). As the term “Pied-Noir” is now used by all sides, it will be used for the rest of the paper to refer to the French-Algerians.

Colonialism, defined by Edward Said as “the implanting of settlements on distant territory,” has many facets (8). Said’s definition is fairly neutral in that it deliberately avoids any political leanings. It also seems quite simplistic as it ignores many of the complex aspects of the colonial situation. Other scholars have defined colonialism as the expansion of a colonial empire into other territories that involved a strict hierarchy between the colonized and the colonizers (Ashcroft et al. 54). A flaw in studies that use this definition is their (understandable) sole focus on the experiences of the colonized, rather than on those of the colonists. This likely stems from the public political leanings deemed acceptable, but which tend to be anti-colonial. However, the colonists were also shaped by colonialism, and regardless of political affiliations, this paper will expand upon the experiences of two individual colonists

who lived in Algeria in order to better understand the complex nature of colonialism in Algeria.

Within colonialism, it is important to understand the concept of hybridity because it analyzes the resulting transcultural entity that occurs when two or more cultures interact in a region (Ashcroft et al. 135). Previous studies of the French-Algerian situation have focused on the hybridity of the Algerian culture because of French influences that became obvious after the end of French rule. This paper argues that hybridity also characterizes the French colonists due to the interactions that occurred in the country before Independence and reflect the Pieds-Noirs’ feelings that they were more Algerian than French.

The general French population and scholars view Pieds-Noirs as far-right colonialists who were never fully integrated into Algerian society. This narrow understanding is based on an overgeneralized negative view of French colonialism in Algeria. There was, however, more integration than is assumed. In the autobiographies, *Hier est proche d’aujourd’hui (Yesterday is Close to Today)* by Jeanne Cheula and *Ma mère l’Algérie (My Mother Algeria)* by Jean Pélégri, the authors explained their remembered experiences in Algeria and what they went through when they became immigrants themselves once they were forced to move “back” to France. This heavily impacted the Pied-Noir community after repatriation. Author Jeanne Cheula was born in France and moved to Algeria in 1926 when she was a young adult; she repatriated in 1962 after Independence was announced. She married a French government official while living in Algeria, and, therefore, lived a life of high status. On the other hand, Jean Pélégri was born to a farmer in Algeria and he remained there until Algerian Independence. He lived the life of a member of the “working class.” Since both these Pieds-Noir authors came from different circumstances, their experiences with colonialism were complex and their allegiances shifted as the Algerian conflict progressed.

Since these Pieds-Noir authors came from different circumstances, they held different opinions on colonialism as a political ideology. Born in France, Jeanne Cheula supported colonialism and proudly upheld the colonial values of her home country, France. In her autobiography, she wrote:

Depuis qu'à la fin de l'été 1848 un long convoi de Parisiens sans travail, turbulents, gênants, dont la France se débarrassait, avait débarqué sur cette terre inconnue : on leur donnait un fusil, une faux ; ils apportaient leur endurance et leur ténacité.

Ever since the end of the summer, 1848, France discarded a long convoy of unemployed, unruly, and troublesome Parisians who had disembarked on this foreign land. They were given a rifle and a scythe and they brought their endurance and tenacity.<sup>1</sup> (Cheula 42)

Cheula had a sense of pride in her ancestors and in those who were sent to Algeria both as a method of expansion of the French colonial empire and for getting rid of the unemployed citizens who were living on the continent. This pride is apparent because she described them as having endurance and tenacity, which indicates her belief that the colonists had to endure a great deal of hardship in order to successfully settle in Algeria. Since she appeared to ultimately associate herself with these colonists who came, like she, directly from France (as opposed to those who were born there), she wrote about them with more pride. This proud sentiment shows how much Cheula believed in colonialism and the notion of spreading France's colonial rule. Thus, Cheula's identity and life mission was heavily influenced by colonialism and likely endured long after Algeria gained its independence.

