

OTHERNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S
ASSASSINATION IN *LES ACTUALITÉS FRANÇAISES* OF 1968

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Otherness in the Context of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Assassination in *Les Actualités Françaises* of 1968

_Abstract

The concept of alterity is always related to identity, and based on one's self-perception: the *Self* influences what we perceive as the *Other*. Following this idea, the present article explores the hidden Self of French cultural identity in French newsreels, *Les Actualités Françaises*, from 1968. It examines the construction and representation of alterity in the news coverage of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, and, consequently, what that reveals about French national self-perception. This event is notable for two reasons: first, Dr. King's death is an event of extraordinary international importance; second, the news coverage not only presents alterity, but also the handling of alterity by another culture. Therefore, in this example, the concept of alterity operates on multiple levels.

The objective of this article is to analyze the interaction of image, music, text, and voice-over in this newsreel; the newsreel's effect on the French viewers; and the French national self-perception that is mirrored in the newsreel's representation. The argument will show that deep-rooted French values, existing since the French Revolution, have a strong influence on the perception and evaluation of the events in the US, and therefore on the handling of otherness.

1_Introduction

Alterity relies on identity. There is no *Other* without any kind of self-conception — neither for an individual, nor for a culture.¹ Various concepts of alterity, as well as research projects focusing on alterity and the concept of otherness, speak for an increasing interest in the approach to alterity as related to identity.² The present article addresses, nevertheless, a remaining desideratum: the concrete construction of alterity and the presentation of otherness in French newsreels of 1968.³ Although such newsreels have already known a 'second life' in footage libraries or for footage researchers for the last 40–50 years, the focus on investigating the construction of otherness in these newsreels is quite new.

This essay's theoretical starting point is the work of Julia Kristeva: in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (1988), Kristeva traced the terms 'stranger' and 'foreigner' in different times and cultures. She explains that the search for strangers or strangeness always ultimately leads to oneself,⁴ and that the handling of otherness reflects personal identity: "The foreigner is within us. And when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious."⁵ In this respect, researching the presentation of 'strangers' and 'strangeness' in French newsreels of 1968 also means analyzing France's self-conception, that is, that identity understood as the French nation's self-

image.⁶ In the particular case of France, the construction of national identity especially needs to be taken into account, because of the high level of importance that the French accord to their own national self-image, with its origin in the French Revolution.⁷

The discovery of what might hide ‘behind the scenes’ of the newsreels can “explain much about French society (or rather about the social groups that present themselves in the newsreels) for those who are able to read between the lines.”⁸ For the interpretation of the 1968 newsreels in terms of alterity and its construction, the arrangement of the clips is particularly important, with a special focus on the order of scenes⁹ that were shown to a French public, along with music and texts added to the filmed material. The conformity of the newsreels’ content across different countries is apparent, and can be easily explained by the “international exchange of stories proving cheaper than basing camera operators overseas.”¹⁰ Furthermore, it is a “filmic analysis in the narrow sense, which means, rather than focusing on the scene’s content (authentic or not), instead concentrating on the discourse that those scenes transmit. It is important to keep in mind that those filmed newsreels always had a kind of ideological mission, if not even an explicit propaganda.”¹¹ The newsreels thus reflected — and still reflect — images in a symbolic way, exercising a huge influence on society and history.¹² In their own time, newsreels were unlike other media, such as newspapers, because there was (almost) only one way of perceiving them: by watching the whole week’s summary in the cinema, without any possibility of choosing personally favored topics.¹³

Therefore, this article’s objective is a structural analysis, based on a close reading of selected scenes from an edition shown in France on April 9, 1968, and focused on the construction of alterity and identity in the newsreel.¹⁴ The chosen footage formed part of the long-running series *Les Actualités Françaises*, which was produced between January 4, 1945 and February 25, 1969. This particular newsreel’s primary topic is the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968.¹⁵ This topic lends itself especially to an analysis of the construction of alterity and identity in French newsreels, because from today’s point of view, it is apparent that Dr. King is not part of only the American ‘cultural memory.’¹⁶ In 1968, it was already clear that this kind of event would be a milestone in the French nation’s history, containing information that concerns French society as well as American.

