

## Introduction

Between 1995 and 1997 the French photographer Luc Delahaye conducted a rather peculiar project. While travelling with a concealed camera on the Paris metro, he began making hundreds of black-and-white portraits of unsuspecting passengers. Eighty of these were then published together as *L'Autre* (1999). A novel contribution to debates surrounding the visual representation of alterity, Delahaye's surreptitious photography of strangers raises several legal and ethical issues. Viewers may question, for instance, who qualifies as "other" in his photography and what right, if any, a photographer has to take such photographs of others. They might also wonder whether alterity can be captured on camera at all. The metro passengers whose portraits were published are, visibly, ethnically diverse and the way their images appear can be read as a *mise-en-abîme* of how the concept of ethnicity has habitually been framed in France. Delahaye's uniform portraiture suggests equivalence and that differences can be levelled between the sitters. Given that the travellers remain nameless and that aspects of their lives and ethnicities are undisclosed, however, this humanist approach risks homogenising differences *tout court* among his cosmopolitan cohort. In this way, Delahaye's project exemplifies the dominant political philosophy in France – French republican universalism – that legally asserts equality among French citizens and, despite patent societal inequalities, historically has refused to distinguish between them. This, combined with several other factors, ensures that the study of how ethnicity is represented in

France, especially visually, remains particularly intriguing. This book probes some of the diverse ways in which different ethnicities have been represented across contemporary French visual culture.

As Cole (2005: 201) has argued, France is well placed geographically. By sharing a land border with six European countries and being connected to England by an undersea channel, it can plausibly claim to be at the crossroads of Europe. Directly across the Mediterranean lie three Maghrebi countries it formerly ruled and it still possesses overseas territories in the Caribbean, South America and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It also continues to maintain its global reach by fostering a sense of shared cultural and linguistic heritage among the group of French-speaking countries that constitute *la francophonie*. Accordingly, mainland France itself is, ethnically, far from homogenous; its population has 'consistently been the most cosmopolitan of any European nation' (Cole 2005: 201) and it has a long and rich history of welcoming migrants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Despite such ethnic diversity, acknowledging the importance of ethnicity within France remains complex and difficult. This has been demonstrated repeatedly over recent decades. Calls in the late 1990s for quotas for ethnic minorities to appear on French television were met with widespread derision and Nicolas Sarkozy was roundly attacked for advocating positive discrimination in employment laws in November 2003. The main reason for this reaction is that such affirmations of ethnicity are at odds with the French Republic's principle of universalism, which insists upon non-differentiation of its citizens as a guarantee of egalitarianism. As the first article of the French Constitution states: 'la France est une république indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion' (France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic. It ensures the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion). Nevertheless, as Lloyd (1999: 38) points out:

The Jacobin view of equality runs the risk that real inequalities between citizens might be ignored: if all citizens are equal what space is there to understand social stratification based on gender,

ethnic group or income? Neither does the idea of an equal citizenry provide any guidance regarding the position of foreigners living in France who are the main subjects of contemporary debates on race and ethnicity.

Advocates of French republican universalism might retort that it is a political project *en chantier* rather than the finished product: an ideal not yet attained that the Republic forever strives to achieve. This, however, does not negate the fact that

Liberal universal humanism ... puts 'others' in a double bind: it demands that they abandon an identity that, while oppressive, is also constitutive of their very existence. And it also obscures the dynamics of oppression beneath the assertion of a universal human essence that 'we' all share. Liberal ideology and the Western humanist tradition, as well as 'canonical' philosophy and political theory, have indeed all frequently functioned as exclusionary discourses. (Kruks 2001: 94)

French republican universalism is clearly in line with this tradition and accordingly has traditionally refused to define French citizens according to their ethnicity. Indeed, as Lloyd (1999: 37) states, following the 1789 Revolution: 'in order to produce a French nation, certain indigenous ethnic identities were suppressed, in ways which are now acknowledged to have involved an unacceptable denial of human rights'. Today, the concept of ethnicity remains tainted in France for at least two further reasons. First, distinguishing between citizens on ethnic grounds conjures up for many the anti-Semitic government policies of the Vichy period. Second, Jacobin tradition judges any distinction between citizens as tantamount to discrimination, which would lead only to the segregation and communitarianism deemed characteristic of what French commentators term Anglo-Saxon society. The result is a worrying disparity between abstract equality and practical inequalities that the French republican model has repeatedly proved unable to prevent or resolve.