Jean Pélégri held very different views. He believed that colonialism caused segregation and unnatural relationships in Algeria:

Ce colonialisme qui était la loi générale, qui dénaturait les rapports quotidiens, qui conditionnait la politique, la foi, l'instruction, et qui introduisait partout la ségrégation. This colonialism (which) was the general law that altered daily relations, shaped politics, faith, and education, and introduced segregation everywhere. (Pélégri 33)

By explaining colonialism as impairing daily connections, Pélégri asserted that colonialism interfered with relationships that might have otherwise developed between these groups. Algerians of non-European descent were wary of the Pieds-Noirs since the latter, were the ones who imposed French politics, religion, and education on the former. The pride that Cheula had is missing in Pélégri's memories because he saw the damage that colonialism was doing to Algeria. His birth in Algeria is reflected in his comments because he does not carry that same pride in his ancestors who moved to Algeria directly from France. He and his ancestors had been there much longer and they had closer contact with the non-European Algerians. He had more temporal distance from his line of colonists, so he was more critical of the situation. Thus, Pélégri's expressions represent a different group of the colonist population, that of those who were born in Algeria as descendants of direct French colonists and how they felt disconnected from their colonial countries—in this case, France.

In addition to the two authors' feelings towards colonialism as a political stance, each author noticed different aspects of the colonial situation in Algeria. While proud of the notion of colonialism, Cheula also recognized that the communities were not as integrated as they could have been. Cheula wrote:

Pourtant, dans ce monde bigarré qui faisait plus que bon ménage, la fusion aurait pu être plus complète. Un trop grand respect des traditions de l'autre, ce qui, de la part des

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

Français, ressemblait à de la froideur ou de l'indifférence, ne l'a pas favorisé...

Nevertheless, in this diverse world which was integrated more than enough, the fusion could have been more complete. The coldness or indifference from the French towards the traditions of the Algerians did not favor it [integration]... (Cheula 86)

Cheula believed that the full integration or 'fusion' of the two cultural communities was hindered by French attitudes towards the non-European Algerians. This acknowledgement of the faults of the French-Algerian colonial situation renders her attitude more complex because Cheula was such a proud colonist. She felt that the French did not always have the open minds to better accommodate the non-European Algerians. Other colonists may have had similar realizations in their respective colonies, which led to conflicting attitudes towards French colonialism in general.

Pélégri was also aware of the flaws of the French-Algerian colonial situation, but he was more aware of the positive relationships that were forged between the non-European Algerians and the Pieds-Noirs during his life in Algeria. He wrote:

Je savais que sous l'histoire apparente et officielle de l'Algérie, celle de l'injustice et de l'inégalité coloniales, s'était déroulée entre Algériens et Pieds-Noirs, là où les relations étaient quotidiennes, une autre histoire, tout aussi réelle que l'autre, mais souterraine. Une histoire qui était faite, en dépit du système colonial, d'entretiens, de conciliabules, et parfois de tendresse.

I knew that under the surface of Algeria's official story<sup>2</sup> – that of colonial injustice and inequality – another story<sup>1</sup> – just as real as the first – but hidden – had unfolded in the daily interactions between the Algerians and the

Pieds-Noirs. A story<sup>1</sup> that, in spite of the colonial system, was built from ongoing conversations, private meetings, and sometimes tender exchanges. (72)

Pélégri has his own complex attitude towards Algeria because he acknowledged the two different versions of French-Algerian life based on Algerian memory and Pied-Noir memory. These versions included a variety of interactions: ongoing conversations, private meetings and tender exchanges. Each Pied-Noir's experience was different, and many of them had their own connections with the non-European Algerians. These three descriptions alone suggest that there is more to colonialism than is documented in history books and in scholarly articles because these memories are different from the "officielle" Algerian history since they were "souterraine" ("hidden"). Pélégri found that the situation itself was complex, so only those who were in Algeria have the right to recount the history of the colony. The real experiences that occurred are hidden gems that must be included in the general understanding of French colonialism in Algeria. Thus, there are many more facets to examine, especially on the colonizers' side, that reveal much more about colonialism itself.