2_ *Les Actualités Françaises* and the Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

An awareness of the anticipated impact of the news of Dr. King's death is quite visible in the newsreel of April 9, 1968. Whereas usually the different clips of a newsreel are simply strung together without any kind of connection or relation between them, right from the beginning this one delivers an eye-catching arc of suspense, fully focused on the message of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Each news item then finishes in a way that is very atypical for *Les Actualités Françaises* of 1968: the voice-over insists on the lack of special, remarkable or unique events that could make this week stand out from any other week. This aesthetic or formal strategy does not provide a structurally more coherent relation between the content of the various items.¹⁷ The commentator's unusual announcements at the end of every unrelated clip, stating that *this week is like every other week*, rather links the whole newsreel by providing spectators with the idea that, on the contrary, there must be something or some information vastly *different* from every other week. Despite these constant references, and unlike today's practice of beginning with the most important topics, spectators must wait until the final clip to learn the breaking news.

Additionally, the duration of the clip is conspicuous. In general, French newsreel clips last two to three minutes; here, the clip about Dr. King extends to five and a half. From these two extraordinary details — the arc of suspense built between the transitions by the voice-over and text, and the extended duration of the news item itself — one can extrapolate that Dr. King's assassination must have been evaluated as exceptional event, with vast public interest and a profound effect on French society.

The last clip of the newsreel, containing the coverage of the assassination, is introduced by the chorus-like words "a week like every other week," only here, they are followed by the word "but."¹⁸ This adversative conjunction leads into the information about why this week, which otherwise seemed so normal, is nevertheless a week *unlike* any other. Accompanied by dramatic music, an oversized photograph of Dr. King suddenly appears.¹⁹ The next series of shots show his name filling the whole screen; finally, a slide that reads "is dead"²⁰ is supplanted by a single word in capital letters: "murdered."²¹ Thereby, in relation to the time and the medium, the news of Dr. King's death is spread with dramatic suspense. The visual representation with the enormous letters is much more intense and solemn than a simple oral announcement would have been. Furthermore, the ornate font used for his name and the static photograph shown at the

beginning seem dignified and sublime. This image, showing only Dr. King's face and part of his upper body, imparts a statuesque quality to the figure; his gaze, directed towards the upper right corner, appears as if raised to God. Thus, from the first few seconds of the clip, the representation of Dr. King seems like an elevation to heaven.

The clip continues with a retrospection of his life and role in the advancement of civil rights, for which he was fighting with nonviolent civil disobedience related to his religious belief.²² Older footage of the archives show a demonstration by African Americans and the brutal reaction of United States police forces using water cannons and truncheons;²³ the protesters are then finally — brutally — arrested. These pictures appear without commentary, accompanied only by background music evocative of sacral music: emphasizing suffering on one hand, and on the other hand, again, the sacred implication of Dr. King and his ideals. The juxtaposition of the religious music, symbolizing Dr. King's Christian beliefs and his fight for the 'right' side, and the cruel behavior of white police forces are a first contrast to underline the injustice that Dr. King was fighting against. Audio-visually pointing at Dr. King's beliefs creates an impression of righteousness in the still predominantly Christian population of France in 1968. The images of the demonstrations additionally focus on the bestial act of the government (represented by the police) and in this way, how blacks are victimized: their suffering is pointed out, and sympathy and compassion for them is implicitly suggested to a French audience. The clip then continues with a picture of Dr. King.²⁴ It is the same image that was displayed at the beginning, but only a smaller segment of it is shown now, focusing on his lips and eyes, and thereby emphasizing the intensity of his gaze. It gives the impression of Dr. King as a moral authority, particularly after the visual documentation of racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans.