One of this book's key concerns, therefore, is how ethnicity is represented at all in a culture where it has traditionally been elided. While French republican ideology and government policies can hardly determine all visual practice or fully regulate

discourses surrounding ethnicity in France, clearly creative sectors and cultural industries do not exist in isolation from the political realm. Moreover, given the overwhelming support for universalism among French society, media and politicians, the continued inculcation of a strong republican ethos via the French state education system, and the weight historically given to reproducing its symbolic power by French academic disciplines (such as the social sciences), its enduring influence should not be underestimated.

A study of the way ethnicity has been represented in France in any era could be enlightening, but there are many reasons why focusing specifically on the period since the 1980s is particularly important. Events have ensured that the last three decades have been a highly charged time for debates surrounding ethnicity and the attendant areas of national identity, immigration and citizenship. They saw ethnicity placed firmly on the French political, social and cultural agenda: a place where, given its persistent topicality, it duly remains.

1981 heralded the Socialist François Mitterrand's first presidency and initially his government sought to break with the anti-immigration policies of his conservative predecessor Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. The right of families overseas to join economic migrants in France was reinstated, the financial incentives designed to encourage their repatriation were suspended and an amnesty was declared on foreigners working without permits. Meanwhile, the nationwide 1983 'Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme' (March for equality and against racism) raised public consciousness of the plight of the descendants of postwar Maghrebi migrants settled in France, many of whom were relegated socially and spatially to *banlieues* lying at the extremity of urban centres, suffered discrimination at the hands of municipal authorities, police and employers and endured recurrent racist attacks. It led to the formation of high-profile anti-racist groups such as France Plus and SOS Racisme, which did much to sensitise the French public and mediatise such attacks and practices. Nevertheless, their essentially republican outlook later qualified their support for some ethnic minority causes (Blatt 1997).

The mid-1980s saw the Socialist government adopt a change of tone. Faced with the electoral success of the far-right National

Front party and right-wing politicians competing on an anti-immigration platform, financial incentives to encourage migrants settled in France to return to their country of origin were reinstated in 1984 and new restrictions were introduced on family reunions. Later, the election of Jacques Chirac as Prime Minister of a centre-right government in 1986 brought the Pasqua law, which further toughened entry and residence regulations for foreigners.

In the autumn of 1989 the place of Islam in France began to attract unprecedented political and media interest. When the headmaster of a state school in Creil, north of Paris, suspended three young Muslim women for wearing headscarves – because he judged it contrary to long-standing French laws on secularism in French schools – his decision became a major political controversy and was quickly dubbed the '*affaire du foulard*' (headscarf affair). Forced to act, the Minister of Education Lionel Jospin reinstated the students – a decision later upheld by the Conseil d'État, which ruled that wearing religious insignia did not *per se* constitute an act of proselytism and therefore did not contradict French laws on *laïcité*. Instead it found the headmaster at fault for not respecting the young women's right to profess their religious faith, a right guaranteed by the Republic. The subject resurfaced in 1994 when the Education Minister François Bayrou – a member of the centre-right Édouard Balladur government elected the previous year – issued a circular to headteachers urging them to ban religious insignia perceived as ostentatious precisely because, in his eyes, they did promote religion. Although the circular technically applied to symbols of any religious denomination, it was clear that the Islamic headscarf was once again the target: this was confirmed during an interview by Bayrou himself when he declared crucifixes and yarmulkes to be less ostentatious in comparison (Hargreaves 1995: 127).

