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MULTICULTURALISM FROM THE INSIDE OUT: OCCITAN AND TOULOUSE

Abstract

This article contributes to the ongoing debates on multiculturalism in Europe by looking past the nation-state to the region. The Occitan movement endeavors to reclaim legitimacy and vitality for both its language and its culture. This research deals with a corpus of texts that publicize linguistic and cultural events in southwestern France by evoking connections between Occitan and other cultures. How do the texts in question create discourses that situate Occitan language and culture not only within France, but within a changing Europe? As European nation-states continue to grapple with changing identities, both through migration from the exterior and from the reclamation of regional and local identities from the interior, the Occitan movement's work to harmonize these two forces bears further examination. The ways of being Occitan found in the corpus suggest an alternative to a more rigidly construed French identity.

Keywords: multiculturalism ♦ language revitalization ♦ regional languages ♦ corpus linguistics

1. Introduction

Language activist and author Alem Surre Garcia regularly gives lectures on Occitan language and culture.¹ In 2016, he appeared several times at the Ostal d’Occitània, the locus of Occitan activities in Toulouse and the headquarters of the *Convergència occitana*, a collective regrouping over 60 Occitan associations. Entitled *Una civilizacion occitana*, Surre Garcia’s 2016 lecture series evokes the migrations and cultural exchanges that contributed to the formation of a distinct ethos in the territory that would become the Midi. This imagined Occitània is a crossroads of east and west, of north and south, traversed during various eras by Phoenicians, Greeks, Visigoths, Byzantines, Sephardic Jews, Arabs, Berbers, and ancient Iberians. The historical and contemporary diversity of Occitan and its openness to cultural exchange is a note often struck by activists in southern France, especially in urban areas. This study, which analyzes a corpus of documents promoting cross-cultural exchange with Occitan, suggests that, for partisans of Occitan, the region is still a crossroads. Can supporters of this long-marginalized regional culture find a way to make multiculturalism work in France, or is their engagement with diversity doomed to irrelevance as the Occitan revitalization project struggles?

The French Revolution introduced the ideal of ‘one nation, one language’ to the Hexagon, but consolidation of power under a central authority was hardly revolutionary. Today, the national preoccupation with integration and embrace of the French identity concerns mainly people of non-European backgrounds, but France has endeavored to assimilate new territories and culturally diverse populations for centuries. Toulouse, along with its surrounding area, was once a powerful county ruled by local counts. It was annexed into the kingdom of France in the early 13th century following the bloody Albigensian crusade. As the crown’s primary interest was financial and political, efforts to modify the linguistic and cultural practices of the Toulousains were relatively insignificant. However, by the end of the 18th century, Jacobinist

¹ In this article, I use the term *Occitan* to refer to the southern Gallo-Romance varieties that may be considered dialects of the Occitan language, following Pierre Bec (1963). This idea is not universally accepted, notably by language revitalization activists from Provence and Gascony. The term “Occitània” refers to the linguistic area in which those dialects are spoken, and includes Spain’s Val d’Aran and the Occitanophone Piedmont valleys of Italy.

revolutionaries held that the maintenance of particularisms was a threat to the fledgling Republic. Differences among the people, including the languages they spoke, could undermine the unifying power of a state based on absolute equality. True linguistic assimilation would take time and the cooperation of history: the establishment of universal public schooling in the late 19th century, the mixing of populations from all six corners of France during the World Wars, the post-war exodus from rural areas (the last strongholds of regional languages)—all of which contributed to the decline of regional languages as much as did formal “French-only” policies (Lodge 1993).

Since the nineteenth century, language activists in the Midi have focused their efforts on repairing some of the damage by normalizing orthography, carving out a place for the language in the media and public life, fostering artistic production, lobbying for changes in national language policy, fighting to establish bilingual language education, and largely restoring the prestige of Occitan in the popular imagination of southern France. The Institut d’estudis occitans (IEO) privileges the establishment of a place for Occitan in public life, the media, and education.² Many other Occitan groups and individuals press for practical and political change as well; small victories have come on local levels. The mission for recognition and embrace of Occitan is particularly successful in terms of its place in the cultural landscape. Surveys indicate generally favorable attitudes toward Occitan language and culture in Toulouse’s region. According to a 2010 sociolinguistic study prepared by the Région Midi-Pyrénées, 74% of respondents believe that it is important to preserve the language, and 13% would prefer that it take on an expanded role in daily life. Of course, positive attitudes toward language in the abstract may not translate into embrace of concrete practices, as was evidenced by controversy over the introduction of bilingual metro announcements in Toulouse in 2010 (Hagège 2013: 30).

For 72% of the respondents, the acquisition and practice of the language is “a sign of openness more than a sign of withdrawal” (“davantage un signe d’ouverture que de repli”).³ This last statistic is particularly fascinating when one considers the dual significance of “withdrawal”—in France, withdrawal into one’s own ethnic or cultural community, or *communautarisme*, is anathema to the well-being of the Republic. Simultaneously, however,

² The IEO is the largest and most influential of the associations that work to promote Occitan language and culture. This information comes from the IEO’s website: <http://www.ieo-oc.org/Presentation-et-fonctionnement>

³ Source: Région Midi-Pyrénées. <http://www.midipyrenees.fr/IMG/pdf/EnqueteOccitan.pdf>. p. 10

withdrawal may indicate rejection of modern—and thus diverse—French society. With the favorable public image that Occitan enjoys locally and its association with openness, it seems to hold potential as an ambassador for newcomers to the region. Even so, only 38% of survey respondents agreed that knowledge of Occitan facilitates integration into the Midi-Pyrénées region. This question is particularly interesting, as it touches upon a potential function of the language as well as the problematic nature of cultural diversity. With little in the way of economic advantages to tempt new speakers, the concept that Occitan could help newcomers adjust to life in the region is powerful. Considering that ‘integration’ has been a priority in contemporary French society, the potential of its regional cultures to act as allies both of diversity and of the Republic is not unimaginable, despite the low expectations for such a project at the moment. The Occitan movement has made real progress toward improving public perception of the language and culture; as the survey data indicates, they are generally regarded as worthy of preservation and esteem. Nevertheless, the movement faces great challenges in the twenty-first century. Efforts to recruit new speakers struggle: Bernissan (2012) offers one of the more pessimistic prognoses, while others maintain a much larger base of speakers, depending on the criteria used.⁴