As the Algerian War worsened, the Pieds-Noirs began questioning France's actions and wondered how they were going to be affected by the outcome of the conflict. Jeanne Cheula grew up thinking that colonialism was the only way of living life, so when the war began and France started to back down from the war, she felt neglected and abandoned.

La France partait, et non seulement elle abandonnait ses amis, ces hommes engagés à ses côtés, à qui elle avait tant promis, mais elle les laissait désarmés en face de leurs bourreaux.

France was leaving, abandoning its friends -- Algerians fighting for the same cause, and to

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<sup>2</sup> Translation note: the word 'histoire' in the original text may be interpreted either as 'history' or as 'story'.

whom France had promised so much. Moreover, it left them unarmed, facing their executioners. (Cheula 199)

After having lived in Algeria for over thirty years, Cheula saw the pro-colonial, non-European Algerians as friends of France. They formed a bond based on their hopes for France to remain in power over Algeria, but Cheula observed that France was disengaging itself from the war, and her hope decreased. Her view of colonialism was based on her belief that France was offering Algerians a better life, but her life was also better because of colonialism. She lived with the constant threat of dying during her last few years in Algeria due to the chaotic violence, and she felt that all who were fighting for France would be left to their own devices, waiting to be executed by the anti-colonial Algerians. Since she was aligned with many Algerians, she saw an important part of herself as being Algerian.

Cheula further explained her sentiments after France formally decided to leave Algeria alone. She was beginning to feel exiled as a French woman because her opinions no longer aligned with those of her fellow compatriots living in France at the time.

Le 8 avril, les Français n'ont plus à se soucier de l'Algérie ; on les a persuadés que l'abandon était nécessaire, qu'il était synonyme de paix et que le reste était sans importance. Comme des réprouvés, nous avons été exclus du vote, et l'Algérie agonisante a regardé la France décider de son sort.

On April 8, France wasn't worried about Algeria anymore; the French government<sup>3</sup> persuaded the (French) public that abandonment was necessary, that it was the equivalent of peace and that the rest was unimportant. Like the condemned, we were excluded from the vote, and as it was dying,

Algeria watched France decide its fate. (Cheula 207)

When Cheula wrote “the French,” she was referring to those living in France who voted against keeping a political presence in Algeria. She believed that the French government convinced the French public that peace would be the result of leaving Algeria, and the other implications of this decision did not matter. However, Cheula knew that there was more to the decision than peace. She knew her life of high status was going to end if Algeria won its independence, which is what catalyzed an emotional conflict within her. She was French-Algerian, and who would she become if she had to leave the country? Not only was her status in jeopardy, but her identity was at risk, as well. Algeria was her life, and she became the person she was because of the colonial situation. Colonialism made it possible for her to settle in Algeria, which eventually caused a disruption in her life once Algeria gained its independence and her life mission was no longer supported. This demonstrates how French colonialism was detrimental to colonists in its own way.

Pélégri's attitude towards France was also negative, but for different reasons. He had a much different upbringing from Cheula because he had attended public school with non-European Algerians and he was socialized more according to their values and attitudes. He explained:

Et c'est par eux, à partir des réalités quotidiennes, que ma conscience politique s'est peu à peu formée. En les regardant. En les écoutant.

And it's through the everyday realities with the Algerians that my political conscience formed, little by little. By watching them and listening to them. (Pélégri 44)

His group of friends consisted of non-European Algerians, so they were the ones he grew up listening to. His social status (or lack

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<sup>3</sup> Translation note: the original use of ‘on’ is understood here to refer to the French government.

thereof) lent itself well to being able to listen to people who were different from him and then form his own political conscience based on how his friends felt and whether or not he felt they were treated fairly in society. He followed this by writing, “Mais qu’avais-je à dire sur la France? Je n’en avais pas une compréhension intime” “But what did I have to say about France? I didn’t have an intimate comprehension of it” (66). Since Pélégri was born and raised in Algeria, he did not have any emotional connection to France, nor to colonialism. He was aware that he was a descendant of French colonists, but he was more aligned socially with non-European Algerians and his views were the result of those relationships and not the result of his family ancestry.