The 1990s also saw nationality, citizenship and immigration laws generally made more restrictive. In 1993 the Interior Minister Charles Pasqua further limited foreigners' entry and residence rights and facilitated police identity checks. Four years later, the Debré law further tightened existing legislation and made it easier to expel those judged to be residing illegally in France. The

Méhaignerie law of 1993 removed the right to French nationality at birth from those born in France to foreign parents – making them wait until the age of sixteen, after which they had formally to request French nationality before the age of twenty-one in order to receive it. The Guigou law of 1998 then reinstated its automatic conferral for applicants from the age of eighteen. Although this could technically be granted to applicants after reaching thirteen, it may well have done little to dispel any anxiety surrounding an applicant's status.

The situation of those in France without work or residency permits also became increasingly precarious. Known collectively as *sans-papiers*, they faced immediate deportation if found without them, regardless of their length of stay in France or family commitments. After a series of highly publicised protests in the late 1990s, controversy grew and they became a *cause célèbre* for French cinema: in February 1997, fifty-nine film directors spearheaded an appeal for civil disobedience against the Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré's bill requiring citizens to inform the authorities when lodging foreign visitors in their homes. The national demonstration that followed in Paris attracted 100,000 protestors. In June 1997, Debré's successor under the Jospin government, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, announced an amnesty and specified the criteria France's estimated 250,000 illegal residents would have to meet in order for them to be granted an official legal status. Eventually 80,000 were given residency permits, renewable annually, but were still left reliant on undeclared employment and unable to access social security benefits (Fysh and Wolfreys 2003: 216–20).

Post-millennium, Jean-Marie Le Pen's second place in the first round of the 2002 presidential elections shocked French society and provoked mass demonstrations nationwide. Chirac comfortably won the contest with 82 per cent of second-round votes but – notwithstanding the important contributory factors of a low voter turnout, the fragmentation of the plural Left alliance and an ineffective campaign by the Socialists – the fact that the National Front polled so well (receiving 4.8 million votes in the first round and 5.5 million in the second) revealed that a significant number of the French electorate remained so anxious about French

national identity that they approved of the Front's brand of xenophobia and racism.

The following year, France's relationship with Islam faced new scrutiny when, following several reports of young Muslim women refusing to unveil at school, the Raffarin government decided to legislate. The new law, which came into force in September 2004, policed dress even more strictly than before, banning outright the wearing of any visible religious symbol in French state schools. While this categorically outlawed Christian and Jewish symbols as well as those linked to Islam, the fact that – once again – it was a spate of media reports focusing on Muslim women that led to legislation did little to diminish the impression that the French State's primary target remained Islam. Furthermore, the many weeks of rioting that took place throughout France during the autumn of 2005 – largely seen as symptomatic of the failure of France's integration model – provided further evidence of how topical the subject of ethnicity in France remained and provoked a significant degree of soul searching as commentators sought to explain how such a prolonged period of widespread violence could suddenly ignite across mainland France. As Hargreaves (2015) has argued, however, the continuing failure of French state institutions to combat discrimination towards ethnic minorities effectively in the intervening decade suggests that little has been learned about the source of the rioters' discontent and consequently augurs ill for the future.

Debates surrounding ethnicity and cultural identity have, therefore, played an important part in French politics, culture and society throughout the last three decades. Furthermore, this is a particularly opportune moment to study how ethnicity has been configured in France given the series of challenges from specific groups that the French republican universalist model has had to withstand during this period. Such challenges have found its grand narrative wanting and provided further proof that

Universalism has turned out to be an illusion obscuring just another particularism – yet one which mobilized all the resources of a growing industrial/institutional/ideological complex in the attempt to convert this illusion into reality. The universal citizen was, in fact, the abstract product of bourgeois individualism and Western patriarchy. (Silverman 1999: 133)

The 1990s in particular saw a series of once supposedly private concerns become increasingly public. First, the signing by the Jospin government of the European Charter of Regional Languages, which would have allowed the official use of regional and minority languages, threatened to displace the Republic's unilingual policy of only ever allowing French. This was, however, later blocked in June 1999 by the Conseil constitutionnel, which declared that it not only contravened the second article of the French Constitution, which states that French is the language of the Republic, but also, by crediting rights to specific minority groups, breached the Republic's indivisibility of French citizenry.