The French government’s aversion to promoting regional languages leads to a lack of top-down influence and resources favoring language initiatives, at least on the national level. This exacerbates the challenges facing language revitalization movements. However, autochthonous linguistic and cultural diversity is sanctioned under some circumstances. The French Constitution’s Article 75–1, adopted in 2008, states that “Regional languages belong to the patrimony of France” (“Les langues régionales appartiennent au patrimoine de la France”).⁵ This form of recognition has the effect of distributing the ownership of the languages in question across the citizenry of France, framing them as “a common possession for all citizens that should be safeguarded for the common good” (“un bien commun pour l’ensemble des citoyens et qu’il convient de sauvegarder dans l’intérêt général”, Woehrling 2013: 84). This manner of recognition insists that regional languages and cultures contribute to, rather than threaten, the unity of the nation-state. The documents in this corpus do the

⁴ For example, UNESCO counts each dialect separately and estimates over 1.5 million speakers, while Bernissan’s more restrictive methodology leads him to estimate only 110,000. Source: <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php>.

⁵ All translations by the author. Source: Assemblée nationale. http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/constitution.asp#titre_12

work of reclaiming the Occitan identity as discrete from the French identity, inscribing itself as part of a solidarity movement among a group of cultures.

2. Cultural exchange and Occitan revitalization in Toulouse

In 2013, 9.7% of Toulouse’s population had lived in a different *commune* the previous year—providing ample opportunity for cultural exchange.⁶ In fact, over the past few decades, artists and intellectuals associated with Occitan have had a rich history of encouraging such exchange—the musical group Les Fabulous Trobadors, the association *Escambiar* (Occitan for “exchange”), and the community center the Carrefour culturel Arnaud Bernard all focus on fostering arts and culture in Toulouse, with an eye to both the promotion of Occitan and to diversity (Terral 2007; see Rulhes 2000 for another account of this scene in Toulouse). Occitanism appears to take the past to heart—according to the prevailing mythos, the once-flourishing and diverse civilization of the medieval era was ripped apart by French aggression (Salhi and Jeanjean 2002: 150–51). Thus, solidarity with fellow victims of French hegemony and a care for diversity are not only moral but ancestral imperatives.

Nevertheless, it is unclear whether linguistic revitalization (understood here in the sense of reestablishment of intergenerational transmission, see Fishman 1991) is the principal goal of the Occitan movement in the city. Hervé Terral (who has written extensively in favor of Occitan language instruction) cites critiques of the movement in its contemporary incarnation in Toulouse, which is centered around the groups mentioned above. He muses that their project may be:

...strictly cultural (in the anthropological sense of the word) [...] to the point of appearing, despite everything, as a kind of Occitanism without Occitan (a critique published in the newspaper *La Setmana*, taken up again in the *Linha [imaginòt]*, in 2005) [...] the regular use of Francitan⁷ clearly testifies to a low-water mark for Occitan in the city of Toulouse?

...strictement culturel (au sens anthropologique du mot) [...] au point d’apparaître, malgré tout, comme sorte d’occitanisme sans occitan (critique publiée dans le journal

⁶ Source: INSEE. http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/dossier_complet.asp?codgeo=COM-31555. This statistic does not account for the origin of these new residents, be they from France or from another country. Statistics on national origin do not appear in INSEE’s figures.

⁷ Francitan, the regional variety of French inflected with Occitan, here faulted as a poor substitute for the actual practice of Occitan.

La Setmana, reprise dans la *Linha*, en 2005) [...] témoignage en relief, par l'usage assidu du francitan, d'un point d'étiage de l'occitan dans la ville de Toulouse? (Terral 2007: 275–76)

Is it possible that the sort of *ouverture* of Toulouse-style Occitanism comes at the expense of the practice of the language—and if so, is this an inevitable endpoint?

In the course of a meditation on language rights, Monica Heller argues that the role of the language itself in a situation like that of Occitan in France takes on a heavy load as a signifier for a host of other identity markers:

Yet it seems clear that in the case of modernist democratic state-focussed linguistic minority struggles, the terrain of language seems to make sense as a proxy insofar as democratic states are supposed to be inclusive and language can be held up as something one can learn (while remaining sufficiently ambiguous to be able to in fact function as a masked criterion for the construction of essentialized ethnic boundaries). (2004: 285)

This symbolic form of linguistic acquisition remains, however, in the realm of potential. Status and prestige planning efforts like those frequently undertaken by the IEO have succeeded in creating interest around and affection for Occitan, but the transition toward commitment to the real task of learning, using, and transmitting the language remains hazy.

From the outset, I have used the corpus presented in this article to interrogate the evocation of various cultural traditions alongside Occitan. In some ways, such associations contribute little to the language revitalization movement; traditionally a rededication to the community and a certain degree of isolation have been encouraged in order to nurture speakers' return to the language before opening out on the larger world (Fishman 1991). However, this sort of action in contemporary Europe may read as nativist. As a regional language of France, Occitan is necessarily tied to its geographic location and relies on its traditional speakers for legacy and legitimacy. At the same time, the Occitan movement has always been associated with the political left, and is thus in theory more likely to embrace cultural differences.