In opposition to his relationship with France, Pélégri wrote about how strong the influence of Algeria was on him, “parce que l’Algérie m’a fait. Comme une mère. Parce que le peuple algérien m’a appris l’essentiel de ce qu’il est nécessaire de savoir dans une vie” “because Algeria shaped me the way a mother does. Because the Algerian people taught me the fundamentals of life” (83). Pélégri credited Algeria with everything he learned about life because he had never lived in France when he was growing up. He found colonialism personally irrelevant because he considered himself an Algerian. His identity was a hybrid one because his French ancestry still rested within him, but he was more connected to Algeria. He also critiqued French politics and actions by writing, “Dans ses colonies, la mère patrie est une marâtre, une mère dénaturée” “In its colonies, the mother country is a wicked stepmother, an unnatural mother” (48). Not only did he lack a connection with France, but he considered it to be a type of evil stepmother and dysfunctional parent. This showed his negative attitude towards France, despite having French colonists as ancestors. Clearly, the mother figure was an important one for Pélégri because he called Algeria his mother and France his wicked stepmother. His alliance stayed with Algeria

because he was more integrated into and a part of everyday Algerian society. Pélégri’s individual experience shows the breadth of colonial stances and experiences within the group of French colonists in Algeria and how political affiliations varied.

Cheula also voiced her allegiance to Algeria, but in a distinct way from Pélégri. She saw daily interactions much differently than he did because of her high status, but she still believed there was a fair amount of integration between the two groups of people—the Pieds-Noirs and the Algerians. She wrote:

Dans la grande famille... les Musulmans n’étaient pas en marge, ils avaient leur place ; on les connaissait, on connaissait les commerçants, les vendeurs du marché, les employés des administrations, les ouvriers, les employées de maison.

In our big family... the Muslims weren’t in the margins, they had their place; we<sup>4</sup> knew them, we knew the storekeepers, the market vendors, the administrators, the laborers, and the housekeepers. (Cheula 169)

Each occupation she listed is an important part of a functioning society. She knew that a large part of her life depended on the work of non-European Algerians, and she considered them to be a part of the ‘large family,’ which was the Pieds-Noirs. Moreover, she claimed to know the non-European Algerians as essential parts of her daily life and on a personal level. She was proud of the relationships that were formed in this context. Cheula also wrote:

Le charme le plus surprenant et le plus attachant de notre Algérie, c’était l’alliance naturelle de la vie et des habitudes ancestrales et des facilités modernes.

Our Algeria’s most surprising and endearing charm was the natural alliance between ancestral customs and modern ways of doing things in everyday life. (Cheula 66)

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<sup>4</sup> Translation note: ‘On’ can be used to represent ‘we,’ a group of people, or an individual in

general. The original use of ‘on’ is understood here as ‘we.’

She took pride in the fact that the hard work of her ancestors was still successful and present with modern functions, which was why she found Algeria to be such a wonderful place and began aligning herself more closely with it.

As Cheula discovered her true connection with Algeria, the Algerian War began and France's political actions made her begin to question her allegiances (both to Algeria and France). She wrote:

Parce qu'en France, dans le même temps, à la faveur de la confusion des événements, on va créer une confusion des esprits et égarer une 'certaine opinion' en l'intéressant davantage aux tueurs qu'aux victimes... Cette trahison du cœur est une chose affreuse, elle va nous isoler peu à peu de la France.

Because in France, at the same time, thanks to the confusion of events, the government<sup>5</sup> sets out<sup>6</sup> to confuse and mislead the public, by directing more attention to those doing the killing than to the victims. This betrayal of the heart is an awful thing, it is going to isolate us, little by little, from France (123).

As she was experiencing the war, she felt desperate for help and intervention from France. However, she knew that the violence only made it more confusing, which enabled the government to manipulate French public opinion by framing the conflict in Algeria in a more simplified manner, rather than allowing reporting of actual events. She felt betrayed because she believed that if the French knew what was actually happening in France, they would be more eager to intervene. Instead, the government's version of events would only further distance the Pieds-Noirs from their compatriots. The violence only occurred because colonialism existed. If there was no colonialism, Cheula would not have been in Algeria and she would not have grown so attached to the country as she knew it, which was something she may have regretted during the height of the war. Once

<sup>5</sup> Translation note: the original use of 'on' is understood here to refer to the French government.