The French Constitution was, nevertheless, altered during this period following momentum to inscribe the principle of parity between men and women in politics in it. Despite the fact that French republican universalism promises equality among citizens – regardless of sex – women in France were only enfranchised in 1944 and in the 1990s France had proportionally almost the lowest number of female parliamentary members in the EU (Dauphin and Praud 2002: 5). Debates split commentators across the political spectrum but eventually a majority was in favour, many recognising that the universal citizen had not in fact been genderless but male. From July 1999, the French Constitution henceforth specified that French law should promote equal access by both women and men to elective offices and posts and stipulated that political parties must implement it. In addition, November 1999 saw a civil partnership agreement, known as the *Pacs* (*Pacte civil de solidarité*) become law. Intended to acknowledge the existence of cohabiting gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples in French state legislature, the *Pacs* enabled those living together and sharing an intimate relationship to receive some of the legal and monetary advantages only enjoyed previously by married heterosexual couples (Tidd 2000: 183–4). It was another groundbreaking reform and one that duly challenged the primacy of heterosexuality and marriage in France.

Moreover, with particular regard to ethnicity, as Fysh and Wolfreys (2003: 207) note, from the mid-1990s onwards, the French abstract citizenship model was 'either increasingly ignored in practice, or more and more consciously called into question as

a diverse range of actors discovered the category of “race” as a major structuring factor affecting the life chances of immigrants and immigrant-origin youth’. As noted previously, positive discrimination in the workplace was mooted by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2003. Four years earlier, however, a previous incumbent at the Ministère de l’Intérieur, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, had urged police forces – while explicitly ruling out the introduction of any quota-based system – to reflect the ethnic diversity of the nation better by directly encouraging the recruitment of young people from a variety of different heritages (Schnapper 2003). The former Prime Minister, Édouard Balladur (2005), meanwhile, subsequently joined calls for minorities in France to be awarded special status and even suggested that France could learn positively from the experience of the US: all the more surprising given how routinely approaches dismissively labelled as Anglo-Saxon continue to be demonised in France.

Such measures to acknowledge the importance of ethnicity as a valid component of lived experience nonetheless still attract controversy, as illustrated by events in the early 2000s in Corsica. A referendum on Corsican devolution, which would have formally divided the supposedly indivisible Republic, was only narrowly defeated on 6 July 2003 but the island found itself once again at the centre of controversy in September 2004. A settlement to end the strike by workers from the SNCM (Société Nationale Maritime Corse Méditerranée — the national ferry company that operates services to and from the mainland) included a clause that stipulated a preference for new employees to be Corsican residents, provoking cries of outrage from leading French politicians on both the left and right. Other forms of positive discrimination have, however, already been established outside the workplace. Two examples from the education sector are the extra funding given to schools in areas known as ZEP (Zones d’Éducation Prioritaire) and the programme launched in 2001 by the Parisian *grande école* the Institut d’Études Politiques to facilitate the recruitment of more students from deprived areas.