3. Multiculturalism in France

According to Martiniello, “Multiculturalist discourse aimed at combining unity and diversity while ensuring the social and economic integration of immigrants and their offspring” (2014: 3). Written in what many commentators have theorized is a post-multiculturalist era, this

efficient definition also illuminates the enormity of the project, especially in France (Choquet 2015, Martiniello 2014, Villard and Sayegh 2013). An outlier in Western Europe, France has never embarked on a project of instituting multicultural policies. While Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden “pioneer[ed] a multicultural model,” and Germany, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway actively research migration, France continues to rely on “its Republican model of organic unity, and how migrants assimilated into French society was the key research question” (Bevelander and Taras 2013: 7). Privileging the perpetuation of separate ethnic, social, or religious identities is anathema to a public policy that insists that all citizens are simply “French.” From a multiculturalist point of view, such a stance may seem obtuse. However, if the state is conceptualized as an impartial actor, privileging no group or citizen over another in a legal sense, such detachment is logical. Villard and Sayegh describe the underpinnings of the “French model” thus: “Officially and from a theoretical point of view, we could say that the French Republican state does not recognize any form of ‘particularisms’ as the citizens who make up the nation have, in theory, neither ‘race’, religion, ethnicity, class nor culture; this is what the politics of indifference implies” (2013: 239–40).

France has not only refrained from instituting a comprehensive set of measures dedicated to fostering multiculturalism; indeed the term itself is rarely used in public discourse and tends to have a negative connotation—both due to its incompatibility with French national values and its increasing unpopularity in the rest of Europe. An absence of certain sorts of demographic record-keeping may mask, but does not alter, the increasingly varied cultural, ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds of the French population:

...The ‘French model’ is not traditionally associated with multiculturalism, at least in the normative, ideological sense. This does not mean that French society is not phenomenologically multicultural, but even in its descriptive meaning the term ‘multiculturalism’ has only recently entered political and academic discourses in France. (Constant 2000: 17)

The terms ‘cultural diversity’ (*la diversité culturelle*) or simply ‘diversity’ (*la diversité*) have traditionally been preferred to ‘multiculturalism’.” (Villard and Sayegh 2013: 236)

In the absence of an official multicultural project, such diversity often passes for an affirmation of France’s openness. However, the question of what constitutes legitimate

diversity is a fraught one.⁸ National recognition of regional languages is conditioned on the acceptance that they are not coequal to French in status. Such acceptance seems to be the main division between legitimate diversity that adds color and interest to France, and diversity that threatens a cohesive national identity.

Official attitudes toward the use of France's regional languages have passed from hostile to indifferent as they pose less and less of a problem to the unity of the Republic. This is due both to the attrition of speakers over the years and their lack of political clout; it is also due to concerns over assimilation of immigrants outweighing concerns over the pacification of the provinces. The robust practice of a language other than French in France is rendered more difficult by policies and laws such as the 1992 Article 2 of the Constitution ("The language of the Republic is French"). Many initiatives that would have granted linguistic rights to speakers of languages other than French have thus been declared unconstitutional and were defeated.⁹

4. Internal colonization and the Occitan movement

Today, political agitation on the part of the Occitan movement is mild compared to that of the 1960s and 1970s. As discussed above, the rejection of difference in the name of unity and equality has marked France's national identity: "The construction of the unity of the French nation through the conscious project of erasing cultural and linguistic differences provides a further example of why the French Republican model appears as the absolute counter-example of the multicultural model" (Villard and Sayegh 2013: 239). While the assimilation of the Midi is a *fait accompli*, this republical "conscious project" of erasure has become an object of great interest for Occitan activists.

The making of France led to cultural and economic casualties. During the 1960s, the fledgling Occitan movement pointed out similarities between the contemporary process of decolonization and the treatment of France's indigenous populations (Lafont 1971, Jeanjean 2000). Salhi and Jeanjean recount how François Fontan "founded [in 1959] the first Occitanist political party, the Occitan Nationalist Party (PNO)" (2002: 150). The PNO also supported the independence movement in Algeria, hoping for a domino effect in which peoples oppressed

⁸ Thanks to the anonymous reviewer of this manuscript for the concept of legitimacy in diversity.

⁹ France's ongoing refusal to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is a good example of such a challenge: http://www.liberation.fr/france/2015/10/27/le-senat-entree-la-charte-des-langues-regionales_1409281

by France, including Occitan, would be inspired to rise up as well. As overseas colonies (Algeria, Vietnam, Senegal, etc.) and metropolitan colonies (the Midi, Bretagne, Corsica, etc.) had suffered from the same “destruction of local culture,” they became lost in trying to emulate the oppressor and in so doing forfeited their own power (Salhi and Jeanjean 2002: 151). In southern France, both the violence and destruction of the Albigensian crusade and the more insidious work of the “propaganda...imposed upon the Bretons, Occitans, and Corsicans by the education system” figure among the offenses of the French authorities (Salhi and Jeanjean 2002: 149). Echoes of this critique of French Republican identity-building appear in the writings of contemporary activists in the Midi:

Abbé Grégoire believed that the patois were not languages, that their crudeness led to fanaticism and that they could not express neither abstractions, nor universals, nor brotherhood. The Republic confused national unity with cultural homogeneity, political equality with linguistic uniformity, and decades of education would do the rest.

