

**Performing Gender, Performing the Past: Memories of
French Colonialism in French and Algerian
Literatures Post-1962**

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Abstract

This thesis examines examples of post-1962 cultural production in French (literature, theatre, film) from France and Algeria which contribute to the cultural memory of French colonialism in Algeria and its various transnational legacies. It develops recent theories of the transnational and transcultural nature of memory, that I call ‘connective’ memory, to define the ways in which memories are not simply discrete or self-contained but can forge connections with other histories and remembering subjects. The major focus of the thesis will be to show how ‘connective’ cultural memory, as an act of cultural imagination, is gendered. Although memory studies *and* gender theory have both undergone ‘performative turns’ in the last three decades, there has been no sustained effort to consider the intersecting performativity of gender and memory.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. After an introduction to the historical and theoretical background to this thesis, each chapter is a case study and detailed narrative analysis which explores how the interactions of memory and gender in French and Algerian cultural production are inflected in different ways with various transnational dynamics and political outcomes. The first chapter analyses Assia Djebar’s cinematic and written works to demonstrate performative strategies for articulating Algerian women’s memories outside nationalist forms of commemoration. The second chapter shifts the focus onto how gender can be a framework for the transcolonial movement of memory, in this case through an analysis of H el ene Cixous’s transposition of colonial memory from Algeria to India. The third chapter draws attention to the implicit naturalisation of masculine perspectives in certain ‘connective’ narratives of memory via a close literary analysis of biographical and fictional works by Ahmed Kalouaz. The fourth chapter examines Malika Mokeddem’s performative reinvention of gendered norms in her novels

set in the Mediterranean, where memory is gendered but plays a role in highlighting political responsibility in the present. The final chapter analyses three novels by Nina Bouraoui in which memory, as an affective engagement with the past, can be acquired and produced through performative articulations of masculinity and femininity. Overall, this thesis suggests that performative gender is central, not additional, to our understandings of 'connective' forms of cultural memory.

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Introduction: Gendering Connective Memory

0.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on two intersecting concepts; on the one hand, the fluid ‘connectivity’ of memory narratives in cultural production and, on the other hand, the performative gendering of cultural memory. The notion of ‘connective’ memory refers to a growing area of memory studies that examines how cultural memory moves across divides of national group, religion, and ethnicity. In this thesis, ‘connective’ memory provides a framework for understanding how cultural memories of French colonialism in Algeria overlap and intersect productively with Holocaust memory and other sites of colonial trauma in postcolonial literatures in French from France and Algeria.¹ This thesis aims to add new meaning to this significant ‘connective’ development in French-language cultural production, by shifting the focus onto questions of performative gender as theorised by Judith Butler (1990). Through the analysis of a selected corpus of texts, it considers how the performative and imaginative re-enactment of the past in cultural production also reinforces and subverts gendered inflections of power and norms.

The corpus analysed in this thesis consists of a range of literary and cultural production (novels, films, theatre) in French by Assia Djebar (1936-2015), H  l  ne Cixous (1937-), Ahmed Kalouaz (1952-), Malika Mokeddem (1949-), and Nina Bouraoui (1967-). These texts shed light on the gendered frameworks, structures, and hierarchies that underpin the construction and transmission of memories concerning French colonialism in Algeria. My thesis is based on the principle that cultural production by writers, filmmakers, and other artists actively fabricates a collective memory pertaining

¹ In this thesis, I refer to the ‘post-colonial’ as a temporal marker. However, the unhyphenated version of ‘postcolonial’ will be used as a conceptual and theoretical category.

to French colonialism in ways that, as Patrick Crowley suggests, ‘differ from, but sometimes complement, the work that historians, anthropologists and political scientists undertake to construct studies of past and present that draw upon archives and interviews’ (2017: 3). Ann Rigney and Astrid Erll have discussed literature as a medium in its own right for the production of collective memory. In other words, literature is not a passive channel by which remembrance comes into being, but actively, and self-consciously, makes ‘remembrance observable’ (2006: 113). Kaoutar Harchi has demonstrated how ‘la valorisation littéraire’ of Francophone Algerian writers such as Kateb Yacine, Assia Djebar, Rachid Boudjedra, Boualem Sansal, and Kamal Daoud has been instrumentalised during the public ‘luttres mémorielles’ (2017: 83) regarding France’s colonial history. My selection of authors is based on the assertion that their texts make the process of remembering colonialism ‘observable’ (Rigney and Erll 2006: 113), rather than how their authorial identities have been mobilised in memory debates. My methodology consists of comparatively examining a selection of texts by each author, in a close narrative analysis, to show how they performatively re-enact the memory of colonialism in connective and gendered ways.

This introduction will establish the historical and theoretical basis for looking at the intersecting relationship of French and Algerian cultural memory and gender theory in new ways. I will consider the troubled trajectory of colonial memory in France, alongside the growing field of memory studies. I will then outline scholarly responses to how women’s memories have been represented in postcolonial memory narratives and cultural production. The importance of ‘connective’ memory will then be established for my argument, distinguishing it from ‘competitive’ frameworks of memory. I will also address feminist approaches to memory and the overlooked category of gender in studies of ‘connective memory’. Finally, I will suggest that focusing on performativity in relation

to both gender and memory opens up new perspectives on the circulation of memory across cultural and national borders. Overall, it will be established that, although indebted to Francophone postcolonial studies and feminist studies of women's writing, this thesis will develop a gendered perspective of cultural memory in postcolonial France and Algeria which is situated in the growing field of 'connective' memory studies.²

0.2 Remembering and Forgetting Colonialism

The late 20th century saw a boom in 'memory' as an intellectual field of study, in which the histories of France played a significant role. The influential 1971 documentary *Le Chagrin et la pitié* re-examined collective and individual memory of the Occupation, opening up difficult questions regarding French collaboration and the Vichy regime. This memory work on the Second World War was continued by Henry Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (1987) and signalled historical interest in how collective cultures selectively remember *and forget* over time. Pierre Nora's extensive study *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984) is a seminal work in the study of memory and French cultural identity. Nora argues that 'lieux de mémoire' are crystallised spaces of commemoration and memory. 'Lieux de mémoire' are both physical 'sites' and cultural 'sites' of memory in the form of monuments, song, iconography, and historical figures. Significantly, for Nora, 'lieux de mémoire' proliferate when a collectivity can no longer *organically* remember, signalling an 'effondrement central de notre mémoire [française]' (1984: xvii).

² For developments in the study of French language literature from the perspective of postcolonialism see *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* (Forsdick and Murphy 2003), *Memory, Empire and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism* (Hargreaves 2005), *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde* (Hargreaves, Forsdick, and Murphy 2010), *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature, and the Maghreb* (Barclay 2011), *From Francophonie to World Literature in French: Ethics, Poetics, and Politics* (Migraine-George 2013).

An acceleration in public debates concerning French colonialism took place in the 1990s, with belated historical attention particularly focused on French Algeria and its demise after the long and bloody Algerian War of Independence, otherwise known as the Algerian Revolution (1954-62). For some commentators, this belated recognition constituted a Freudian 'return' of repressed memory. Anne Donadey (1996) draws a parallel with Henry Rousso's study to describe a so-called 'Algeria Syndrome', in which the prevalence of Occupation and World War Two memory represses a working through of the controversies and wounds associated with the Algerian War. The histories of France, as a nation which has both undergone brutal occupation, but has also been complicit in mass deportation and atrocious colonial exploitation, are particularly apt for the study of how different memory narratives circulate alongside and against each other (Sanyal 2015: 10).

Since the profound rupture of Algerian Independence and the subsequent exodus of *pieds-noirs*, Algerian Jews, and *harkis* to France, different communities on both sides of the Mediterranean have politicised memory in an ongoing struggle 'to be "heard" at different times and in distinct ways' (Aissaoui and Eldridge 2017: 2). *Pieds-noirs* groups and activists in France have successfully produced and circulated a 'meta-memory' of Algeria 'premised on a canon of historical and cultural narratives' which continues to resonate in postcolonial identity politics today (Eldridge 2016: 48). Memories of colonial atrocities on metropolitan soil slowly emerged with the high profile trial of former Chief of Parisian Police and Vichy civil servant, Maurice Papon (1997-8) who orchestrated the deportation of Jews from Bordeaux, as well as the violent massacre of peacefully protesting Algerians in Paris on 17 October 1961 (House and MacMaster 2006). Ostensibly, colonial memory is based on the recognition of various histories of victimisation that circulate within particular identity groups through repeated traditions

and cultural articulation (Jan Assmann 2011: 8). For prominent historian of France and Algeria, Benjamin Stora, this has triggered ‘une guerre des mémoires’, in which public discourse is constructed by a competitive logic of a ‘surenchère victimaire’ (2007: 46). This discursive war becomes particularly dangerous when the recognition of one memory ‘débouche sur la négation de la souffrance des autres’ (74). This competitive logic also has gendered consequences. According to Jim House and Neil MacMaster, despite the growing visibility of forms of colonial memory concerning the Algerian War of Independence in public discourse at the beginning of the 20th century, the role of women in memory activism continued to be marginalised. They suggest that the masculinisation of memory work can be understood through the unquestioned centrality of ‘the male-dominated language of “younger brothers” and “fathers”’ within the Algerian family and migrant communities (2006: 326).