Therefore, contrary to the unilateralism that typifies much of French republicanism, as Cole (2005: 212) argues, there is ‘an essential duality in French discourse’ which means that ‘in

practice, French governments adopt more pragmatic responses than they profess in public'. For instance, while the primacy of French as the sole language of the Republic has been reasserted, governments have at the same time financed regional language initiatives. Equally, although politicians have singled out aspects of Islam as contrary to republican values, the building of mosques has received government support and an organisational framework for Islam in France has been established. In fact, while governments have at times sought compromises, it is republican institutions such as the Conseil d'État and Conseil constitutionnel that have remained steadfast – both appearing 'determined to preserve a stato-centrist [*sic*] interpretation of Frenchness' (Cole 2005: 213). So while there is general resistance to change in French republicanism, it would be unfair to overlook its simultaneous flexibility and periodic ability to reach such accommodations. Nevertheless, as events since the 1980s in France have repeatedly shown, debates concerning any official affirmation of ethnicity have proved particularly contentious. The recurring polemics that surround the issue of collating statistics based upon ethno-racial categories within French society provide a case in point (Simon 2008). As Sabbagh and Peer (2008: 4) point out, the fact that even an anti-discrimination organisation such as the HALDE (Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité) rejected moves to collect such data, although not surprising, only reinforced the enduring power of official state colour blindness. Indeed, as the first chapter's discussion of contemporary French television will show, while increasing initiatives have been taken to improve French television's representativeness in terms of ethnicity, stakeholders have also conveniently adopted the catch-all term *diversité* as a means to avoid providing the granularity that specifying societal differences necessitates. As we will see, the ways in which the French audiovisual sector has grappled generally with the question of how to reflect better contemporary French society's ethnic diversity on screen reveal much about both the politics and poetics of this area and the stakes of representation more widely in a culture where visualising ethnicity presents its own very specific challenges.

Having broadly established the socio-historical context underpinning this period in question, I will now outline further why this book analyses representations of ethnicity in the field of contemporary French visual culture. Throughout the late twentieth century and since 2000, visual culture has provided a key means through which questions of ethnicity and cultural identity more widely have been explored in France. Three of the most culturally prominent media within it are cinema, photography and television, and it is on works taken from these contrasting but complementary areas that much of this book concentrates. Despite the clear links between them, studies specifically analysing these three particular media in France alongside each other remain highly unusual. The fact that all are lens-based media, mutually influence one another and have contributed significantly to twentieth- and twenty-first-century French cultural production nevertheless facilitates and justifies a comparative approach. While this is duly adopted here in each of the four chapters that follow, each medium naturally has its own specificities and constraints – whether technical, cultural, ideological or financial – and is subject to differing regulations and expectations. My aim, therefore, is not to elide such important distinctions but to instead maintain the tension between them in order to examine what unites and divides them in terms of how each has represented different ethnicities. In doing so, this book endeavours to probe the pivotal role that contemporary French visual culture as a whole has played in making societal sameness and difference in France visible.

Notwithstanding the novelty of this approach, this study is part of an expanding field which investigates the interrelations between ethnicity and contemporary French visual culture. The study of French cinema's representation of ethnicity became established in the 1980s and the 1990s saw it grow in prominence in French Studies. Tarr's (2005) work on the representation of Maghrebis and French people of Maghrebi heritage in French cinema was pioneering in this domain and both Rosello (1998, 2001) and Higbee (2001b, 2013) have also addressed aspects of ethnicity in French cinema. Several edited volumes on French cinema – such as Hayward and Vincendeau

(2000), Ezra and Harris (2000) and Mazdon (2001) – have also included chapters that engage with ethnicity. The predominant focus, however, has largely been on films featuring people of Maghrebi heritage in France and on those set within *banlieues*, and relatively few ethnicities in films outside these paradigms have been considered. Furthermore, in comparison with cinema, both photography and television in the contemporary era remain markedly overlooked in French Studies and very little research has been conducted into how either has constructed ethnicity. This study therefore aims to help address these lacunae by analysing how a variety of ethnicities in France have been represented across contemporary French visual culture. Before introducing each of the four chapters that follow, I shall first outline my theoretical approach.