L’Abbé Grégoire¹⁰ croit que les patois ne sont pas des langues, que leur grossièreté incline au fanatisme et ne peut exprimer ni l’abstraction, ni l’universel, ni la fraternité. La République confond unité nationale et homogénéité culturelle, égalité politique et uniformisation linguistique, et des décennies d’instruction scolaire feront le reste. (Fraj 2014: 218)

Any parallels between the treatment of internal and external minority populations in France must be cautiously drawn. Today, regional minorities like Bretons, Occitans, Basques, Corsicans, and Alsatians, have been more or less assimilated into the French Republic. Actual separatist movements are largely unpopular, and demands for the devolution of powers to regional levels tend to be modest. Moreover, despite cultural and linguistic differences between France’s internal minorities and the population of the Paris / Île-de-France region are mostly overshadowed by their similarities in ethnicity and religion. Populations of non-European origin, the role and assimilation of whom is hotly debated today, are likely to be marked not only by linguistic and cultural differences, but by highly marked ethnic, racial,

¹⁰ An infamous figure among France’s regional language activists, the abbot Henri Grégoire prepared a report entitled *Sur la nécessité et les moyens d’anéantir les patois et d’universaliser l’usage de la langue française* (Report on the necessity and means to annihilate the patois and to universalize the use of the French language). The report, requested by France’s revolutionary government and presented in 1794, in order to investigate the linguistic makeup of the Republic. Rickard explains: “Only some three million [of 25 million], by virtue of the region where they happened to live, or of their education, were able to speak it purely” (1989: 120–21).

and religious ones. Nevertheless, the Republic's purposeful blindness to these differences affects all those living in France. Observers, both partial and impartial, have noted the ways in which the anti-communitarian principles apply to Occitans and Algerians, to Corsicans and Ivoirians. It is not surprising, perhaps, that ties between such populations could become important. The preoccupation with cultural exchange is very present in the urban Occitan movement that provides the corpus for this study—not only in the presence of non-Occitan traditions and practices alongside Occitan ones, but also in more explicit discourses celebrating Occitan as a means by which one might forge ties with other cultures and—possibly—escape the hegemony of France.

5. Methodology

This study was inspired by the 2007 work of Marie-Jeanne Verny, a scholar of Occitan literature. Verny analyzed a large corpus of documents designed to publicize Occitan-related events. In studying this corpus, she looked first at the entities behind the financing of the events, then at the relative importance of the Occitan language as well as the interplay of Occitan with any other languages and cultures featured by the event, and finally the way in which the language and culture were represented (Verny 2007: 179–80). In my study, I further explore the second, cross-cultural aspect of Verny's investigation. Summarizing her findings on the presence of non-Occitan cultures in the corpus, Verny concludes that:

Finally, we keep in mind the clear desire to refuse imprisonment in a narrow identity politics, confined exclusively to Occitan language and culture. Concepts of 'cultural mixing,' 'kinship among Romance peoples,' of 'cultures of the two shores of the Mediterranean,' abound in the documents examined, as well as a desire to bring other minority cultures and languages of France together.

Nous en retenons enfin une volonté manifeste de refuser l'enfermement étroitement identitaire dans les seules langue et culture occitane. Les concepts de « métissage culturel », de « romanité », de « cultures des deux rives de la Méditerranée », abondent dans les documents observés, ainsi qu'une volonté de faire se rencontrer d'autres langues et cultures minoritaires de France. (Verny 2007: 302)

Verny's observation, while fascinating, remains preliminary. In this work, I hope to build on it by using a corpus focused purely on documents privileging this sense of *volonté*, or desire, for intercultural dialogue and openness. A deeper exploration of the interactions and discourses that are most prevalent will shed light on the Occitan movement's imagined community by describing its relationship with its neighbors.

Like Verny's, this corpus is composed of ephemera promoting cultural events, but I also include documents promoting associations or establishments. The corpus itself was gathered during visits to centers of cultural life in Toulouse. The materials were gathered between February and May 2016. Some materials were out of date, but if they were on display at the time of my visit I include them nevertheless. I sought out any document on display with a prominent mention of Occitan, regional languages, or linguistic and/or cultural diversity. Compiling a corpus of ephemera is a reasonable approach for Occitan, as its presence in public life is guaranteed largely by the work of activists and pressure groups. As the target audience consists of people who may already be culturally active, it is more likely that they frequent the sites where ephemera promoting cultural events is distributed.

One notable means of publicizing events and entities associated with Occitan is absent from this study: the internet. In fact, the presence of Occitan online is still limited. As Joan Eygun argues, most of the online Occitan community is fairly insular and outreach is minimal: "...there are blogs and sites of very good quality dedicated to Occitan. But they are still too rare today" ("...il existe des blogs et des sites consacrés à la maitière occitane de très bonne qualité. Mais ils demeurent encore trop rares aujourd'hui", 2015: 83). Finally, restricting the data collection to physically-available ephemera helped reasonably restrict the size and date range of the corpus, facilitating the analysis as a snapshot of the public, tangible Occitan cultural offerings in early 2016.

The assessment of my corpus was undertaken in several stages. During the on-site collection, I retained only documents mentioning Occitan. Despite the relatively prominent role that the city of Toulouse plays in promoting Occitan, and the major presence of Occitan activists there, the majority of cultural institutions did not offer Occitan events during that particular season.¹¹ To qualify for inclusion, documents needed to include an explicit mention of the language and traditions of the Midi, as evidenced through terms like *occitan* or *oc*. Documents on regional languages and cultures were retained as well. The second step involved cataloguing and tagging the documents in order to search for references to another culture, language, place, or people. Of a corpus of 94 documents evincing the "Occitan" criterion, 41 also exhibit the "multicultural" (MC) criterion. The results of this classification, as well as a listing of collection sites, appear in Table 1.

¹¹ Given the great amount of cultural institutions in Toulouse and the logistical difficulty of obtaining data for all of them in the type of collection undertaken for this study, no statistics on the total amount of non-Occitan cultural events occurring during the time period in question are included.