0.3 Gender and Colonial Memory

As the title of this thesis suggests, the focus of this study is not just to consider cultural representations of colonial memory, but to consider how this cultural memory is inflected by gendered tropes and imaginaries. Colonialism, as the physical, spiritual, and cultural occupation and erosion of one group of people by another, has been imagined as a symbolic form of rape and emasculation by both coloniser and colonised. Edward Saïd’s invaluable work in *Orientalism* (1978) has shown how the French colonial imagination feminised and sexualised the ‘Arab Oriental’ ‘to be a puppet in the eyes of the world’ (2003: 312) justifying the masculine colonial intervention of the ‘mission civilisatrice’. Frantz Fanon reimagined this gendered trope in anti-colonial discourse, by equating the bodies of Algerian women with national territory and cultural heritage. He envisaged anti-colonial struggle as the fight to regain control over the bodies of Algerian women:

Dans le programme colonialiste, c'est à la femme que revient la mission historique de bousculer l'homme algérien [...] c'est à la fois conquérir un pouvoir réel sur l'homme et posséder les moyens pratiques, efficaces, de déstructurer la culture algérienne. (Fanon 2011: 21)

Women and their bodies are central to the defeat of colonialism, according to Fanon.³ Whereas this may seem to convey the impressive power and agency of Algerian women, Fanon's 'woman as nation' metaphor is a familiar foundational trope of the European nation-state. As Nira Yuval-Davis's ground-breaking work on *Gender and Nation* has demonstrated, in nationalist discourse women are represented as the 'symbolic border guards and as embodiments of the collectivity, while at the same time being its cultural reproducers' (1997: 23). This 'woman-as-nation' metaphor has echoed throughout Algerian cultural production, becoming a trope of the cultural memory of Algerian Independence. Kateb Yacine's eponymous *Nedjma* (1956) is often associated with the longed-for but violated Algerian nation.⁴ In chapter one, my analysis of Djébar's representation of women's memory of the independence struggle will reflect this tension between the representation of women and the reduction of women to national symbols.

³ Neil MacMaster has characterised this as 'Fanonist feminism' which liberates women 'to fulfil her domesticated destiny as wife and mother, a destiny made sacred through its core function of guarding the holy nation' (2009: 341), rather than empowering Algerian women as agents of a new socialist nation. Rita Faulkner goes as far as to suggest that Fanon 'tries to get into the mind of the young Algerian woman, but perhaps he projects some of the colonized male view' (1996: 849) resulting in a 'cultural confusion', whereby the 'woman-as-nation' metaphor equates the rape of women with national humiliation. See also Sharpley-Whiting (1998).

⁴ Kathryn Lanham teaches *Nedjma* alongside the writings of Assia Djébar to stress the objectification and symbolic alignment of women with the nationalist cause in which *Nedjma* 'is both the object of male desire and the archetypical image of the Algerian nation the protagonists yearn to bring into being; over the course of the novel, she is exploited, silenced, and constrained' (2017: 95). For others, *Nedjma* is a 'living symbol' (Woodhull 1993a: 51) of a hopeful Algerian nationhood which also reflects how the fate of Algerian women hung in the balance of Algerian Independence. Edwige Talbayev reads *Nedjma*'s exile to the Tunisian island of Djerba as an example of 'the heroine's continuous mobility out of her Algerian confinement' (2017: 70).

The place of women in the postcolonial nation is a major theme of critical analyses of women's literature from and about Algeria.⁵ Studies have frequently characterised post-Independence Algeria as a regressive period for gender parity, enforced by the oppressive 'silencing' of Algerian women.⁶ Scholarship around women's writing has tended to respond to this 'silencing' by privileging particular forms of feminine experience in the Maghreb, in particular the notion of veiling, voice, and gaze.⁷ Recent works have nuanced our understanding of how women's memories of colonialism have been both marginalised *and* instrumentalised in the construction of dominant narratives in Algeria. Natalya Vince's *Our Fighting Sisters* (2015) offers an oral history by former *mujahidat* (women veterans of the Algerian Revolution) who actively participated in the dominant narratives of post-1962 Algerian nation-building, but who were also materially and discursively disadvantaged during the post-Independence period.⁸ Vince's study offers a valuable oral history that centres on the voices of female veterans rather than the national pantheon of masculine heroes, while also critiquing dominant historical and

⁵ Writing by women from the Maghreb is a vast, polyphonic, and heterogeneous field and deeply inflected by the gendered legacies of colonialism. See Sadiqi et al. *Women Writing Africa: The Northern Region* (2009) for examples ranging from the 4th century BC in Greek to contemporary writing in Arabic and French, Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke's anthology *Opening the Gate: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing* (1992), and Jean Déjeux *La littérature féminine de langue française au Maghreb* (1994) which included a dictionary of Maghrebi women authors as of 1994.

⁶ The betrayal of the Revolution, in which at least 10,949 women participated (Vince 2015: 18), was epitomised by the passing of the sexist *Code de la famille* in 1984. Feminist writing and politics in the post-Independence period have been discussed extensively by commentators such as Miriam Cooke (1989), Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas (1990), Winifred Woodhull (1993b), Marnia Lazreg (2000), Anne-Marie Nahlofsky (2010), and Zahia Smail Salhi (2004, 2010). Lazreg's *The Eloquence of Silence* (1994) is the first of many studies that focuses on women's silence in the wake of the traumatic memory of the Algerian War and patriarchal oppression. Silence is a major theme in artistic engagements with Algerian and *pied-noir* identity, where creative activity responds to the silences of history (Hubbell 2013: 322). For studies on women's writing in relation to war, see Frédérique Chevillot and Anna Norris's *Des Femmes écrivent la guerre* (2007) and Alison Fell's *French and Francophone Women Facing War/Les femmes face à la guerre* (2009).

⁷ Jane Evans (2010) uses the term 'tactical silence' in her study of Mokeddem's writings, to refer to silence as a means of challenging gendered-hierarchies of power. Silence and the voice is envisaged to be closely linked to the visibility of women in public spaces, of which the veil is the trope *par excellence*. Sandrine F. Teixidor (2010) explores vision and voice through the trope of the veil in the works of Djébar, Bouraoui, Mokeddem, and Moroccan feminist Fatima Mernissi. As women write, they are also deemed to be making an intervention into public discourse and thus make themselves visible. See also Miraglia (2005) and Angelo (2010).

⁸ See also Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne's oral history *Des femmes dans la guerre* (1994).

cultural narratives of Algerian women as passive victims. In their collection on ‘Gendered Memory in the Middle East and North Africa’, Sonja Hegasy and Bettina Dennerlein suggest that representations of women as “self-abandoning” and “self-forgetful” are common characteristics ‘in the making of collective memory’ which are linked to ‘highly gendered and sexualized models of national, religious, or ethnic identity’ (2012: 1). Ayşe Gul Altınay and Andrea Pető have also argued that it is important to be wary of an uncritical approach to ‘unsilencing’ in feminist memory work. In their study of gendered memories of war, ‘a crude “silencing/unsilencing” framework’ risks assuming that women’s memories of wars are undifferentiated from one another and categorically different from men’s’ and overlooks how ‘silence can, at times, be a form of resistance and self-defence’ (2016: 12). My analysis of women’s memory narratives will be situated in this critical response to the oppressive patriarchy of postcolonialism, but will consider how women writers variously appropriate and reinvent gendered tropes of Maghrebi women to stress the agency and plurivocality of women’s responses to the past.

Ranjana Khanna’s key study on the figure of woman in both colonial and independent Algeria also challenges some of these tropes of veiling and silencing in a theoretical and philosophical argument for ‘feminist internationalist reading practice in pursuit of justice’ (2008: 238). Her study examines some of the most iconic images of Algerian womanhood which feature in the globally circulated film *La Bataille d’Alger* (1966). This film famously stages the actions of three members of the urban network of ‘poseuses de bombes’ during the battle of Algiers from 1956-7. In a central scene, these women disguise themselves with the tropes of *pied-noir* femininity and evade detection from French soldiers at the Casbah check points. The women engage in an elaborate and

sophisticated act of code-switching, in which they knowingly and performatively enact the norms of *pied-noir* femininity in their encounters with the soldiers' gaze (Figure 1).⁹



Figure 1: (La Bataille d'Alger 1966)



Figure 2: (La Bataille d'Alger 1966)

According to Khanna, the women of the film are ‘a liminal force’ who cut through the form of the film as documentary, political cinema to ‘pose questions concerning their role

⁹ Natalya Vince has pointed out that, in reality, these women already dressed in Western clothes ‘on the basis of crude judgements of their physical appearance, could ‘pass’ as European without any dressing up. What they were disguising when they transported weapons and planted bombs was not their physical appearance or cultural identity but their political engagement’ (2015: 82).

in the nation to come' (2008: 122). Later in the film, the manipulation of coded Algerian femininity is reiterated when Jaffa and Ali La Pointe disguise themselves in white *haïk* (Algerian veil) to hide their guns and attempt to escape the encroaching French military (Figure 2). Their gender-bending ruse fails, however, and the soldier's gaze cuts through the veiled screen of their disguise. *La Bataille d'Alger*, one of the most widely circulated texts about the Algerian Revolution, is an example where gender performativity seems to play an important role in the representation of anti-colonial struggle.