For the purposes of this study, I take ethnicity to be a socio-cultural construction as well as a lived experience: imagined but not imaginary, with real and tangible effects. As Fenton (2003: 50, 114–15) has observed, the term “ethnicity” is a concept that has proved particularly difficult to define and whose meaning and import vary according to cultural context. For him,

The development of a unitary theory of ‘ethnicity’ is a mirage, as is the search for an ultimately precise definition of ethnicity or ethnic groups. However enticing the word ‘ethnicity’ may be – and it appears to have trapped any number of writers in its web – it is mainly a descriptor for a broad field of interest. Of itself it has no precise point of reference, of itself it has no explanatory power ... the *variants* or ‘forms’ of ‘ethnic groups’ are at least as significant as the common ground between them, and the *contexts* in which they may be found are the source of explanation rather than any inherent qualities of ethnicity itself. (Fenton 2003: 136, original emphases)

It is for this reason that the historical context surrounding the area of ethnicity under discussion is established at the beginning of each of the following chapters and that only tentative definitions of the general term itself can ultimately be offered. With reference to the particular specificities of contemporary French society, ethnicity is viewed here as a group consciousness formed

according to culture and heritage, rather than biological differences, which is

‘grounded’ as well as constructed. Ethnic identities take shape around real shared material experience, shared social space, commonalities of socialization, and communities of language and culture. Simultaneously these identities have a public presence; they are socially defined in a series of presentations (public statements, assertions, images) by ethnic group members and non-members alike. These social definitions are part of the continuous construction and reconstruction of ethnic identities. (Fenton 2003: 194–5)

Ethnicity is also a term that, in the words of Hall (1996: 446):

acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual. Representation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time.

In other words, it does not exist in isolation and although this book’s primary focus is on how ethnicity is represented within contemporary French visual culture, this does not mean that other aspects of identity are not also considered in conjunction with it. Indeed, to overlook the crucial ways in which ethnicity interacts with age, gender, sexuality and social class, among other factors, would be to ignore the important intersectionality that characterises this field and societal experience generally. Accordingly, within each case study that follows, due attention is paid to a range of such aspects as they intersect with and via representations of ethnicity. As will become clear, even if visualising ethnicity can pose particular challenges within contemporary French visual culture, such representations are always already in dialogue with other important aspects of lived experience and this study therefore attempts to do justice to the evident complexities of identification and representation that characterise contemporary French society.

Throughout this book a wide range of theoretical texts are used in order to navigate such a diverse terrain. Using a broadly

poststructuralist and cultural studies framework, Derrida's deconstructive approach to texts and Foucault's work on power and discourse are important influences, as is that of Hall on ethnicity and representation. In order to analyse the specificities of different media, a range of works that focus on film, photography and visual culture as a whole are also cited. The burgeoning interest that this broad area has attracted over the last decade from French scholars – prominent examples including Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire's edited volume *La Fracture coloniale: la société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (2006) and the work of the ACHAC (Association pour la Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine) group more widely in probing the legacies of colonial history in postcolonial France – facilitates engagement with relevant critics in France whose work illuminates the interrelations between ethnicity, French society and aspects of visual culture.

This study's guiding principles are that culture is a site of ongoing struggle, a process not an object. Fields of culture are traversed by relations of power which circumscribe who is represented, when, where and how and help determine the positions practitioners and viewers can occupy. As the relationship between language, meaning and culture is not predetermined but constructed socially, however, such spaces are contradictory and are therefore subject to continual renegotiation. Moreover, representation does not passively reflect what is perceived as reality but in important ways constructs it and, more widely, social relations themselves: as Dyer (1993: 1) argues, 'how we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation'. Culture is, therefore, resolutely ideological and is the site where 'everyday struggles between dominant and subordinate groups are fought, won and lost' (Procter 2004: 11). It plays a constitutive part in society and has real political effects, as demonstrated by Foucault whose notion of discourse delineates how systems of representation can be organised to this end. Historically specific, a discourse can comprise a web of images, statements, philosophies and practices that gain authority during a particular period. In this way, these discourses regulate representation and experience, produce subjectivities and structure representation. Thus in the words of Foucault (1969: 61):

on ne peut pas parler à n'importe quelle époque de n'importe quoi; il n'est pas facile de dire quelque chose de nouveau; il ne suffit pas d'ouvrir les yeux, de faire attention, ou de prendre conscience, pour que de nouveaux objets, aussitôt, s'illuminent, et qu'au ras de sol ils poussent leur première clarté.