France began changing its political approach about how to proceed with colonialism, Cheula's sense of betrayal led her to question her allegiance to France.

Cheula's questioning of her allegiances continued after she repatriated back to France. She knew that she was different, because she had gone through different experiences than the other French people, and there was a new anti-colonial atmosphere in the country, which was completely novel to her. She explained this sentiment:

Exilée dans mon propre pays, je suis devenue... plus algérienne que si j'étais restée là-bas. Tout ce passé, tout ce que j'ai aimé, s'est détaché pour commencer de vivre en moi une nouvelle existence. Huit années de terreur, de folies de sang n'ont pas terni ce passé lumineux; hier est proche d'aujourd'hui.

Exiled in my own country, I became... more Algerian than if I had stayed there [Algeria]. This whole past, all that I loved, stands out as the beginning of a new existence in myself. Eight years of terror, madness, and blood didn't tarnish this luminous past; yesterday is close to today. (97)

Cheula felt exiled, even in the country where she grew up because she felt 'more Algerian than if she had stayed there.' She acknowledged her hybridity in this quote because of the 'new existence' that resulted from repatriation. If she wanted to fit into her new life in France, she would have to forget everything she loved about Algeria, but she found it difficult because it had become such a major part of her identity, despite the violence and blood that occurred during the war. By ending with 'Hier est proche d'aujourd'hui,' the title of the book, she is explaining that the past was still very present in her new life in France, because that was what affected her the most during her lifetime. Therefore, colonialism took an emotional toll on Cheula, which was an experience that may have

<sup>6</sup> Translation note: The author uses the present tense in this passage to bring the reader closer to her experience of that time.

happened among other French colonists and affected their views about the colonial situation.

Pélégri also questioned major actors in his life because of colonialism. Most of his questioning was based on religion and resulted from the violence that occurred during the war and the ideals behind it. He wrote:

Lui le Tout-Puissant... S'il est l'Un, comme chacun [le Coran et le Bible] le dit, il ne peut être ni nationaliste ni raciste. Il ne peut appartenir, Lui l'Incréé, à un seul peuple, une seule race, une seule faction.

He, the Almighty... if He is the One, as each [the Coran and the Bible] says, He can't be nationalist, nor racist. He the Increate can't belong to only one people, only one race, or only one faction. (55)

Pélégri was well aware of the existence of various religions in Algeria with Catholicism prevalent among the Pieds-Noirs and Islam practiced by the non-European Algerians. His questioning was more a questioning of humanity because he did not understand why nationalism and racism had to exist. His justification was that the 'Almighty' (God in Catholicism and Allah in Islam) could not possibly be nationalist nor racist because there is such a range of people who believe in Him. Pélégri did not believe that colonialism was natural, but he also did not think war was natural. He knew that he would not be welcome in the new nation once Algeria gained its independence, but he still supported Independence. Similar to Cheula, Pélégri's life as he knew it was disrupted by the end of colonialism because he had to move to a country he had never seen before and he had to sever the many ties he made in Algeria during his life there. There were thousands and thousands of colonists or descendants of colonists in a similar position, and their individual lives were each affected differently on an emotional level.

After having repatriated, the Pieds-Noirs' memories of their experiences in Algeria influenced their identities and their feelings about themselves. The Pieds-Noirs saw themselves as Algerians and integral parts of the Algerian

society. Once they were forced to repatriate to France, their memories were the only remnants they had of those experiences. Cheula described it as:

Parce que ce ne sont pas les horreurs que j'ai vues ou les angoisses que j'ai eues à ce moment-là qui dominant en moi, mais la fidélité aux souvenirs heureux et aux amitiés nouées pendant tant d'années ; et puis parce que je suis bien de cette race algérienne que les coups reçus ne jettent pas à terre et n'abattent pas longtemps.