Novelists in France have developed interesting approaches to women's memory of colonialism through the themes of complicity and perpetration. Works by French writer Leïla Sebbar, for example, are deeply concerned with her autobiographical situation between French and Algerian histories, having an Algerian father and a French mother. In *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père* (2003), she writes about her father's experiences as an Algerian teacher of French in colonial Algeria. She associates this liminal legacy with her mastery of French, the language of the coloniser, which is nonetheless touched by the musicality of Arabic although she cannot understand it. In her novel *L'Empreinte de l'ange* (1998), Nancy Huston overlays the memory of sexual violence during the Second World with the intersecting histories of anti-colonial activism in France during the Algerian War of Independence and the deportation of Paris's Jewish population. The novel confronts the uncomfortable themes of complicity, perpetration, and victimisation through the memories of its main character Saffie, a young German woman living in Paris who has an affair with Andras, a Hungarian Jewish resident of the Marais.¹⁰ Patricia

¹⁰ The works of Sebbar have frequently been read comparatively with other writers in this thesis, namely Assia Djebar and Nina Bouraoui, in relation to women's writing and memory (Merini 2000; Rice 2012). However, her works have not been included in this corpus. As I make clear later in this introduction, I have instead selected the works of Ahmed Kalouaz (a contemporary to Sebbar) to demonstrate that gendered memory goes beyond the naturalising association of women's writing with gender in critical studies. I have not discussed the works of Nancy Huston in this thesis either, opting instead to focus on how French and Maghrebi writers participate in a 'transcolonial turn' (Harrison 2016: 103) in their representations of

Lorcin's study (2012) examines writings by European women settlers from Kenya and Algeria who actively shaped and supported colonial perspectives. These examples demonstrate how gendered memories can subvert the tropes of feminised victimisation and reflect on questions of complicity. I will develop this question of complicity and gendered memory in the opening and closing chapters of this thesis. I will suggest in the opening chapter of this thesis that the literary and cinematic works of Djébar engage performatively with the politically fraught question of commemorating women's participation in the Algerian Revolution, in ways that problematise questions of complicity and instrumentalisation. In the closing chapter, I will develop the theme of being 'on the fault line' (Barclay 2006: 146) between victim and perpetrator in Nina Bouraoui's narratives, a liminal position which she presents as inseparable from a non-binary perspective on gender.

Cultural production by women in French can also respond to and critique the mobilisation of women's subjectivities as symbolic, but passive, carriers of the national culture. Anne Berger suggests that if the feminisation of colonial subjects in the colonial experience 'se phénoménalise, se subjectivise et se psychologise pour devenir expérience de l'humiliation' (2011: 10), ironically, women are primed as ideal witnesses of colonialism. Armed with the knowledge of feminisation as humiliation, 'ne sont-elles pas [les femmes] susceptibles à ce titre de devenir, en même temps que les observatrices et les narratrices privilégiés du drame colonial, le site de nouvelles formes de subjectivation, véritablement « post-coloniales »?' (2011: 10). Zineb Ali Benali highlights this when she argues that a 'histoire genrée' of Algeria cannot be limited to the entry of a few exceptional women into the pantheon of Algerian heroes 'à la fois signes

colonial memory. In Harrison's study, this refers to the way Algerian writers have engaged with *other* sites of colonial conflict, such as Israel-Palestine.

de reconnaissance et système d'appartenance' (2011: 94). Rather, the task is to deconstruct 'ce qui semble unifié et ne pas bouger, de ne pas accepter les vérités toutes faites et autres poncifs (la soumission des femmes dans le monde traditionnel, etc.)' (Ibid). My own argument concerning how gendered memory is articulated by Algerian and French authors will take this invaluable work by postcolonial feminist critics into account. The task is not to highlight exceptional moments of women in history, but to show how the memory of colonialism is actively shaped by these gendered imaginaries.

0.4 From Competitive to 'Connective' Memory

If memories of French colonialism have been imagined in terms of 'une guerre des mémoires' (Stora 2007) or 'luttres mémorielles' (Harchi 2017: 83), in which women's memories remain a marginalised faction, this thesis will focus on 'connective' articulations of memory that move beyond an antagonistic logic of competing memory groups. In recent years, a new consensus in memory studies has focused on memory as a process of circulation, travel, and migration 'rather than as a reified object' (Bond, Craps, Vermeulen 2017: 1). This focus on the 'unbound' characteristic of memory has developed alongside transnational and transcultural perspectives of memory. Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson define transcultural memory as the movement of 'commemorative tropes [which] work to inform the representation of diverse events and traumas beyond national or cultural boundaries, bridging – but not negating – spatial, temporal and ideational differences' (2014: 17). For Chiara De Cesari and Anne Rigney, transnational optics allow 'memory to be visualized differently: not as horizontal spread or as points or regions on a map but as a dynamic operating at multiple, interlocking scales and involving conduits, intersections, circuits, and articulations' (2014: 6). This thesis will draw on the studies of both transnational and transcultural memory, since they are both informed by

each other. Where they differ can be imagined as a question of scale. From the positions cited above, we can surmise that transcultural memory, on the one hand, refers to tropes of commemoration which can be shared by, or move across, different national and cultural boundaries. Transnational memory, on the other hand, considers the movement of memory in interconnected flows and currents which are unrestricted by geographical borders.

Without losing sight of how important works on transnational and transcultural memory differ, I posit that we can use the term ‘connective’ to describe this concern for intersecting and knotting temporalities and spaces in memory narratives. For example, Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal, and Max Silverman shift the notion of ‘lieux de mémoire’ to develop the notion of ‘nœuds de mémoire’ and posit that “knotted” in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialization (whether at the local or national level) and ‘identitarian reduction’ (Rothberg 2010: 7). Forms of ‘connective’ memory can be understood as distinct from a perspective that compares or contrasts different histories which risks relativising different forms of victimisation. For example, Marianne Hirsch has suggested that ‘connective’ rather than ‘comparative’ Holocaust scholarship ‘enables different histories to illuminate each other and to explore their interconnections without implying that they are comparable’ (Altınay and Pető 2015: 389). Importantly, Hirsch adds that gender can be ‘one of the points of connection among these histories of violence’ (Ibid). Hirsch’s arguments concerning the role of gender in the development of connective memory will be explored in more detail in the next section concerning feminist memory work.

Michael Rothberg critiques the ‘zero-sum logic’ of competitive memory (2009: 20), stressing instead the *multidirectional* process of memory, where memories are not

self-contained objects to be owned by particular groups but ‘subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative’ (2009: 3). ‘Multidirectional memory’ is not unique to discourses concerning French and Algerian cultural memory, and Rothberg explores examples of African-American and Caribbean memory work by W.E.B. Du Bois and Aimé Césaire, demonstrating the scope of this ‘connective’ approach. Nonetheless, the Algerian war plays a privileged role in Rothberg’s development of how memories of trauma from the 20th century mutually inform each other and can be ‘a spur to unexpected acts of empathy and solidarity; indeed multidirectional memory is often the very ground on which people construct and act upon visions of justice’ (2009: 19). Max Silverman endorses Rothberg’s multidirectional perspective, and uses the model of the ‘palimpsest’ in French literature and cinema to demonstrate the intersecting memories of decolonisation and the Holocaust. Palimpsestic memory refers to ‘the superimposition and productive interaction of different inscriptions and [...] spatializations of time central to the work of memory’ (2013: 4). More than an aesthetic characteristic of literatures and cinema that deal with the ‘complex process of interconnection, interaction, substitution, and displacement of memory traces’ (2013: 29), the palimpsestic interconnections of disparate memories can develop ‘political and ethical lessons’ (2013: 29) that go beyond ‘a banal culture of empathy which is often more self-than other-oriented’ (169).

‘Connective’ theories of memory have also developed our understanding of the mediated nature of memory. As Susannah Radstone argues, even privately experienced personal memories are mediated ‘by means of complex psychical and mental processes’ (2005: 135). Focusing on how memory is mediated by cultural products is essential for understanding how seemingly natural forms of memory selection and forgetting are underpinned by gendered hierarchies of power. A foundational work of ‘connective’

memory, Hirsch's *Family Frames* (1997) focused on photography's role in the production of a 'postmemory' of the Holocaust, where the children of survivors recall the memories of their parents and grandparents as their *own* memories. Postmemory is the belated articulation of a memory, of an experience never lived by the remembering subject. Hirsch has also theorised how postmemory can be extended beyond the framework of family transmission to create 'affiliation across lines of difference' (2012: 21). Chapter five will explore the more detailed ekphrastic description of photography as a medium for gendered memory transmission in Bouraoui's work. From the photographic to the cinematic, Alison Landsberg's work on transnational memories of the Holocaust in American cinema has shown how mass media actively shaped identity politics for migrants settling in the United States in the 20th century. She suggests that the memories of others can be 'worn' as a 'prosthetic' memory (2004) or affectively experienced (2015) by spectators who engage with these memories through mass media. In chapter two, I will consider Cixous's theatrical depiction of Indian decolonisation in terms of 'prosthetic' memory and how gender facilitates the act of wearing the memory of others.