Table 1
Document types by collection site

Site tag	Site name	Total documents meeting Occitan criterion	MC documents	Percentage of MC documents per site
MJC	Médiathèque José Cabanis	16	9	56%
OST	Ostal d'Occitània	27	13	48%
CFP	Centre de formation professionnelle d'Occitanie (CFPO)	16	5	31%
COM	Centre occitan des musiques et danses traditionnelles (COMDT)	19	7	37%
ODT	Office de tourisme, Toulouse	4	1	25%
HDV	Hôtel de Ville, Toulouse (Accueil)	4	1	25%
CAB	Carrefour culturel Arnaud-Bernard	3	1	33%
OTH	Other (unknown; street distribution; etc.)	4	3	75%
CCB	Centre culturel Bellegarde	1	1	100%
Total	All institutions	94	41	44%

Third, I subjected the corpus of Occitan-related items to both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The former yielded interesting data on multiculturalism and language use in the corpus. The latter revealed certain recurrent themes and discourses—and the lack of some others that I had thought likely to appear.

5.1 Quantitative analysis

An outstanding feature of the multicultural Occitan corpus is the volume of references to other peoples, lands, and cultures. In my analysis, I tallied references to people, place, and cultural traditions under the heading of the place mentioned (see Table 2). Thus, the Breton people, Brittany, and Breton music would all be recorded as “references to Brittany.” Such a compilation of references aims to pick out some of the most common multicultural associations with Occitan, which will be examined in more depth in the qualitative analysis section.

The data on number of references by continent is interesting as a jumping-off point. References to places in Asia (16), the Americas (12), and Africa (11) are largely one-off items and frequently occur in documents listing multiple places without necessarily implying a deep relationship between them (with the notable exception of Brazil, see below). For example, an exhibition of oboes at the Centre occitan des musiques et danses traditionnelles features instruments from across the world as well as from Occitània. However, aside from remarking that oboe music developed worldwide, there is no mention of how these commonalities came to be, or how profound they are.¹² References to other places in Europe (including the nation of France) were the most common at 39, followed by other places within France at 30, and finally geographical entities existing across continents tallied eight mentions, seven of which were to “the Mediterranean.”

Table 2
References to non-Occitan people, place, and cultural traditions (by place name heading)

Most commonly-mentioned places	Number of references
Spain (including regions or cities within Spain)	13
The Mediterranean	7
Brittany	7
Brazil	6

¹² A notable limitation of this study is the fact that it takes as its object of analysis relatively superficial, short discourses. This was necessary in order to preserve the idea that public discourses are especially of interest, as they are likely to reach the largest segment of the population. However, the potential interest of an in-depth study of some of the actual events and establishments promoted in the current corpus would be intriguing.

Another interesting thread to pick up from Verny's 2007 study is the treatment of the Occitan language itself in the corpus. This question is distinct from that of multicultural references; it also sets up the issue of whether use of the language has a high co-occurrence with certain types of discourses. In her study, Verny found 156 separate languages used alongside Occitan, in a corpus of 1199 documents (2007: 297). Unfortunately, Verny's criteria for the use of another language are unclear. For example, should the word *fórró* be noted as an example of Portuguese on a flyer for a Brazilian music festival? Even by the most inclusive standard (including *fórró*, for instance), the number of other languages exhibited is not as impressive as in Verny's corpus: 21 languages other than French co-occur with Occitan in my corpus.

Only eight documents contain Occitan and a language other than French, and in all but one (a brochure written in Catalan and French published by the Generalitat de Catalunya), use of the extra language(s) is restricted. The most common practice is the use of another language to identify an artifact or cultural practice (e.g., the *Morris dance* in English or the Brazilian *pifano* flute in Portuguese). Thus, instead of studying implied relationships between linguistic codes, we must rely on more explicit text establishing links between Occitan and other cultures. There are zero monolingual Occitan documents, just as there are no monolingual Occitan speakers.¹³ Only 17 of the 41 documents use no Occitan at all, and are written entirely in French. However, of the 24 that do use the language, seven of them use it only in the form of proper nouns, not in the actual syntactic flow of the text. Such usage indicates a careful balance between an obligation to use the language and a deliberate choice to use it. Translating a proper noun may be symbolically destructive of identity, while the use of Occitan in the flow of the text could be opaque to certain readers. The co-occurrence of French and Occitan within these texts is quite compelling and would be an interesting object of further analysis in the future.

¹³ "It is certain, on the other hand, that there exists no longer in France a single monolingual speaker and that Occitan is doubtless no longer the first language spoken in the home." ("Il est certain en revanche qu'il n'existe plus en France un seul locuteur monolingue et que l'occitan n'est sans doute pratiquement plus la langue première en famille.") Source: https://www.univ-montp3.fr/uoh/occitan/une_langue/co/module_L_occitan_une%20langue_10.html

5.2 Qualitative analysis

In his volume on discourse analysis, Gee offers a useful convention of using a capital “D” to refer to a larger, circulating Discourse. Such Discourses are “socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the ‘right’ places and at the ‘right’ times with the ‘right’ objects (associations that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’)” (17). For the current study, the “socially meaningful” discourses are ones reflecting and contributing to the reinforcement of Occitan as a site of cultural exchange. I will follow Gee’s convention to identify Discourses that are suggested by a variety of discourses recurring in my documents. The following qualitative analysis identifies three major Discourses in the corpus. They are illustrated here with limited examples, but they are reinforced by the fact that multiple documents support their existence.