The next part of the clip takes place in the Brown Chapel in Selma, Alabama.²⁵ The spectator can only *see* Dr. King giving a speech, since the original speech is not audible. Instead, the French commentator cites some well-known quotes of the Civil Rights Movement leader, like "hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that,"²⁶ which is still today one of Dr. King's most popular quotes.²⁷ A voice-over mentions Dr. King's international acknowledgement, and the Nobel Peace Prize that he received on October 14, 1964 for combating racial inequality through nonviolent resistance.²⁸ During this

segment, pictures of an African American appear and alternate with one of a white person. Both young men are presented in close-up, so that only each face or head is shown. So on one hand, there is the report provided by the voice-over of Dr. King's goal ('dream')²⁹: to eliminate segregation and discrimination, to end racism, and to attain the goal of civil and economic rights.³⁰ On the other hand, on the image plane the pictures of the white and black men from older archival footage appear.³¹ The irritation for the spectator is now the divergence of what it is heard and what it is seen, because it is obvious that the pictures are constructed to display the opposition of black and white, focusing only on the visible differences of the men's appearances, which does not support the ideal of equality. In the background, non-diegetic sounds of church bells ringing emphasize once again Dr. King's Christian beliefs. His connection to God and his Christianity are the main topics of the construction of his persona in this segment. What effect this interaction of image and sound had on the French spectators cannot be clearly reconstructed: is it just another demonstration of the alterity-identity-trouble in the US? Kristeva says: "At first, one is struck by his [the stranger's face's] peculiarity — those eyes, those lips, those cheek bones, that skin unlike others, all that distinguishes him."³² So, is it the confession that there *are* visual differences between black and white people, but that these obvious differences will be of no more relevance when all people are united and equal under shared Christian beliefs (represented by the words of Dr. King and the church bells)?

The display of bodily alterity is interrupted by a short scene in which Dr. King, marching at the head of a group of activists, is avoiding a projectile.³³ This short violent scene of an earlier attempt to hurt the leader of the Civil Rights Movement is presented as though it were the consequence of what the voice-over and the pictures had argued, representing the impact of Dr. King's fight for equal rights for African Americans and against the racial differentiation by the white population. This presentation of otherness in matters of 'black' and 'white' is followed by a review of marches with African Americans and whites together, Dr. King in their lead, accompanied with African-American Christian gospel music. The "March on Washington"³⁴ (1963) is mentioned as "a spectacular success."³⁵ The footage underlines the enormous number of participants in front of the Lincoln Memorial as well as the support that black protestors found in large segments of the white community. In this way, the construction of differences, established earlier by the alternating pictures, is now deconstructed.

A photograph showing again only a part of Dr. King's face³⁶ leads into a description of his achievements, such as voting rights, and the equal protection by law for all citizens signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964.³⁷ This too can be considered a deconstruction of discrimination and the preconception of racial differences. Afterwards, the alternating images of the black man and the white man are shown once more, presented as they were previously as a construction of alterity based on outward differences, and commented upon again by recounting Dr. King's 'dream.'³⁸ Rhythmic drums with an 'African' sound complete this scene, referring, for the first time, not to Dr. King's Christianity, but to his African heritage. The musical change can be interpreted as an increasing construction of alterity, reflected by this music. The combination of image and sound thereby subconsciously undermines the message of equality. What's more, it links three main elements of Dr. King's identity: his Christianity, his life as an African American, and thereby his 'African' background, with his experience of discrimination and segregation.