This thesis will also deal with the important questions of appropriation and power in the transfer of memory between disparate historical contexts and gendered subjects. In her work on complicity and perpetration in transnational Holocaust memory, Debarati Sanyal explores the 'folding' of memories into each other to suggest that '[a]rt can be the site of an ethical encounter with other(s)' memories, provided we remain attuned to our complicity' (Sanyal 2015: 16). Sanyal suggests that theorists maintain the 'multidirectional ethics' (Ibid) of this connective gesture between disparate memories while recognising the dangers of banal empathy. This is particularly dangerous considering the rhetoric of exceptionalism surrounding events of extreme and totalitarian violence, namely the Holocaust. Silverman and Griselda Pollock's work on

‘concentrationary memory’ has carefully negotiated sensitive ethical demands in Holocaust remembrance, to argue that the ‘concentrationary universe’ can appear outside the context of the Nazi concentration camps of Europe (2011, 2014). The development of my argument regarding the ethical demands of connective memory is reflected in the sequences of chapters two, three, and four. In chapter two, I examine the political limitations of Cixous’s gendered transnational memory from Algeria to India. Chapter three considers how transcolonial memory is imagined as a kind of empathetic ‘fraternity’, which is naturalised as a masculine form of solidarity. In chapter four, I examine the works by Mokeddem in terms of a feminist politics of empathetic memory, which remembers traumas of the past *alongside* a critique of violence in the present. Therefore, this thesis seeks to trace how a critical understanding of gendered memory, as a self-conscious and performative process, may allow for an empathetic politics of ‘connective’ memory to develop.

0.5 Feminist Memory Work

It is also the aim of this thesis to examine how literary forms of remembrance reveal the overlooked place of gender in ‘connective’ theories of memory. In 2002, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith highlighted the uneven development in theories of gender and memory since ‘scholars working in other areas of cultural and collective memory [...] have only recently begun to engage with feminist theoretical analyses of gender’ (2002: 3-4). Ten years later, however, Hirsch suggested that accelerated developments in memory studies had ‘not yet resulted in a developed theoretical elaboration on memory and gender, or on a sustained effort to theorize memory from feminist and queer perspectives’ (2012: 16-7). She argued that ‘although feminist/queer scholarship and memory studies have shared a number of central preoccupations and political commitments, the two fields have

developed along parallel and mostly nonintersecting tracts over the last two and a half decades' (15). It is also necessary to underline that, although there has been work on women's memory and gendering of memory technologies (Reading 2016), there has been little work on the relation of gender theory to 'connective' approaches in memory studies.

Like other memory theorists who consider 'connective' modes of memory transmission, Erll cautions against the 'additive project' of research in memory studies, which has extended the scope of memory studies in an ever-expanding range of historical and geo-political contexts, as more 'forgotten' histories are revealed through memory work. As Erll puts it, this risks reducing memory to 'a mere "stencil"' which can be applied indiscriminately to a broad range of contexts (2011: 4). Therefore, this thesis does not approach gender to simply add another competing category in the 'guerre des mémoires'. Instead, it considers how the structure of memory reiterates or subverts gendered hierarchies of power. As Hirsch and Smith stated, 'cultural memory is always about the distribution of and contested claims to power. What a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender' (2002: 6). This thesis seeks to illustrate the centrality of gendered power dynamics in texts which respond to a cultural memory of French colonialism.

My work is indebted to, but stands in contrast to, studies of feminist memory work which have tended to focus on sexual difference in socio-linguistic, historical, and political studies of women's life writing or oral history (Neubauer and Geyer-Ryan 2000; Leydesdorff, Passerini and Thompson 2005). The invaluable 'gynocentric work' (Reading 2016: 33) of feminist memory has placed women's histories and stories at the centre of historical or commemorative work, as a counter-mnemonic discourse. Similarly, these works have focused on the development of 'new mnemonic technologies or practices' to gender memory in novel ways (31). In this way, feminist memory work

responded to the ways that women's voices are silenced and their memories marginalised. In their aptly entitled *Different Horrors/Same Hell* (2013), Myrna Goldenberg and Amy Shapiro focus on the history of women during the Holocaust who have been marginalised from dominant Holocaust discourse. Their study of the gendered politics behind the treatment and survival strategies of Jewish women during the Holocaust demonstrates the absurdity of claims that studying the suffering of a particular group of Holocaust victims can delegitimise the sufferings of another (2013: 129). In their book *Gendered War, Gendered Memories*, Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető acknowledge the 'gender-blindness' of memory studies and that 'major texts in collective memory studies rarely engage gender, let alone the growing literature on gender and war/militarism' (2016: 7).

Hirsch's theorisation of postmemory is the only theory of connective memory that stems from an explicit feminist engagement with empathetic aesthetics and politics (2012: 99). In her works, remembering is more than a moral imperative characterised by the slogans of post-war human rights discourse such as 'Never again' or 'We will remember them'. Postmemory is theorised as an active, imaginative participation in the belated memory of traumatic events. In Hirsch's configuration, the politics of empathy is foregrounded on a practise of actively and imaginatively engaging with the past. Postmemory is, thus, aligned with the practices of citation and supplementarity that characterise other 'posts', such as poststructuralism, postcolonialism, postmodernism (2012: 5). She also suggests that this imaginative production can reproduce gendered tropes in memory and reflect the different distribution of labour in memory work by different gendered subjects. For example, Hirsch has studied the 'feminization and infantilization' of victims in the post-Shoah works by visual artists (Hirsch 2012: 143). Hirsch's reading of the mobilisation of Holocaust aesthetics in contemporary artistic imagination and political discourse demonstrates the continued resonance of such

gendered stereotypes in the representation of victimisation (feminine) and perpetration (masculine). Cultural production which focuses on the victimisation of the most vulnerable social categories, typically children and women, may actively repeat the symbolic value of femininity as silent, passive, and victimised.

On the one hand, Hirsch re-affirms that, when the postmemory of the Holocaust continues to be shaped by sons and men, it is important to highlight the role of mothers and daughters in postmemory. She notes that the postmemorial act of creation and transmission is gendered because ‘the position of the daughter as historical agent is not the same as that of the son’ (2012: 98). On the other hand, Hirsch adds the caveat that studying postmemory after the Holocaust from a feminist perspective means more than highlighting ‘female witnesses of the first and second generation, but also to think about a *feminist mode of knowing this past*’ (2012: 98, added emphasis). Her argument demonstrates that thinking about gender and memory requires a revision of the structures of knowledge which make the transmission of memory intelligible in the present. It also has implications for transmission of memory *beyond* the frames of the nuclear family and, therefore, the gendered roles within the family. Postmemory can develop forms of kinship with gendered others that transgress divides of nationality, religion, and ethnicity. In other words, memories do not just circulate among subjects that identify with each other, or recognise each other as kin. Memories can travel across categories of difference. I discuss this transgressive circulation of gendered memory in chapter four and five. In Malika Mokeddem’s *N’Zid* (2001), her Algerian protagonist acquires and imagines the memories of a Lebanese woman through a shared feminine, Mediterranean subjectivity. Nina Bouraoui frames gender in *Garçon manqué* (2000) and *Sauvage* (2011) as a performative and fluid way of recalling the traumatic past of decolonisation in Algeria, while disturbing the binary of feminine victimisation and masculine perpetration.

Studies concerning gender and memory have developed our understanding of how women have been marginalised and effaced from the dominant narratives of some of the most devastating historical traumas of the 20th century. What remains to be explored in more detail is how the act of bearing witness to women's memories reproduces or subverts hierarchies of gender in the present. This thesis will examine fictions of memory narratives in the broader framework of performative, creative, and constantly shifting categories of *gender* to demonstrate that, just as we cannot make the assumption that memory *belongs* to a specific generational, national, religious, or racialised group (Rothberg 2009: 5), these 'connective' memory narratives are facilitated by, respond to, and critique gendered structures of hierarchy. While a major component of feminist memory work aims to rehabilitate the voices of women as a means to 'correct' history, I follow Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone in their querying of the memory-as-contestation model. As they argue, it is problematic to appeal to memory for the 'truth' of what 'really happened' since it sets up a dangerous binary opposition between the authenticity of 'experience' as memory and the 'distortion' of memory through ideological lenses. Instead, they insist that 'the past is constituted in narrative, always represented, always constructed' (2003: 2). In gendered terms, this means going beyond questions of gender difference and engaging with memory from the feminist perspective that, as Hirsch puts it, is concerned with 'not just what stories are told or forgotten, or what images are seen or suppressed, but how those stories are told and how those images are constructed' (Paulesc 2011: 175).