5.2.1 The pivot to the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean has for millennia been a center of gravity for its surrounding regions. Across the corpus, the desire to reaffirm these ties appears as a counterweight and a way to turn away from the north of France toward the south. Interestingly, the embrace of “Mediterranean culture” remains rooted not only in the Midi, but in France as well. Closely tied to the colonization of the Maghreb was the justification that France has a Mediterranean destiny. Dine cites the remarks of Thierry Mandon in a 1992 article for *Le Monde*:

[Mandon...] contrasted the artificial community generated by the post-war project of Europeanization with a deeper, more organic, and characteristically southern variety of kinship: “We [France] have at least as much in common with the Mediterranean peoples: it’s a question of a different rhythm of existence; of a form of rural life that is tending to disappear, in France at least, while we still have real need of it; and of strong spiritual values, which are not only to do with religion. (Dine 2009: 7–8)

Mandon’s *éloge* is strikingly similar to the Discourses found in Occitan revitalization. The qualities—rural simplicity, rational spirituality, *joie de vivre*—seem always to be proper to another people, distant in time or in space. His words are all the more interesting when one considers that he was “then socialist deputy for the Essonne département in the Île-de-France” (Dine 2009: 7). In this way, his gaze from the north passes over (or through) the Midi as it observes the Mediterranean; is southern France a part of this ensemble? Mandon appears to

express a sort of nostalgia, not for colonialism, but for a way of life that still exists in the storied Mediterranean.

Frédéric Mistral, a leader in the Provençal literary collective *Le Félibrige* (founded in 1854), argued for deepening bonds between France and the Mediterranean in order to forge a *confédération latine* (Kirsch 2000: 67). Kirsch explains Mistral's appeal as "...anti-centralist, anti-Parisian even, but not anti-French since it was meant to remind France both of its 'wholesome' earthly traditions and its southern vocation" ("anticentraliste, antiparisienne si l'on veut, mais non pas antifrançaise puisqu'il s'agit de rappeler à la France à la fois ses « saines » traditions terriennes et sa vocation méridionale", 2000: 68). Mistral's *confédération latine* was inextricably linked not only with Paris's recognition of the vitality of the Midi, but also with continuing and expanded colonization of the Maghreb. In contrast, the Occitan movement of the 1960s and 1970s relied heavily on the idea that the Midi, like the Maghreb, suffered from colonization and French hegemony. Today, the Occitan movement emphasizes the importance of ties with Mediterranean peoples—not only in the Maghreb, but also in Italy, Spain, and the Balkans. In particular, ties to Catalonia have been vital to the construction of the Occitan movement—the IEO itself was modeled on the *Institut d'estudis catalans*.

In the corpus, the depth of the cultural exchange between Occitània and its Mediterranean neighbors is illustrated by a musical event, promoted in two publications, using somewhat different terminology. In May 2016, Moroccan-born *oudiste* Brahim Dhour visited the *Centre occitan des musiques et danses traditionnelles* (COMDT) to teach and perform. In *Sortir*, a free guide to cultural events in Toulouse, the author of the text works to emphasize that exchange between these cultures is well-established: "*Toulousain* Occitanists are constantly recalling the historical and cultural proximity between Mediterranean cultures and the Arab world" ("Les occitanistes toulousains n'ont de cesse de rappeler la proximité historique et culturelle avec les pays méditerranéens et le monde arabe", MJCBRAH).

As for Dhour himself, the text lauds his ability to "open new horizons for Arab-Andalusian popular music, influenced by world music and jazz" ("emmener la musique populaire arabo-andalouse vers de nouveaux horizons influencés par les musiques du monde et le jazz") (MJCBRAH). The evocation of cultural diversity works on several levels here. First, the COMDT, whose vocation is to promote cultural exchange and culture of southwest France, has continued the tradition of recognizing the ties between Occitània and the Mediterranean, notably between the Maghreb and the Arab world. Second, Dhour himself incorporates

various cultural influences into his work. The association between Dhour and the COMDT conjures a multiplicity of cultural exchanges for the audience.

Dhour's residency at the COMDT, where he performed and gave workshops, is described more sparingly in the COMDT's discussion of its 2015–16 season. The author appears to be the same, as certain phrases and stylistic features appear in both documents. However, in the COMDT publication the evocations of exchange between Occitània and the Mediterranean are elided in favor of emphasizing Dhour's music:

These four musicians [Dhour and his ensemble], rooted in the great musical tradition of the Maghreb and heirs of the cultural intermingling naturally born of the sharing and hospitality between Mediterranean countries, offer a musical voyage of great richness through Arab repertoires.

Ces quatre musiciens, enracinés dans la grande tradition musicale maghrébine et héritiers du brassage culturel qui est né naturellement du partage et de l'hospitalité entre les pays de la Méditerranée, offrent un voyage musical d'une grande richesse à travers les répertoires arabes (COMSAIS).

This picturesque description of the Mediterranean recalls Mandon's praise for the region and its values. As the event is not meant to be a polemical one, terms like *partage* and *hospitalité* avoid evoking the wounds of colonization. This Discourse tends to privilege a sort of aspirational multiculturalism in which an alchemical process leads from exposure to diversity to acceptance of diversity. Here, cultural diversity is unproblematic, and the roles of the visiting artist, the hosting venue, and the well-intentioned audience are clearly defined. The view of the Maghreb and the southern Mediterranean as having linked destinies indeed persists today. For Occitània, which was at once a colonizer and a fellow colony, the Discourse reveals an intricate tangle of guilt, solidarity, and aspiration.

5.2.2 A preference for peoples over nation-states

In the corpus, a marked preference for referring to cultures and populations by ethnic and/or regional identity is present. Several references to Brittany and the Breton language illustrate this phenomenon. In addition to possessing an active tradition of linguistic and cultural activism, Brittany is also part of the transnational ensemble of Celtic peoples. Occitan and Breton language activists have often worked together over time, so the links between these two languages from different families are unlikely to be unfamiliar to a *Toulousain* audience. The prevalence of events including Celtic culture bears examining in more depth.

The theme of 2016's *Río Loco*, a large summer festival in the center of Toulouse was *Celtic Worlds (Les Mondes celtes)*. With the exception of Ireland, Celtic nations are located within non-Celtic nation-states (Great Britain, France, Spain). In fact, the solidarity between Celtic peoples across these borders is often evoked in the corpus. The director of the *Río Loco* festival, Hervé Bordier, describes the “« Trans-Nations » celtiques” thus:

From Galicia to Brittany, from Cornwall, from Wales, from Ireland, from the Isle of Man and from Scotland, to the limits of Western Europe, the Celtic provinces, North and South, form a linguistic and cultural ensemble in their own right. These are extremities of the land, at the boundaries of land and sea, of lands of resistance...The Celtic people have succeeded in building together, with vitality and diversity, a Pan-Celtism that even today supports, heritage, living tradition, and modernity.