What follows is a juxtaposition of past and present: the scene of Dr. King's murder is shown,³⁹ introduced with a non-diegetic sound of a gunshot, immediately announcing the violence of the assassination. The commentator then explains what happened in Memphis on April 4, 1968: "The champion of non-violence sank down at the balcony of his hotel where he was fatally shot."⁴⁰ In the background, the audience can hear the sound of military marching drums befitting the images of armed forces that accompany it. The mention of Dr. King's non-violent fight contrasted with the sound of a gunshot, the drums, and the appearances of soldiers reveals the brutal opposition between his pacifistic ideals and his violent death. The commentary informs the audience about the overall perception of a menace towering over the country after the attack occurred.⁴¹ In a speech on the occasion of the assassination, President Johnson declares that it is important for America to defy violence.⁴² His original speech is paraphrased in the French voice-over. The following scenes, supported by the sound of sirens, give the impression of a civil war. The voice-over then elevates Dr. King as a "black Gandhi,"⁴³ and ends with a commentary on the awareness that the worst case has arrived: "Martin Luther King has been murdered."⁴⁴

This is the first time the news of Dr. King's assassination is actually spoken during the whole reportage instead of being written out in text, like at the beginning. This postponement makes his death appear like a taboo — too traumatic to pronounce —

and thereby strengthens the arc of suspense built from the beginning. The sound of superimposed sirens is then replaced by church music, while Dr. King is shown in his coffin. The scene begins with a close-up and is followed by a long shot of the whole coffin in front of a large cross, which insists upon the religious implications of Dr. King's death, and his iconization as a Christian martyr. Again, the emphasis here lies in the contrast between mindless violence and Dr. King's peaceful sanctity.

For more than ten seconds, music plays without any commentary. Mourning people are shown and when Dr. King's widow appears, the commentator declares that millions of people share in her suffering. Afterwards, images of burning houses are suddenly shown, and the voice-over points out that the death of this non-violent activist has (rather paradoxically) provoked widespread violence and race riots.⁴⁵ During the following scene, as armed forces march down a street, the commentator quotes Dr. King: "‘Hate cannot drive out hate,’ said Martin Luther King, ‘only love can do that.’"⁴⁶ Once more, the focus lies on the contrast between Dr. King's ideals and reality: this time, between his popular declaration and the actions following his death. The audience again may recognize a divergence between what the commentator is saying, and what is shown with it. The newsreel ends with a short clip of a speech by Dr. King, which is not translated in French.⁴⁷ Through this, Dr. King's personality and his way of 'preaching' are foregrounded, to be remembered afterwards. During the last sentences of this clip, instead of footage of his speech, a picture of Dr. King is shown that then fades away.⁴⁸ The photograph is the same one used in the beginning of the newsreel.⁴⁹ It has a dignified and sublime effect, and again suggests Dr. King's iconization. The photograph now serves as a frame to the coverage, and completes or perfects the presentation of Dr. King throughout the whole story.

3_Otherness in the US and in France in 1968.

Assembling these different elements, and developing the essential aspects of the whole Martin Luther King Jr. newsreel in the context of otherness, emphasizes the notably extensive presentation of Dr. King's death. The focus lies on his huge impact on the advancement of the actual equality of civil rights, on his fight against segregation and racial discrimination of African Americans as a consequence of the way of handling 'strangeness' in the US in Kristeva's terms. There are different segments of retrospection and current incidents, like the reactions to his assassination. With some quotations

still popular today, and with well-chosen photographs, the French clip tries to preserve the primary elements of Dr. King's life and his wisdom. The newsreel thereby foreshadows the memorization of Dr. King's person and his life.⁵⁰ Furthermore, his significance for French society, and the international trauma provoked by his assassination, are underlined by the extra-long duration of the reporting and the arc of suspense that extends over the whole newsreel. It becomes clear that the assassination is not only an event far away in America, but also a tragedy affecting the French people. The newsreel's imagery, its use of music, and the emotions it displays imply the French *douleur*, the common trauma. Thus, its objective to (re-)present France as a nation that shares Dr. King's values and identifies itself with his 'dream' becomes clear. His death eclipses every other topic — thitherto *a week like every other* — and changes the week completely. France presents itself and its society via this newsreel not as a distant observer, but as commiserating and compassionate.