Instead of limiting my analysis to identification of gendered stereotypes in the memories of French colonialism, I will apply a gendered analysis to my corpus in order to examine how gendered structures support and limit the 'connective' impulse of cultural memory. For example, at one point in *Multidirectional Memory*, Rothberg examines the

interface of gender and multidirectional memory.¹¹ In William Gardner Smith's novel *The Stone Face* (1963), the character Maria, a Jewish-Polish actress and Holocaust survivor, tries to forget and dissociate from a memory of the concentration camps. For Rothberg, Smith employs a 'gendered logic of memory and activism that sacrifices the anamnestic links of solidarity to the urgent temporality of politics' (2009: 230). The process of anamnesis is shown to produce solidarity with the past, but is defined according to a gendered logic. Rothberg identifies a gendered binary between the passivity of forgetting and the activity of the political present through Maria, who is 'marked by her feminine-coded desire to disappear into the masquerade of her theatrical persona' (2009: 263).

Although Rothberg does not offer a critique of the 'feminine-coded desire to disappear', his analysis of *The Stone Face* demonstrates how gendered imaginaries support other binaries of activity and passivity in memory. Here, masculinity is presented as the default subjectivity of connective remembrance. Therefore, this thesis will question how gender and memory are intimately connected at a structural level, which naturalises 'ungendered' perspectives with masculinity, and 'gendered' perspectives with femininity. My decision to study a selection of works by Ahmed Kalouaz in chapter three is based on the fact that he does not explicitly engage with a gendered perspective of colonial memory. I posit that this demonstrates how a gendered approach to 'connective' memory may be a useful lens through which to examine how cultural production is implicitly inflected by gender. In selecting this corpus of texts, which includes a range of masculine, feminine, and fluidly gendered perspectives, I do not attempt to limit the frame of

¹¹ This takes place in the chapter entitled 'A Tale of Three Ghettos: Race, Gender, and "Universality" After October 17, 1961', in which gender is considered as the 'third ghetto' (Rothberg 2009: 227). This is based on Marguerite Duras's 1961 *France-Observateur* article, entitled 'Les deux ghettos', referring to the Holocaust, on the one hand, and the violence of the Algerian War of Independence and the 17 October 1961 massacre, on the other.

‘connective’ memory. Rather, as in my discussion of implicit gendering in chapter three shows, the gendering of ‘connective’ memory, by its nature, is not exclusive to works that explicitly engage with questions of gender identity.

0.6 Performative Turns

Throughout this introduction to gendered memory of French colonialism in Algeria, I have framed memory as a kind of narrative, rather than a neurological process by which knowledge from the past is recalled in the present. In recent years, the ‘performative turn’ in History and Memory Studies has paid attention to the ways memory is staged, re-enacted, and performed. Jay Winter suggests that the performative turn challenges ‘a rigid bifurcation’ in definitions of history and memory (2010: 12) and insists on the performativity of any reconstruction of the past, whether in historical scholarship or cultural production. To remember the past is to tell a story, but also to restage the past through mediatisation and representation. According to Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik, the mediation of memory in art and popular culture actively produces the performance of memory since:

If we understand the medium as a process and not as a thing, we can argue not only that it re-mediate but that the medium itself also remembers [...] Mediated memory products can be understood as having a double mnemonic layer – that is, as being both the cultural and the medial remembrance of something. (2013: 11)

In other words, cultural production does more than only represent memory; the representation *does* memory.

My selection of texts for study in this thesis is based on the assertion that they all respond to the performativity of memory in ways that support the ‘connective’ impulse

of transnational memory. In a discussion of W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Michael Rothberg suggests that the novel engages with memory, not only at the level of what the novel *says*, but what it *does*, 'for what it does [...] involves new forms of memory via intertextuality and a metonymical narrative technique, even at sites of emptiness and forgetting' (2013: 42). For Rothberg, this is also a multidirectional approach as the intertextual performativity of the text, involves 'new layering and constellations of time and place' (2013: 43). In chapter two of this thesis, in particular, I suggest that Cixous's writing demonstrates an interconnecting thread between her explicitly theatrical works that are then performed by actors, and the performativity of her memory work in her autofictional writing. I argue that beyond the narrative description of the past, the text itself can *perform* memory, by re-enacting, re-articulating, and re-imagining the past. In terms of gender, this re-articulation of the past in intertextual and metonymical narratives also has the potential to perform and subvert gender-normative practices. In the performative, multidirectional articulation of textual/cultural memory, the notion of certain narratives belonging to categories of nation, religion, and race are called into question. This thesis aims to shed light on how gendered subjectivities are also called into question.

According to Max Silverman, performative memory does not reduce various historical conjunctures to an artificial or superficial performance of the past. Rather, the performative turn has opened memory studies up to new possible interpretations and meanings in the present. Memory is presented as an encounter with various pasts across temporal and spatial moments:

The significance of the encounter between different temporal and spatial moments of trauma lies not in an understanding of history as cyclical but in the creative and transformative potential that is produced through the narrative staging of the encounter itself. (Silverman 2017: 38)

This concept of memory as an encounter will be important to my analysis in chapters four and five. In these chapters, I will draw on the work of Mireille Rosello (2005; 2006) who theorises ‘performative encounters’ of French and Maghrebi subject positions. Like Rothberg’s assertion that there has been an ‘overly rigid focus on memory competition’ (2009: 11) in the association of collective memory with particular forms of group identity, Rosello suggests that Mediterranean subject positions are overdetermined in cultural and political discourses. This establishes a ‘pre-established script’ imposing ‘the language of the encounter, the subject-positions from which each protagonist meets each other’ (Rosello 2005: 2). In my analysis of both Mokeddem’s and Bouraoui’s literary encounters, I will argue that they present performative encounters where memory narratives not only transgress the ‘pre-established scripts’ of ‘*pieds-noirs* or *harkis*, Arabs or Berber, *roumis* or settlers, terrorists or politico-financial mafia’ (Rosello 2005: 2), but also the gendered scripts that have determined these encounters.

The encounter with the past produces a creative and imaginative process which can be understood in regards to a performative theory of gendered subjectivity. Butler’s theorisation of the ‘performativity’ of gender demonstrates that gender is never stable or essential, but enacted through reiterations in the body, language, and discourse (1988, 1990, 1993, 1997a, 2004b). As Damlé and Rye point out, Anglophone feminist and queer theories have taken a long time to ‘filter through to French feminism (evidenced by the fact that it took fifteen years before Judith Butler’s otherwise hugely influential *Gender Trouble* (1990) was translated and published in France)’ (2013: 7).¹² In this seminal text,

¹² In recent years, studies on literary representations of colonial and postcolonial memory have increasingly considered queer theory and gender performativity. Claudia Gronemann and Wilfried Pasquier’s *Scènes des genres au Maghreb* (2013) explores the dual patriarchal legacies of colonialism and Arab-Islamic cultures in the Maghreb to ‘de-essentialise’ gender categories, including ‘queer’ identities. Jarod Hayes’s *Queer Nations* suggests that ‘the spectre of queerness’ haunts literature from Maghrebi nations and is closely related to anti-colonial discourse (2000: 17-8), while Andrea Durante (2008) has shown how homoerotic Moroccan novels express a liminal identity between French and Arabic languages. William J. Spurlin (2013, 2016) figures queer narratives in terms of translation across borders of languages, histories,

Butler argues that gender is not a natural attribute or an ontological category, but is, in fact, a performative action. Developing Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion that one *becomes* a woman, Butler demonstrates that gender is an 'ongoing discursive practice, [...] open to intervention and resignification':

Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the 'congealing' is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction. Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. (2006: 43)

Gender as 'congealing' conveys the notions of gender as a malleable and fluid substance, but also as a temporal phenomenon. Gender can take time to congeal, to settle, to take shape. It is regulated by a repetition of actions 'over time'. Butler states that the appearance of gender is misrecognised as an ontological essence rather than as an enactment or re-enactment *over time*.¹³ It is this notion of congealing, repetition, and duration that makes Butler's theory of gender performativity so relevant to memory studies. Simply put, if gender is an act, it is an act of memory.

However, this does not mean that each new performative action simply repeats actions from the past. The performativity of gender is reiterative and citational, so that

and culture. These engagements normally note the denial of homosexuality in Maghrebi nations where anti-sodomy laws were implemented during the colonial era (Beirne and Habib 2012: 42).