(‘one cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, or to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground’) (Foucault 2002: 49)

This has particular importance with regard to the relationship between visual representation and ethnicity, given the stigma often attracted by those who appear to differ visibly from the ethnic majority, and it means that one can speak of how a ‘racialized regime of representation’ (Hall 2001: 245) is often at work within discourse. Artists, directors, photographers and writers evidently must always make choices during the genesis of their works which have important consequences with regard to the potential meanings works generate and their attendant reception by viewers. Their choices may nevertheless be limited and limiting in a number of ways: for instance, economically (dictated by access to financing); or institutionally (the exhibition of their work depending upon the politics of film funding organisations or gallery owners). The poetics of representation cannot be separated from its politics and, because of this, it is important to situate works within the era in which they were produced. Cultural products may appear to reflect their era, rail against it, or adopt an intermediate position but they never exist in a historical vacuum. I therefore view each of the works considered as an ‘instantiation’ (Jones 1998: 12) – both an articulation and a reflection – of the factors that characterise representations of ethnicity in contemporary France as well as indications of shifts over time within and across the discourses that surround them. As I will argue, they each engage compellingly with questions of ethnicity in contemporary French visual culture.

Turning now to the structure of this book, in order to consider a broad range of ethnicities, four different areas have been chosen for analysis. The first chapter begins on a national footing

by considering how ethnicity interacts with representations of Frenchness. In a country with such a strong sense of national identity and powerful republican ethos, the dialectic between the French nation and the French Republic's universalist political doctrine is particularly intriguing. This chapter considers how the two coexist visually and stresses the need to interrogate how whiteness in France has been represented. In addition, in order to counter the Paris-centrism that has historically characterised studies of this area and in much of French visual culture itself generally, the chapter's corpus here purposely comprises works that challenge the capital's hegemony by concentrating on life in the provinces.

The second chapter addresses a highly symbolic group in contemporary France – namely, its largest and arguably most visible or marked ethnic minority: people of Algerian heritage. The representation of Maghrebis and those of Maghrebi heritage in French cinema – and in particular of the younger generation mostly born in France to post-1945 Maghrebi migrants settled there – is an established topic in French film studies, which has documented the increasing visibility afforded this section of French society since the 1980s. Rather than consider Maghrebis and those of Maghrebi heritage as one sole category – and consequently run the risk of eliding important differences between them – all the works I consider focus specifically on how people of Algerian heritage fare in contemporary French visual culture. Furthermore, as the depiction of Maghrebis and those of Maghrebi heritage in contemporary French cinema is now so well documented, this chapter deliberately examines instead a range of works from different media, including a selection of works by a prominent Franco-Algerian artist, an important trilogy of text-image books and a popular *téléfilm* franchise.

In spite of France having the largest Jewish population in Europe, little attention has been paid, outside Holocaust Studies, to representations of postwar Jewishness in France. My third chapter tries to redress this imbalance. Moreover, repeated acts of anti-Semitism throughout the 1980s and 1990s in France and increasing reports of its resurgence post-2000 make its study all the more pertinent. With French Jews often portrayed as a community in a climate where communitarianism – dismissively dubbed *la solution*

*anglo-saxonne* – is demonised by French media and politicians, how Jewishness is constructed across contemporary French visual culture is particularly absorbing. Furthermore, given that many French Jews would be considered white-skinned, whether and how practitioners differentiate between whiteness and Jewishness (an ethnicity marker based on cultural, religious and geographical factors, among others) also deserves scrutiny and forms part of this book's more general aim of deconstructing representations of whiteness in contemporary France, in keeping with Dyer's (1997: 4) project to stress the importance of 'making whiteness strange' by defying its apparent invisibility in order to highlight its contours and attendant socio-cultural collocations.