The self-staging of the French newsreel's nation is in this context very important: while showing compassion and sharing Dr. King's values, the (implicitly supposed) equality of black and white people in France — a quite different treatment of the *Other* — ought to become obvious to the audience. Referring to the footage from the beginning of the clip — the demonstration by the African Americans and the brutal repression of the American police — the manner of its presentation shows clearly that the French nation wants to distance itself from such a segregation and social marginalization. The national motto of France — *liberty, equality, fraternity* — has its origin in the French Revolution, and is therefore deeply anchored in French 'cultural memory.'⁵¹ This is the implicit base for the support of Dr. King, who had the same ideal (or 'dream') for the people all over the world.

Despite this deeply ingrained sense of equality, it must be questioned whether France's empathy only exists for the blacks in the US (and therefore far away from the French nation), or if the equality of all people in France was actually put into practice at that time. That is, in 1968, is the French (self-)representation in newsreels only a way of moral self-staging, or does it reflect the real handling of strangeness? One thing is clear: the problems of racism, social marginalization, etc., are (still today) well known in France.⁵² To use Kristeva's language, the 'foreigner,' the 'stranger,' also exists in France. The Algerian War had just ended in 1962, with the independence of Algeria from France after the most important and hardest decolonization war of and led by the

French Nation. The end of this war caused the flight of nearly one million people from Algeria to France, of the so-called *pieds-noirs*,⁵³ whose families had migrated to French Algeria in the past. Both French society and the French government seemed rather unprepared for this integration challenge. The problems caused by this unexpected immigration wave endured through the following generations, evoking, for example, questions of identity on one side, and prejudices and stereotypes against the ‘foreigners’ on the other. So, in 1968, and still today, France is just as involved in the problem of racism and the discourse of alterity and identity as is the US, although legal segregation as introduced in America has not existed in France. The main difference consequently has its source in the respective juridical foundations. In America, the so-called Jim Crow Laws enforced racial segregation in the southern United States between 1876 and 1964, until on July 2, 1964 President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, outlawing discrimination based on sex, religion and — for the present context — race and color.

In France, the contrary can be observed: since 1789, the *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen* passed by France’s National Constituent Assembly exists as a milestone in the history of civil (and human) rights. As a fundamental document of the French Revolution, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen is part of French ‘cultural memory’ and an important element of the French national consciousness. From 1789 until today, the first article has guaranteed that “men are born and remain free and equal in rights.”⁵⁴

Considering the substantial differences between French and US backgrounds, it becomes clear that discussions of discrimination in respect to integration in France treat issues like racism and inequality dissimilarly. Even if racism, as a consequence of the handling of otherness, or a confrontation with strangeness, existed in France as well, there has never been an officializing of discriminatory behavior. Therefore, France’s self-presentation as well as its self-perception must be in favor of equality. Julia Kristeva points out, that:

Now France today is in the process of welcoming newcomers who do not give up their particularities. The situation is quite different from the one that presided over the beginnings of the United States of America, which offered a new religious and economic faith to uprooted people who all found themselves in the same boat. In France, at the end of the twentieth century, each is fated to remain the same *and* the other — without forgetting his original culture but putting it in perspective to the extent of having it not only exist side by side but also alternate with other’s culture. A new homogeneity is not very likely, perhaps hardly desirable.⁵⁵

What Kristeva means — although she focuses here on the end of the twentieth century — is that France treats otherness and cultural diversity in a different way than, for example, the United States: its aim is not to achieve a new homogeneity, but coexisting cultural diversity. From that point of view and in this context, the compassion transmitted through the French newsreel in 1968 seems plausible in its conformity to the self-concept and the values of France.

4_Conclusion

By trying to summarize the results of the ‘close reading’ of the April 9, 1968 newsreel and the French self-concept and construction of its national identity, it becomes clear that the presentation of otherness, or as in this case, the presentation of the handling of otherness eventually leads to a French self-image. The identification with the shock and the dolor of Dr. King’s supporters and with his fight for legal equality points out French beliefs of *liberty, equality, fraternity*. The connection and combination of footage, photographs, music and comments (voice-over) stylize the French nation as a country of equality and human rights — as a land where Dr. King’s ‘dream,’ since 1789, has already become true.