¹³ In *Bodies that Matter* (1993) Butler responded to criticisms that she had overlooked bodily materiality in her original arguments. She reduces the distance between the historicity of gender as a collective construction which is temporally, culturally, and socially situated, and the materiality of sexed bodies by suggesting that the sexed body is also historically produced, 'a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies' (1993, 1-2). She argues that the body does not naturally contain a gendered 'essence' but that the body reiterates the effects of gender.

each utterance opens up the possibility for the resignification which conforms to or contrasts with a malleable set of socio-cultural values and norms. Butler derives her theory of performativity from J.L. Austin's linguistic theory of 'performative utterance' (1962). These utterances can be understood as 'speech acts' which not only describe or report (constative utterances) but actively change and effect social reality. The 'speech act' underscores language as a site of power. Jacques Derrida extended Austin's notion of the speech act beyond Austin's specific set of examples but considers the performative as 'un trait structurel de toute marque' (1972: 385). For Butler, the performative is especially 'successful' when it appears naturalised, normative, and even authoritative. Performative action '*accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices*. It is not simply that the speech act takes place *within* a practice, but that the act is itself a ritualized practice' (1997a: 51, original emphasis). We can therefore think of performativity as a process of citational doubling in which the utterance *produces* gender but *is also a product of* gender – in other words, it is both *gendered* and *gendering*. However, as Butler claims in a lecture in 2009, 'there is no gender without this reproduction of norms that risks undoing and redoing the norm in unexpected ways, thus opening up the possibility of a remaking of gendered reality along new lines' (Butler 2009: i). Like memory, there is no accessible *origin* to gender, no discrete, specific source from which all other iterations emerge, no original to be infinitely copied and repeated. If gender depends on *reproduction* of norms and the possibility of deviation from these norms, this thesis will examine the role of memory in the *reproduction* or *destabilisation* of norms.

Despite the performative turn in both memory studies and gender and queer theory, the transmission of memory has not been explored in terms of gender performativity. However, the terms of debate that arise in relation to theories of

'connective' memory are useful for defining the intimate relationship between gender and memory. For example, Erll examines the methodological shift in memory studies in what she calls a transition from 'lieux de mémoire' to 'les voyages' and 'les mouvements de mémoire' (2011: 11), or what she coins as 'Travelling Memory' (2011). Erll designates five main frames through which to recognise travelling memory: memories can travel with what she calls '*carriers of memory*' (12) (of which the migrant, diasporic subject, or exile are examples *par excellence*); via '*media*' and technologies of memory, the '*contents*' of which 'consist in shared images and narratives' (13) that must be made and remade 'to keep them alive'; through '*practices*' of memory which seem to accelerate in the globalised and digital age; and finally and most importantly for my argument, through '*mnemonic forms*'. She defines '*mnemonic forms*' as the 'symbols, icons, or schemata' of memory which are themselves carriers of meaning. She suggests that terms such as 'Exodus', 'the Somme', or the 'fall of the Berlin wall' are examples of these figures which condense memory and make it transportable as a form of memory short-hand (13-14). Religious categories such as 'Jewish' and 'Muslim' also carry racialised concepts and condensed memory tropes that can pertain to colonial, postcolonial, and post-Shoah memory narratives.

If 'women's memory' is increasingly a term of reference in memory studies, I suggest that it can also be thought of as a 'mnemonic form' which carries with it particular meanings associated with sexual violence, domesticity, and forms of feminist resistance (Altınay and Pető 2015). Gendered categories also carry particular narratives and forms of remembrances which, in turn, reiterate and re-enact gendered norms in the present. As a 'mnemonic form', gender is less of an object of remembrance and more a structure of

transference for certain kinds of knowledge.¹⁴ I argue that performativity, *as a structure of remembrance*, cites and reiterates the past in the present. Gender, understood as the *effect of performative discourse* (Butler 1990 viii-ix), carries, but also transforms, the traces of past norms and limits to gendered experience. Therefore, I suggest that performative reiterations of gender can be considered in terms of ‘mnemonic forms’ which refers to forms of ‘knowledge, repertoires of stories and scripts, implicit memory, *bodily aspects such as habitus*, and [...] forgetting’ (Erll 2011: 14, added emphasis). In the bodily and discursive performative production of gendered effect there is *also* an act of memory, a citational gesture to the past, that draws on a repertoire of knowledge and ‘implicit memory’, often in affective or embodied ways.

0.7 Thesis Overview

This thesis is therefore situated within a complex theoretical and critical field. Bringing together established work on gender, memory and performativity, my analysis will enable the relationship between performative gender and cultural memory to be seen in new ways. Through a literary analysis of performative gender and memory in a selected corpus, it will open new perspectives on elements which have been so important to previous critical analyses of colonial memory in cultural production, such as the representation of women and the nation, the naturalisation of masculinity in dominant memory narratives, the role of the family in the production of a collective memory, and the politicisation of colonial memory in the present.

¹⁴ In chapter three, I suggest that Kalouaz’s writings on ‘connective’ memories of French colonialism in Algeria are framed as a ‘fraternity’, which will be interpreted as a gendered mnemonic *form* which carries memory across temporal and spatial differences (Erll 2011: 13).

The corpus of texts from literatures in French from France and Algeria has been chosen to elucidate the different aspects of the hitherto understudied intersecting processes of performative gender and cultural memory. The sequence of the following chapters will reflect the development of my argument that gender and memory are interconnected in cultural memory. The assertion that the symbolic representation of women develops and produces a 'histoire genrée' (Benali 2011: 94) of French colonialism will be the focus of my argumentation in chapter one. It will explore how Djébar searches for a new language for women's memory in her 'écriture de cinéma'. Her narrative form offers a critique of commemoration politics and refuses to fix the memory of women into a singular, heroic category. Here, the performativity of Djébar's restaging of women's memory opens up space to critique the gendered politics of commemoration in post-Independence Algeria.

As I will show in chapters two and three, the structure of the family is a key arena for memory transmission, which contributes to the formation of a gendered and national identity. The symbolic gendering of national identity is reflected in the socio-political valorisation of mothers and daughters as keepers of the national culture and ethno-nationalist concern for blood line.¹⁵ My analysis of Cixous's writing in chapter two will develop a feminist response to the role of gender in forms of transnational memory which challenge the role of the father-, mother-country in her autofictional writing. In contrast, her theatrical depiction of Gandhi presents him as the heroic, yet maternal, father of Indian decolonisation. Chapter three will examine, on the one hand, family as an arena of postmemory in Kalouaz's work, which also entails a renegotiation of the narrator's

¹⁵ Paul Gilroy recognises the important links of gender and nationalism with bio-politics and racism since: '[t]he unholy forces of nationalist biopolitics intersect on the bodies of women charged with the reproduction of absolute ethnic difference and the continuance of blood lines. It connects men and women, boys and girls to the larger collectivity toward which they must orient themselves if they are to acquire a Fatherland' (2004: 127).

relation to French and Algerian ‘motherlands’. On the other hand, Kalouaz’s writings also explore a transcolonial brotherhood, or ‘fraternity, in which memory transmission is framed through a shared knowledge of colonial violence. This analysis will consider how the process of gendering the nation takes place on a transnational scale, transgressing conceptual borders of Algerian, French, and ‘beur’ identities.

Chapters four and five will further develop my arguments concerning the centrality of gender performativity in transnational encounters of memory between, and beyond, France and Algeria. Chapter four will explore some of the gendered tropes and myths of the Mediterranean in two novels by Mokeddem. This gendering is shown to forge connections between disparate histories across the Mediterranean, as well as provide a feminist framework for political responsibility in the present. In chapter five, my analysis will consider how Bouraoui’s depiction of transnational memory also entails the performative expression of affective and non-binary gendered subjectivity. These two chapters seek to develop an understanding of gendered memory which articulates Maghrebi feminine experience beyond a vocabulary of silencing, veiling, and marginalisation. As in chapter one, my argument will attempt to nuance the association of women’s memory with the prevalent themes of feminine voicelessness and invisibility.

Fundamentally, this thesis seeks to show that gender performativity plays an important role in how these authors construct, mediate, and stage ‘connective’ memory. This will be explored in relation to the voices of women in specific communities, as in the case of Djébar’s works, as well as in relation to the wider transnational movements of memory across time and space as we will see in my analysis of Cixous, Kalouaz, and Mokeddem. As I will show in my analysis of Bouraoui’s writings, ‘connective’ memory narratives also destabilise presumptions and tropes associated with normative gender subjectivity. Although this thesis cannot be a comprehensive study of all the ways

that gender and memory are mutually performative, the following chapters will shed light on the relationship between gender and an empathetic politics of memory in new ways.

Chapter One: Haunting and Performative Mourning in Assia

Djebar's 'écriture de cinéma'

'La mémoire est corps de femme'

La Zerda ou les chants d'oubli (Djebar 1982)

1.1 Introduction

The Introduction to this thesis outlined the need to consider the intersecting structures of gender performativity and forms of cultural memory in literatures in French from France and Algeria. This chapter will examine the gendering of memory in works by canonical Algerian writer and filmmaker, Assia Djebar (1936-2015), who devoted her career to exploring how Algerian women articulate the past in ways that contested dominant, patriarchal narratives of both the French colonial and postcolonial Algeria.