De la Galice à la Bretagne, des Cornouailles, du Pays de Galles, de l'Irlande, de l'île de Man et de l'Écosse, aux confins de l'Europe Occidentale, les provinces celtes du Sud au Nord forment un ensemble linguistique et culturel à part entière. Ce sont des bouts du monde aux frontières de la terre et de la mer, des terroirs de résistances...Peuple celtique qui a réussi à bâtir en commun avec vitalité et diversité un interceltisme porteur, encore aujourd'hui, d'héritage, de traditions vivantes et de modernité (MJCPOPP).

Bordier's welcome message encompasses many of the themes encountered in the corpus at large. We see solidarity across distance, the unifying power of language and culture, and minimization of the importance of national boundaries. The admiration for Celtic *résistance* and *vitalité* is clear. The success that Celtic activists have enjoyed in forging links across national boundaries is particularly important for Occitan activists, whose territory likewise is found in multiple nation-states.

Such an aspirational perspective toward another culture is not unusual. Brittany continues to sustain some of the same struggles, being a region with distinct language and culture in France.¹⁴ Notably, the Breton movement has pioneered many language and cultural revitalization initiatives, such as the Diwan schools, withstanding internal discord and disapprobation from the national government (Judge 2007, Priest 2008). The subtext here is that Toulouse is welcoming their allies in the struggle for recognition on the regional level.

¹⁴ In the case of Brittany, clear linguistic distinctions from the Romance-speaking territories of the Hexagon and a long duration of self-determination have contributed to forging a self-concept that is more clearly differentiated from French than Occitan's is (see Broudic 2003).

Whereas the Celtic community is portrayed as transcending national boundaries, Spain appears as a nation-state that, like France, contains many distinct cultural and linguistic communities. However, Spain's statutes of autonomy afford an amount of regional control unimaginable in France. Those promoting Occitan tend to portray Spain as a nation of regions, each of which is home to a people with their own unique culture and language. Of thirteen references to Spain and cities or regions, only three use the terms "Spain" or "Spanish" explicitly. The rest prioritized the region or city, especially Catalonia, with four references. Occitània and Catalonia certainly have very close cultural and historic ties, so it is unsurprising that a careful respect for Catalonia's distinctiveness appears in the corpus. For example, a lecture on Catalonia given at the *Ostal d'Occitània* by two local academics (Michel Martinez and Fabrice Corrons), is entitled "*(Southern) Catalonia: situation and perspectives*" ("*La Catalonha (del sud) : situacion e perspectives*") (OSTLES D). Southern Catalonia in this context is that part of Catalonia located in Spain. Thus, priority is given to the territory as that of the Catalan people, not that of France or Spain.

The particularly close relationship between Occitans and Catalans accounts in part for their sensitivity to Spain's national composition, which extends to other regions as well. For example, at the *Centre interregional de desvolopament de l'occitan* (CIRDÒC) in Béziers, Occitan singer Éric Fraj sings fifteen poems by Spanish poet Federico García Lorca. In this performance, the audience will hear as "The Occitan voice, all light and shadow, the Andalusian rhythms subtly resonating, merge to create something new, original, and very moving" ("*La voix occitane toute de clartés et d'ombres, les rythmes andalous en résonance discrète, fusionnent pour donner quelque chose de neuf, d'original, et de très émouvant*") (COMERIC). Here, Occitan is the target language, playing host to the work of a celebrated author in another Romance language. The emphasis on García Lorca's cultural origins—Andalusian, not Spanish—makes the translation of his work into another regional culture appear natural. The preference for construing Spain as a nation-state where community identity comes first conjures up a desire for the same consideration within France.

5.2.3 Internal diversity of Occitània

For the present study, which is built on a corpus whose materials were assembled based on their evocation of Occitan, some discussion of the term Occitània or Occitanie is in order. Kathryn Priest, in contrasting the cases of Occitan and Catalan revitalization, contends that the denomination of Occitan language and Occitània "represents a post-rationalisation of linguistic practices in the southern area of present-day France and the geographic area of their

enactment, which has been applied by scholars and activists requiring descriptors” (Priest 2008: 140). This summation has the advantage of chronological accuracy: arguments for unity of linguistically similar populations of the Midi as Occitan emerged around the turn of the twentieth century, most notably with the classical orthography proposed by teachers, authors, and *félibréens* Prosper Estieu and Antonin Perbosc, who rejected the Provençal-based orthography favored by the Félibrige (see Martel 2010 for more on the history of this schism and its after-effects).

Priest’s assessment also raises necessary questions about the perceived naturalness of such unity. Alain Touraine et al., in a striking analysis of Occitan activists in the late 1970s, find the Occitan identity to be primarily adversarial, a counter to French hegemony and a sense of historical inequity in the Midi (1981: 84). In this arrangement, a positive identity is missing: rejecting French is the primary element of Occitan identity. Since that time, militancy in the Occitan movement has been attenuated, and the embrace of Occitan has increased in many parts of southern France. Nonetheless, the concepts of Occitan and Occitània continue to be contested, with some language activists rejecting them entirely in favor of the linguistic label *langues d’oc*. This designation is meant to allow for the recognition of Provençal, Béarnais, Limousin, Auvergnat, Languedocien, Gascon, and Vivaro-Alpin as languages in their own right, not dialects of Occitan—as is the view of the majority of outside linguists, and, of course, Occitanists (cf. the special issue of *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* from 2004, vol. 169).