At this point, it seems that there is no otherness from the French point of view between black and white. Nevertheless, the recurring photographs of the African American and the white man, which might have built a contrast to the beliefs of Dr. King, cannot be neglected and cannot clearly be integrated in the whole context. Maybe it is the understanding of some existing (visual) differences that does not include or even allow a different treatment. The equality of all people in France is not based on visual characteristics, but on the affiliation to the French nation and its values.

And there is still another question remaining: if France’s self-representation, related to the deep-seated beliefs of the French Nation, is stated as the source of the way of reporting on Dr. King’s assassination, is not there another implication of being different, being ‘better’ than the *Others* — that is, better than America? This ‘construction of otherness’ works on a different level — but the conviction of being different (with a positive connotation) subsists.

In conclusion, and to return to Julia Kristeva and the idea of the self-image reflected in the presentation of otherness, it becomes clear that the reporting on Dr. King’s death confirms this theory. The history of France, its early sense for equality and liberty, and

its own discourse of racial relations influence the ways in which the shocking event and the context of alterity and identity are presented. On one hand, the analysis shows how the particular treatment of the tragic event foregrounds the importance of Dr. King's life and death. On the other hand, on examining this treatment more closely, the images and impressions created show clearly France's self-perception regarding questions of racism and discrimination. The idea of *liberty, equality, and fraternity* is imprinted on the French consciousness as a part of the identity of the French nation. It is not questioned as a cultural value, not even when the French nation is experiencing their own problems regarding discrimination and marginalization, which are necessarily connected with questions of identity — and alterity.

Endnotes

- ¹ See Wolfgang Raible, "Alterität und Identität," in *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 110 (1998), 7–22, here: 11–12.
- ² See Anja Becker and Jan Mohr, "Alterität. Geschichte und Perspektiven eines Konzepts: Eine Einleitung," in *Alterität als Leitkonzept für historisches Interpretieren*, eds. Anja Becker and Jan Mohr (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), 1–60, here: 4. See also for example Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge 1994) and Doris Bachmann-Medick, "Multikultur oder kulturelle Differenz? Neue Konzepte von Weltliteratur und Übersetzung in postkolonialer Perspektive," in *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 68.4 (1994), 585–612; and Karl Hölz, *Zigeuner, Wilde und Exoten: Fremdbilder in der französischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: ESV, 2002).
- ³ Luke McKernan wrote about the newsreel as "a reel of film showing a collection of news stories released at regular intervals in cinema" and also as a "reel of film containing reports of past events, found in archives and utilized chiefly by television programmes seeking to illustrate historical events." Luke McKernan, "Newsreels: Form and Function," in *Using Visual Evidence*, eds. Robert W. Matson, and Richard Howells (New York: Open University Press, 2009), 95–106, here: 95.
- ⁴ See Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 283–284; Bhabha also questions "the binary logic through which identities of difference are often constructed — [...] Self/Other," see: Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 3.
- ⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 191.
- ⁶ Homi K. Bhabha also declares that "[s]ocial differences are not simply given to the experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project — at once a vision and a construction — that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present." Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 3.
- ⁷ For the French Revolution as the origin of today's French nation and society see François Furet, "L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution," in *Les Lieux de Mémoire* 2, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 2301–2324, here: 2301.
- ⁸ François de la Bretèque, "Les actualités filmées françaises," in *Vingtième siècle, revue d'histoire* 50 (1996), Dossier: Nations, état-nations, nationalismes, 137–140, here: 138; translation by the author

of this article: “*dire beaucoup sur la société française (ou plutôt sur les groupes sociaux qui se mettent en scène dans les actualités), pour qui sait les lire.*”

9 Even if McKernan explains that “newsreels were often constructed simply in the order in which the individual filmed stories came out of the labs” (see McKernan, “Newsreels: Form and Function,” 104), sometimes (particularly in later newsreels) there is a strategy, a plan behind the order of the films which can be meaningful.