Djebar's influence on the cultural memory of women in Algeria cannot be overstated. According to Christiane Chaulet-Achour, she was the sole 'écrivaine algérienne' from 1956 to 1976 (1998: 56) and continues to be cited as one of the most influential francophone writers and thinkers of, and from, the global south. Elected as an 'immortelle' of the *Académie française* in 2005, Djebar is widely taught in Anglophone and Francophone institutions of higher education, although Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes that 'the contingency of her writing' means that her works cannot be reduced to any singular literary approach (2017: 162).¹⁶ This chapter will examine the role of performative gender in two memory narratives: her 1977 film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* and her 2002 novel *La Femme sans sépulture*. In these texts, as she does

¹⁶ Kaoutar Harchi describes the political and cultural debate following Djebar's election and her 'discours de réception' which condemned the cultural and material disaster of colonialism in Algeria (2017: 129). For Harchi, the reception of Djebar into *Académie* transformed it into an arena for the 'luttres mémorielles' of the early 2000s.

in her wider *œuvre*, Djébar records the voices of Algerian women who bear witness to the history of French colonialism, the brutality of the Algerian revolution, and local memory and folklore. I will examine the role of haunting and performativity in these two narratives, which, I suggest reflect Djébar's 'écriture de cinéma' (1999: 174). This narrative strategy, which moves between written and cinematic expression, reveals the performative structure underpinning expressions of gender and memory. Furthermore, this is a formal strategy that critiques the politics of commemoration from the perspective of gender.

Djébar experienced the 'structures of gendering' (Spivak 2017: 157) in both colonial and post-colonial contexts. Fatima Zohra Imalayène (Djébar's name at birth) was born in 1936, in a town just outside of Cherchell, then known as Césarée. Her father Tahar Imalayène was a teacher at a local school. Djébar was one of the few Algerian girls to receive a formal education in French and the first Muslim-Algerian woman to attend the *École normale supérieure de Sèvres*. Djébar's student career in Paris came to an end with the outbreak of war in Algeria. A strike was called by the *Union générale des étudiants musulmans algériens* (UGEMA) (Harchi 2017: 123) and Djébar left her studies for Tunisia where she worked for the revolutionary newspaper *El Moudjahid*, taught History, and completed three novels *La Soif*, (1957), *Les Impatients* (1958) and *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* (1962) (Hiddleston 2006: 21). The novels were received with some controversy in Algeria for their depictions of women's sexuality during war time (Donadey 2017: 13), placing middle-class Algerian women in between French feminist notions of emancipation and the nationalist politics of liberation encapsulated by the FLN.

A defining moment of Djébar's career took place in the 1970s. Djébar took a ten-year hiatus from writing and publishing novels when her desire to write autobiographically and in literary Arabic was increasingly frustrated. Instead, she made

two films: a long-form film, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1977) and a short film, *La Zerda ou les chants de l'oubli* (1982), which mixed archive footage of French colonisation, recorded sound, and *voix-off*.¹⁷ *La Nouba* documents a woman's return to her mother's tribe, where she listens to their stories and memories. It is a mixture of fiction, documentary, and folklore, defying normative frameworks of generic and cinematic storytelling. 25 years later, her novel *La Femme sans sépulture* (2002) returns to the scene of *La Nouba* and recounts in a semi-autobiographical account the filmmaker's return to her mother's tribe just outside of Césariée. The novel also returns to the violence of the Revolution and the French counter-insurgency.¹⁸ However, its temporal markers are stubbornly ambivalent – does the narrative take place in the reconstructed past of the war in the 1950s and 60s, the time of the film's shooting in the 1970s, or in the time of writing which, the narrator admits, took place over a twenty-year period from 1981 to 2001? For Nicole Aas-Rouxparris, these ambiguities not only mark the belated return of memory at the personal level of the narrator(s) but also 'symbolisent l'énorme retard d'une nation toujours en quête de son identité 40 ans après son indépendance' (2004: 104).

Given the far-reaching influence of Djébar's writings for postcolonial and feminist literary criticism (in Arabophone, Francophone *and* Anglophone contexts), there have been many critical engagements with Djébar's writings in terms of women and memory (Heathcote 2006; Hiddleston 2006; Khanna 2008; Martin 2005; Murray 2008; Salhi 2012; Zimra 2011). Many of these critical interventions are based on the principle that Djébar's works present counter-narratives to Algerian nationalism and, therefore,

¹⁷ 'Nouba' is a type of Andalusian song, whereas 'Zerda' refers to a North African song, ritual and feast.

¹⁸ Debra Kelly suggests that, with the outbreak of mass violence in Algeria during the national tragedy of the Black Decade, Djébar's later works became increasingly concerned 'with the dead, the absent, and the missing of Algeria' (2007: 219).

seek to remedy the unjust marginalisation of women's involvement in anti-colonial resistance from post-Independence nationalist narratives. However, in this chapter, I want to demonstrate that this is a process that does not entail the straight-forward 'making visible' or 'making audible' of women's stories. The first section of this chapter will explore the gendered relationship between representation and effacement in her work by considering the blending of cinematic and written representation, what Djébar called an 'écriture de cinéma' in *Ces voix qui m'assiègent* (1999). I will demonstrate that textual and cinematic strategies in Djébar's *œuvre* merge at the level of the text, to create a kind of intertextual memory between her film *La Noubia* and the novel *La Femme*. I suggest that this 'écriture de cinéma' is a textual strategy that enables the performative articulation of women's memory, which also acknowledges the impossibility of amending the erroneous representations of women in history.

The second section of this chapter will engage with the significance of haunting in *La Noubia* and *La Femme*.¹⁹ These texts are populated by the ghosts of women. *La Noubia* documents, dramatises, and bears witness to the voices of women of 'Mont Chenoua', a mountain near Césarée. These voices form a plurivocal narrative that evokes the memories of women of myth and local history. The figure at the heart of this haunting is the presence-absence of Yamina Oudai – known as Zoulikha – a *shaheeda* (feminine noun for 'martyr' in Arabic) for the Algerian revolution. After being captured, tortured, and executed by French colonial forces, her body was never recovered. Zoulikha is the eponymous 'femme sans sépulture', although Djébar's title also nods to Sartre's 1946 play *Morts sans sépulture* which stages resistance efforts during the German occupation

¹⁹ The *Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2013), edited by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Ester Peeren, attests to the general rise in interest in haunting and 'spectrality' as a legitimate category of analysis from psychoanalysis to cultural studies. For other examples of haunting in Francophone Algerian literatures see Laurent Dubreuil's *L'Empire de langage* (2008) and Fiona Barclay's *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature and the Maghreb* (2011).

of France and, significantly, the use of torture (Hiddleston 2006: 168). Zoulikha's unburied body is the underlying spectre of the film, and occupies a distant mystical space for the women who are interviewed.

The theme of haunting has already been considered by commentators working on Djébar's literature in terms of psychoanalysis and trauma: O'Riley considers Zoulikha's haunting in *La Femme* as 'an interruption in the repetitive corpus of spectral colonial history' (2004: 81, 2007) and Hiddleston discusses Zoulikha's 'spectral presence' (2006: 161) as a 'motif' by which Djébar can reflect on 'the interpenetration of the living with the dead, of the resurgence of the not-quite-dead' (169). Both commentators recognise Djébar's acute mistrust of certain kinds of haunting that simply repeat or reiterate the colonial past in the present. Other have focused on haunting in terms of character psychology. For example, Jenny Murray has interpreted *La Femme* through Mária Török and Nicolas Abraham's influential and complex theory of the 'crypt' and 'incorporation', in which loss is displaced from language and buried into the 'crypt' in the ego so that normal procedures of mourning are blocked (2008: 182). Murray notes that Hania, Zoulikha's daughter, stops menstruating when she fails to locate her mother's grave, signalling the symptomatic consequences of her 'incorporation' of blocked mourning (183). For Kirsten Husung, the absent tomb symbolises the open wound left by colonialism in Algeria, which *La Femme* seeks to heal by deconstructing 'l'Histoire homogénéisante en substituant son roman au monument historique manquant, en d'autres mots, la sépulture de l'héroïne' (2014: 246).

These previous psychoanalytical frameworks have been important for demonstrating the role of haunting in the psychology of the characters in *La Femme*. My approach in this chapter will examine the *textual haunting* found in Djébar's 'écriture de cinéma'. I understand 'haunting' in terms of a trace, a presence-absence that is resistant

to representation at the level of the film and text itself. I will propose that Djébar's use of 'écriture de cinéma' is also a kind of haunting, where the text of *La Femme sans sépulture* is haunted by the film *La Nouba*. Drawing on feminist interpretations of Jacques Derrida's *hantologie*, I will analyse four monologues performed by Zoulikha's ghost which appear throughout the course of the novel. The monologues self-consciously stage, with cinematic references, Zoulikha's memory. Djébar's cinematic form of writing goes beyond the limits of an anthropological or biographical project, which aims to reconstruct the story of Zoulikha's life. Rather, it draws attention to Djébar's anxiety concerning representation. The pluralistic and oscillating 'écriture de cinéma' depicts a range of perspectives and feminine voices as well as Zoulikha's. Jane Hiddleston has shown that Djébar's writing at large is deeply engaged with the 'tension between the specific and the singular-plural in the very narrative structure of her work' (2004: 383). Djébar's pluralistic, oscillating, and hesitant 'écriture de cinéma' will be shown to be a narrative strategy for staging Zoulikha's ghost.