Despite the Republic's success at fashioning the French nation from such a large geographical and linguistic expanse, the continued importance of regional identities is another distinctive feature of contemporary France. Critics noted a return to the provinces in late-1990s French cinema and my final chapter focuses on one of the most culturally and historically important areas of provincial France: Marseille. While a range of other French cities could also merit attention – including those considered by Marshall (2009) in his delineation of the French Atlantic – Marseille is particularly important because of the symbolic place it occupies as France's second city and the Mediterranean port's justifiable claim to be France's southern capital. Despite its prominence in French culture, there have been very few studies of how the city has been represented visually. As my final chapter will show, *la cité phocéenne* – in many ways positioned as Paris's Other – has been imagined as both Mediterranean melting-pot and Latin hotbed. As the city where as many as over a hundred distinct ethnic groups reportedly reside, it is increasingly deployed as an important symbol of contemporary France's ethnic diversity.

Adopting such an approach, focus and structure has advantages and disadvantages. Scrutinising this area via a series of case studies necessitates selection, prioritising some over others, consequently resulting in the omission of works that might otherwise have deserved consideration. While some of the works featured here have already attracted critical attention, the vast majority has attracted little or none, and this book duly probes

areas of contemporary French visual culture that – despite their popularity – are yet to enjoy significant levels of critical exposure, especially within the areas of photography and television. Nevertheless, some readers may have expected to find an explicit focus upon two key areas: blackness and *bande dessinée*. With regard to the former, although not the subject of a discrete chapter, representations of blackness are analysed throughout this book and form an important strand of its consideration of how ethnicity has been represented in contemporary French visual culture. In so doing, it aims to complement work from scholars such as Thomas (2007), Ndiaye (2008) and Tin (2008), who have probed representations of blackness within contemporary French society and culture. In relation to *bande dessinée*, it is certainly true that examples from this medium could have been incorporated within each chapter. Important work in this area with regard to colonial and postcolonial culture has been conducted by a number of scholars, including Miller (2007) and McKinney (2011, 2013), and where elements of a cartoon aesthetic are deployed within the work selected, these are duly highlighted. The omission of a case study precisely in this area was certainly unintentional and is more a reflection of the relative limits that this methodological approach imposes: to do justice to each of the works closely analysed within this book, each requires sufficient space. Furthermore, the importance of covering the wide variety of media scrutinised here – including cinema, photography, television and the visual arts – and also a broad range of case studies encompassing both popular culture and works of less mainstream appeal automatically meant that some elements of contemporary French visual culture had to be left out.

Similarly, the choice of focus within each of the following four chapters may also invite debate. Whereas many readers may welcome the first chapter's scrutiny of how Frenchness, whiteness and ethnicity interrelate within contemporary French visual culture, why focus on people of Algerian heritage, Jewishness and the city of Marseille in the chapters that follow? Earlier sections above made the case for why each of these specific areas deserves critical attention, but their mutual inclusion here is deliberate:

by including such chapters, this book attempts to scrutinise not only how ethnicity in contemporary France has been represented in terms of notions of national identity, but also in relation to postcolonial subjectivities, cultural and religious identities and regional specificities. Naturally, other such categories of identity could have merited inclusion and scrutiny but, as the subsequent chapters demonstrate, compelling reasons justify this focus on these specific areas.

Given the problematics of representation posed by French republican universalism as dominant political ideology – where championing ethnic difference risks being interpreted as communitarianism and theoretically colour-blind equality perennially trumps other concerns – how can different ethnicities be represented visually? The following chapters argue that, over the last three decades, many works across French visual culture have confounded such zero-sum logic by engaging meaningfully with the challenges of representing ethnicity within such a context. As will also become clear, however, the enduring power and legacy of French republican universalism are such that its ideology continues to penetrate far and wide across this field and with far-reaching consequences.