10 McKernan, “Newsreels: Form and Function,” 96. For example, the French newsreel analysed in the present article includes photographs and footage that were also shown in Spain (see the edition of the Spanish *NO-DO*: “April 15, 1968”, accessed March 19, 2017, <<http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-1319/1487000/>>, 07’:17’’ – 09’:54’’).

11 De la Bretèque, “Les actualités filmées françaises,” 139; translation by the author of this article: “*analyse filmique proprement dite, qui s’intéresse moins au contenu, authentique ou non, des plans, qu’au discours que ceux-ci véhiculent. Car il ne faut pas oublier que les journaux filmés ont toujours eu une mission idéologique, sinon de propagande ouverte.*” De la Bretèque also points out the fact that the “manipulation of images is as old as the newsreels. Arrangements as well as faked photographs are ancient methods — although, based on the technological progress, there is a multiplication of options today,” see de la Bretèque, “Les actualités filmées françaises,” 139; translation by the author of this article: “*La manipulation des images est aussi ancienne que le cinéma d’actualités lui-même. Le montage, les trucages, dont les possibilités ont été décuplées aujourd’hui par l’électronique, sont des pratiques anciennes.*”

12 See de la Bretèque, “Les actualités filmées françaises,” 139.

13 See McKernan, “Newsreels: Form and Function,” 99.

14 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” April 9, 1968, accessed March 17, 2017, <<http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE86001168/l-assassinat-du-leader-noir-integrationniste-martin-luther-king-video.html>>.

15 Dr. King’s death is not mentioned again in the newsreels in France in 1968, except in that which followed the one from April 9, 1968, on April 16, 1968, which started with the reporting of Dr. King’s funeral. Unfortunately, it is no longer available on <<http://www.ina.fr/>>.

16 For ‘cultural memory’ see Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter 2008), 109–118. The American federal holiday Martin Luther King Jr. Day shows the importance of Dr. King until today and country’s intention to commemorate his life and work.

17 The first topic of the newsreel was, for example, a football match between France and Yugoslavia, the first leg of the quarter-final for the European championship. For this clip, see Les Actualités Françaises: “Football. Championnat d’Europe des Nations. Quart de Finale: France–Yougoslavie,” April 9, 1968, accessed February 25, 2017, <<http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE86001165/football-video.html>>.

18 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:01’’; translation by the author of this article: “*mais.*”

19 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:03’’ – 00’:09’’.

20 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:13’’ – 00’:15’’; translation by the author of this article: “*est mort.*”

- 21 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:16’’ – 00’:18’’; translation by the author of this article: “ASSASSINÉ.”
- 22 Carson published Dr. King’s life in autobiographical form (see Clayborne Carson, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* [New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1998]). For an overview of Martin Luther King’s role in the Civil Rights Movement, see Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
- 23 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:18’’ – 00’:51’’.
- 24 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:52’’ – 00’:53’’.
- 25 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:54’’ – 00’:57’’.
- 26 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 01’:03’’ – 01’:08’’; translation by the author of this article: “*la haine ne supprime pas la haine, seul l’amour y parviendra.*”
- 27 For example, after the Charlie Hebdo shooting on January 7, 2015, photographs of the Eiffel Tower combined with this quotation from Martin Luther King Jr. circulated on the Internet.
- 28 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 01’:35’’ – 01’:44’’.
- 29 For the “I Have a Dream” speech and Dr. King’s rhetoric, see Frederik Sunnemark, *Ring out Freedom! The Voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 72–73, 221–224.
- 30 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 01’:59’’ – 02’:07’’.
- 31 The fact that the same photographs of the African American were already used at the beginning of 1968 in a similar context (the newsreel at that time was also about a flashback to America’s past racism, and the idea of a categorization of African Americans, or rather, a documentation of their supposed optical properties) reveals that existing footage has been used by the newsreels in a different context (see Les Actualités Françaises: “Messe pour les hommes noirs,” date of release, accessed July 28, 2017, <<http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE86001101/messe-pour-les-hommes-noirs-video.html>>), 00’:10’’ – 00’:30’’.
- 32 Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 3.
- 33 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 01’:50’’ – 01’:57’’.
- 34 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 02’:40’’; translation by the author of this article: “*La Marche sur Washington.*”
- 35 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 02’:43’’; translation by the author of this article: “*une réussite spectaculaire.*”
- 36 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 02’:64’’ – 02’:47’’.
- 37 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 02’:48’’ – 03’:00’’.