Because it isn't the horrors I saw nor the anguish I felt at that moment that prevail within me, but my fidelity to happy memories and friendships forged over the years. Also because I am a part of this Algerian race, which beatings cannot vanquish nor subdue for long. (170)

She described herself as part of the 'Algerian race' and she explained how that part of her is unyielding. Despite the horrors she witnessed during the war, she always returned to the memories of the friendships she had made, and this was the true effect of French colonialism on colonists similar to Cheula. They thought that nothing was wrong with the colonial situation because it created opportunities for lives they were able to build for themselves, and they were faulted for following through with their country's politics, which were accepted by all during the time they were implemented. Once those politics changed, the colonists had the most difficult time accepting the change, because they did not know any other life. They faced obstacles as they tried to adjust to the new anti-colonial attitudes in France after repatriation; colonialism had already made its mark on them, which made it challenging for them to reinvent themselves as French when they saw themselves as Algerian.

Pélégri never really considered himself French because his alliance with Algeria manifested itself so strongly ever since his childhood. As he came of age in Algeria, he realized just how meaningful it was to him. He wrote, "Et j'ai commencé à me dire, ou plutôt à ressentir confusément, que ma

patric, ma vrai patric, c'tait peut-tre l'Algrie” “And I started to tell myself, or rather to vaguely feel, that perhaps my homeland, my *real* homeland, was Algeria” (48). He grew up conscious of the fact that he descended from French-Algerian colonists, but he realized that he could possibly be someone else. He was Algerian because it was the only country he knew and he became conscious of the love for Algeria that developed within him. Moving back to France was bittersweet for him because he was losing everything he loved (Algeria and his friends there), but they were achieving what they had long sought, so he could not be too unhappy. The impact of Algeria never left him because he had learned to love it intimately. He wrote, “C'tait [Algrie] mon pays natal, et malgr la sparation, je continuais  l'habiter, tous les jours, toutes les nuits” “It [Algeria] was my home country, and despite the separation, I continued to live there, every day and every night” (67). After repatriation, Plgri felt separated from Algeria, but he would always consider Algeria to be his home country. His memories continuously surrounded him, so much so that his heart was there every day and night. Plgri's life represents the group of colonists who were born and raised in their 'home country's' colonies, because their real home countries were the colonies themselves. He was born into colonialism, but he was able to assess the French-Algerian situation and develop a deep love for Algeria. This love continued well into his time living in France, after Algerian Independence.

Many scholars have studied colonialism and it has traditionally been understood to involve two distinct types of actors, the colonists and the colonized, where colonists are intricately tied to the policies of colonialism. While this is true, the Pieds-Noirs were actually a separate entity because they were the products of French politics that were over a century old. They grew up in a world where colonization was the norm and that was one of the best ways to build a life. Once the principles of colonialism became questioned in society, they were unable to change the views they maintained throughout their entire lives.

Their hybrid identities were the result of colonialism, whether that meant they began as identifying more with France or with Algeria. As a result of colonialism, Pieds-Noirs transformed due to their new allegiances and to the love they had developed for Algeria.

After Algeria gained its Independence, the Pieds-Noirs experienced major emotional turmoil. Cheula and Plgri wrote about their individual experiences and tried to work out what they were feeling and what was acceptable to be feeling after repatriation to France. Colonialism declined, but the Pieds-Noirs were not accustomed to a world without it. They had lived different lives in Algeria, which is what makes their experiences much more complex than has been assumed by some scholars in the past. Cheula and Plgri were vastly different, but they both still developed a deep love for Algeria, which is a testament to colonialism and evidence that colonists were not always villains or just tools of the colonial government. French colonialism was not always about power dynamics for colonists; some, like Cheula, thought they were truly making Algeria a better place, and some, like Plgri, loved the people so much that they resented their colonies' (the French government) policies. As we continue to examine the experiences of more individual colonists and descendants of colonists, we can continue to unravel the full complexity of colonialism.

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