As Toulouse is in the heartland of the Occitan movement, the voices in favor of *langues d’oc* do not tend to be in circulation in the discourses on the area’s regional language. However, another Discourse that appears in the documents does serve to reinforce the internal diversity of Occitan culture(s). There is a rehabilitation of this diversity as well: the dismissal of non-Francophone groups within France as speakers of *patois* is refuted by the idea that not only is *patois* an unacceptable concept, but that these populations are far from monolithic (Courouau 2005, Alén Garabato 1999). It also provides redress to populations in the Midi itself who might feel left out of the pan-Occitan ideology that was prevalent over the last few decades of the twentieth century. Singer and activist Eric Fraj puts the question of language and dialect in personal terms:

I speak Languedocien, Gascon, Limousin, Provençal, Auvergnat, Vivaro-alpin, etc.,
so I speak Occitan, that is to say, necessarily *an* Occitan, and not a dialect (of)

Occitan, so I speak a language in one of its geographic and/or social forms, for, being situated, I can only speak one language in a situation.

Je parle languedocien, gascon, limousin, provençal, auvergnat, vivaro-alpin, etc., alors je parle l'occitan, c'est-à-dire obligatoirement *un* occitan; et non pas un dialecte (de l') occitan; alors je parle une langue dans une des se modalités géographiques et/ou sociales car, être de situation, je ne peux parler qu'une langue en situation. (2013: 212)

Fraj's evocation of the internal diversity of the language plays on the context-dependency of the linguistic repertoire. It also establishes an equity among geographical forms of the language, without which the Occitan ensemble would be incoherent.

An example of discourse emphasizing the diversity of Occitan appears in the listings for the 2015–16 COMDT season. The musical group “Aronde” is described thus: “Aronde is the balance between two strong identities in well-established musical universes. Emerging from traditional Auvergnat and Gascon repertoires, the musicians connect two paths that seem to run perpendicular to each other” (“Aronde c'est l'équilibre de deux identités fortes dans des univers musicaux bien trempés. Issus respectivement des répertoires traditionnels auvergnats et gascons, les musiciens fusionnent deux parcours qui semblent perpendiculaires l'un à l'autre”, COMSAIS). The emphasis on the difference between the musical traditions of Auvergne and Gascony emphasizes that Occitan culture is no more easily defined than is Mediterranean culture or Spanish culture. The same problem applies to French culture. Following the assertion made in Article 75–1 of the Constitution, regional cultures exist within French culture and patrimony. Discourses valuing the internal diversity of Occitan allow its partisans to refute this claim while sidestepping charges of replicating French hegemony in favor of Occitan hegemony.

6. Conclusion

In the case of Occitan in France, the diversity of regional culture that the nation-state has recognized is qualified by its insistence that this diversity must be considered French. The documents in the corpus, through their appeals to a robust conception of multiculturalism and insistence on the status of Occitan language and culture as equally well-developed and autonomous as other, more well-recognized regional and national cultures, reject that interpretation while remaining sufficiently apolitical to appeal to a mass audience.

The appearance of various cultural traditions in public discourses promoting Occitan is significant. Militant historical analyses insist that Occitània had been an active participant in a vibrant cultural exchange prior to its annexation and isolation as a backwater of France. Today's efforts to reclaim the territory as part of a Mediterranean space, as a diverse region in its own right, dovetail nicely with the promotion of cultural diversity in Europe, which privileges "trans-culturality, internal differentiation, and cross-border co-operation (Warasin 2007: 99). Occitan activists thus find themselves facing a familiar antagonist, the French. By rejecting homogeneity, these activists assert their regional rights without presenting themselves as closed-off or old-fashioned. However, to claim that Occitan multiculturalism is cut from the same cloth as the political multiculturalism enacted elsewhere in Western Europe would be unwise. Occitan multiculturalism is less formal and appears more concerned with its own cultural vitality than integration of immigrant populations.

The future of Occitan in the Midi in general, and in urban areas in particular, remains unclear. The challenge of attracting new speakers is compounded by the fact that the acquisition and use of the Occitan language confer few economic prerogatives. With more and more newcomers unfamiliar with the language and the culture moving to the region, can Occitanists capitalize on cross-cultural exchange to spark language revitalization? Occitan activism has, over the last seventy-five years, built up influence in Toulouse, such that the city's government (and those of the department and the region) generally favor supporting Occitan language and culture.

As the corpus indicates, there is a significant number of Occitan-related cultural events on offer in Toulouse and its environs. However, this fact does not imply that language revitalization has turned a corner. The journey from interested onlooker to a dedicated speaker who transmits the language to his or her children is long and difficult. Moreover, it is not at all clear that the Occitan movement in Toulouse is as focused on language acquisition as some critics would like it to be. Nonetheless, the inventive atmosphere in Toulouse no doubt encourages new initiatives. For example, the relatively new association *Estancabra* proposes a four-pronged approach that seems concerned with some of the more challenging problems facing Occitan: "Language, Culture, Society, and Economy" ("Lenga, Cultura, Social, Economia").¹⁵ New transnational initiatives such as the creation of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion have the potential to create new spaces for Occitan as well.

¹⁵ Source: <http://estancabra.org/lassociation/>

The paradigm of language-and-culture promotion that has developed in the urban Occitan movement has grown through a youthful, leftist ethos that sets it apart from other language revitalization movements in the Midi (and even from certain other Occitan revitalization efforts). Its focus on putting Occitan in dialogue with other cultures is energizing to activists, yet tends to draw criticism from those who prefer a more language-centered approach. Certainly, the portrait that I present here of the current Occitan cultural and linguistic offerings of Toulouse is but a piece of language activism within that city. Nevertheless, discourses around cultural exchange through regional language revitalization in an urban setting continue to resonate beyond Toulouse.

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