- 38 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 03’:01’’ – 03’:12’’.
- 39 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 03’:12’’.
- 40 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 03’:23’’ – 03’:29’’; translation by the author of this article: “*Le champion de la non-violence s’est écroulé sur le balcon de son hôtel atteint d’une balle mortelle.*”
- 41 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 03’:34’’ – 03’:38’’.
- 42 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 03’:40’’ – 03’:56’’.
- 43 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 03’:59’’; translation by the author of this article: “*Gandhi noir.*”
- 44 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 04’:08’’ – 04’:11’’; translation by the author of this article: “*Martin Luther King avait été assassiné.*”
- 45 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 04’:31’’ – 04’:42’’.
- 46 Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 04’:48’’ – 04’:55’’; translation by the author of this article: “*la haine ne supprime pas la haine, disait Martin Luther King, seul l’amour y parviendra.*”
- 47 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 05’:03’’ – 05’:10’’.
- 48 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 05’:10’’ – 05’:15’’.
- 49 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King,” 00’:03’’ – 00’:09’’.
- 50 See Les Actualités Françaises: “L’assassinat du leader noir intégrationniste, Martin Luther King;” See also Claudia Jünke: “The collective memory needs the media, because without it, the memorization and the dissemination of knowledge of the past, which creates identity, is not possible” (Claudia Jünke, *Erinnerung, Mythos, Medialität. Der spanischen Bürgerkrieg im aktuellen Roman und Spielfilm in Spanien* (Berlin: ESV, 2012), 69); translation by the author of this article: “*Das kollektive Gedächtnis [...] ist auf Medien angewiesen, ohne die die Speicherung und Verbreitung eines identitätsstiftenden Wissens über die Vergangenheit nicht möglich ist.*”
- 51 It is also a French *lieu de mémoire* as defined by Pierre Nora (see Mona Ozouf, “Liberté, égalité, fraternité,” in *Les Lieux de Mémoire* 3, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 4353–4388).
- 52 For an overview of the discourse of immigration and racism in France see Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France (XIX^e-XX^e siècle). Discours publics, humiliations privées* (Paris: Fayard, 2007).
- 53 It is clear that the history and the context of the *pieds-noirs* is quite different from the one of the African Americans (and that Algerian people are not considered as ‘blacks’ in France) — it is only an example for immigration and cultural — or racist — conflict in the history of France. For French racism in the context of the immigration wave after the Algerian War see Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France*, here: 537–578. Bouamama and Tévanian explain the development of racism in France after the decolonization (see Saïd Bouamama, Pierre Tévanian, “Peut-on

parler d'un racisme post-colonial? (1961–2006),” in *Culture coloniale en France. De la Révolution française à nos jours* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2008), 651–661.

- ⁵⁴ Morel de Vindé and Charles Gilbert Terray, *La déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, mise à la portée de tout le monde, et comparée avec les vrais principes de toute Société* (Lille: C. L. de Boubiers, 1790), 24–26; translation by the author of this article: “*Tous les Hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits.*” Neither does that mean that an idea of superiority never existed in France, nor that blacks always had equal rights (for example, in the colonies) — but the demand for equality exists.
- ⁵⁵ Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 194.