The third section of this chapter will engage with the process and practice of mourning from a performative perspective. Following the Freudian model, mourning is a kind of working through, whereas melancholy reaches no conclusion and is the symptom of mourning without end (Freud 1966: 244). Djébar's writing seeks out forms of mourning that are distinct from the post-1962 nation building project, associated with monuments and statues built in order to commemorate and mourn Algeria's martyrs.²⁰ On the one hand, Abdelkader Cheref has interpreted Djébar's representation of the overlooked history of women with that of other Maghrebi women writers, such as Leila Abouzeid and Souad Guellouz, to argue that the considerable 'gap between women's

²⁰ The official memory of the Algerian Revolution is encapsulated in the stone and concrete monolith of the *maqam e'chahid* next to the Museum to the Army in Algiers, meaning 'the place of martyrs', which opened in 1982 on the 20th anniversary of Independence.

engagement in the struggle and their position in today's society' motivates their desire to portray 'the heroic period of the revolution' from the perspective of women (2010: 42-3). On the other, Brinda Mehta suggests that Djébar's concern is less with mourning for the lost heroines of anti-colonial revolution than with reading 'the everyday acts of resistance against a reactionary postcolonial Muslim brotherhood in Algeria' and portraying the minutiae of Algerian women's memory which 'was marked by the corporeal inscriptions of violence' by agents of French empire *and* by agents of nationalist patriarchy (2007: 10).

My suggestion is that Djébar's performative mourning engages in both the everyday acts of resistance by women and the heroic acts of women's participation in warfare. Djébar blends generic and formal techniques to reflect this diversity of experience as she mourns for the loss of Zoulikha. For example, she cinematically stages Zoulikha's voice in monologues throughout *La Femme* in order to stress the performativity of the gendered tensions (masculine heroism against feminine victimisation) inherent in public acts of mourning. For Djébar, neither the language of heroism, nor the language of victimisation is sufficient for the act of mourning women. Instead, the performative oscillation between the literary and cinematic in Djébar's creative production highlights the very process of gendering in a way that contests the nationalist, monumental model. I will argue that Djébar never attempts to lay Zoulikha's body to rest, nor do her texts inscribe Zoulikha into an 'histoire qui peut servir de modèle d'identification' (Husung 2014: 112) for *other* women in the national narrative. Rather, Djébar's work self-consciously engages with the performative processes of remembrance itself. In other words, Djébar is careful not to simply create her own cinematic or textual monument to the memory of women.

1.2 'Écriture de cinéma'

In this section, I will explain the poetics and politics of 'écriture de cinéma'. First of all, it will be important to trace her trajectory as a filmmaker which brought her to coin this term. Although Djébar is perhaps best known as a writer, filmmaking was an important part of her engagement with feminist memory work. According to Zahia Smail Salhi, cinema is the form *par excellence* by which Djébar could democratise women's expression of memory, bring her closer to the women of her mother's tribe, and restore 'their shattered memory' (2012: 65). Cinema, Salhi suggests, allows women to gain political agency from their roles of 'porte-mémoire', a position which traditionally 'does not allow space for expressing the self or for speaking in the first person' (54). I will suggest that Djébar also integrated cinematic form into her writing as 'écriture de cinéma' as a means to articulate women's memory.

Djébar took a decade-long hiatus from publishing novels during the 1970s, opting to make films instead which she viewed, in hindsight, as a key stage in her return to publishing in French. In 1974, supported by *Radio Télévision Algérienne*, Djébar returned to Césarée from France to start filming what would become *La Nouba des femmes du Chenoua*. Initially devised as a 90-minute documentary on the women of Césarée during the Algerian Revolution, Djébar was compelled to highlight her own personal and feminist investment in the stories of her country-women. As Wassyla Tamzali puts it in her observational notes of the filmmaking process, 'Djébar nous conduit plus qu'à une réflexion sur l'histoire, à une réflexion sur la femme algérienne – Mais peut-on dissocier les deux réflexions ?' (1979: 106). As Tamzali notes, in this context, the project of recording oral history is indivisible from the project of valorising the voices of women. The film sees the character Lila (played by Sawan Noweir) return to Algeria after a long period spent in France and visit the homes of the women of her mother's tribe (portrayed

by the residents themselves), who testify to the terrible events of the revolution and their role in the resistance against occupation. Lila's enquiries and testimonials with the women of Mount Chenoua and Césarée trigger their recollections of Zoulikha. However, this seemingly autobiographical and documentary gloss is complicated by multiple scenes of local folklore and myth which intermingle with the oral history of women's resistance in the region. Zoulikha's memory is deliberately evasive in this film, as the film hovers between the desire to represent the absent body of the heroic Zoulikha and the fear of effacing her memory in the very act of representation.

Following its broadcast on Algerian television, the film was poorly received by Algerian critics.²¹ In Djébar's own words the film demands 'un effort' (Tamzali 1979: 110) from its audience to work through its non-linear, fluid, oneiric narrative. *La Noubia* is structured according to five different musical movements, each one assigned a woman's name. Above visual or verbal communication, sound is the privileged medium of the film. The whispering *voix-off* of the narrator often gives way to the music of the film, and spoken testimonies dissolve at times into the sounds of a traumatic memory; shouting, screaming, and the long wail of falling bombs. For Mai Al-Nakib (2005), this formal engagement with sound is also present in *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985) which constitutes a kind of aural and musical ekphrasis. Al-Nakib demonstrates that musical ekphrasis is a way to transgress cultural, political and sexual boundaries and challenge ideological power structures (2005: 273). As Djébar crosses generic borders by transmuting the qualities of a work of aural art into those of a written piece, she also uses ekphrasis as a technique *par excellence* for contesting homogenous Algerian national culture.

²¹ Conversely, the film was recognised with an award at the Venice *Biennale* in 1978.

Al-Nakib's study demonstrates Djébar's engagement with 'scrambling habituated expectations' (Ibid) for genre, which is limited by the written word.²² In an interview with Tamzali, Djébar describes how the film was a way to explore creative opportunities not available to her in literature, particularly in terms of the 'space' lived by other Algerian women:

Tant que j'étais en littérature je pouvais échapper par l'imagination à cet enfermement des femmes. Mais d'avoir à filmer des femmes qui parlent (et seulement cela au début), j'ai vite pris conscience concrètement de leur espace. Je me suis sentie solidaire comme jamais en littérature. [...] D'une certaine façon, le cinéma m'a mise devant, et cela physiquement, devant l'espace. Ce que la littérature n'aurait pas fait, c'est évident ...' (Tamzali 1979 : 112).

In other words, the cinematic medium allowed Djébar to express feminist solidarity in ways that were impossible via literature. However, this does not mean that Djébar abandoned concerns of writing, and she admits to have 'écrit « Nouba » en cinéaste', but to have found 'la chair du film [...] sur le terrain' (110). As Giuliva Milò puts it, filmmaking in Djébar's career was never a question of abandoning the written word for the 'image-son' but a means to produce 'un film sur la mémoire où fusionnent et s'entrecroisent le documentaire et la fiction' (2007: 82). Thus, in Djébar's *œuvre*, working on memory calls for this entanglement of genres and forms. This approach to cinema is a bittersweet one for Djébar, since her attempts to produce more films were blocked by funding and political constraints. Nonetheless, she continued to be 'aiguillonnée par un désir de cinéma' (Djébar 1999: 169). Thus, her 'besoin de cinéma' was transmuted into her literary work, becoming a 'besoin d'une écriture de cinéma' (1999: 174).

²² See also Nicole Aas-Rouxparis's article on Djébar's 'mélange de genres' and the 'polyphonie de voix chevauchées' in *La Femme sans sépulture*. (2004: 97).

What does Djébar mean by ‘écriture de cinéma’? The phrase recalls Agnès Varda’s term ‘cinécriture’, which gave filmmakers the literary vocabulary to discuss the construction of film in terms of a written text. For Varda, a well-written film extends beyond the written style of script and dialogue to the *mise-en-scène* of the image (Smith 1998: 14). I suggest that ‘écriture de cinéma’ works from a reverse stand-point to ‘cinécriture’, which designates how the cinematic image is written. ‘Écriture de cinéma’ designates the way in which the written narrative is imbued by the cinematic qualities of image, editing, voice, and sound. Clarisse Zimra translated ‘écriture de cinéma’ as ‘writerly cinema’ (2011: 115) but we can also understand this term as a kind of *cinematic writing* in which Djébar’s cinematic sensibility is present in her textual, not just visual, language. Zimra suggested that Djébar’s generic blending is a response to ‘a yearning to experiment with a filmic mode’ (114) producing what she has described as a Djébarian ‘poetics of the threshold’. Zimra identified the ‘poetics of the threshold’ in several of Djébar’s post-*Nouba* novels which produces a form of ekphrastic cross-pollination between film and text (116): in the third part of *L’Amour, la fantasia* (1985), Djébar includes materials she collected for the film, and in *Vaste est la prison* (1995) she describes her filmmaking process. We can add that *La Nouba*’s primary characters Lila and Ali are taken from Djébar’s 1962 novel *Les Enfants du nouveau monde*. It is clear from these intertextual references to *La Nouba* in the rest of her works that Zoulikha’s memory is a topic to which Djébar returns time and again, much like the haunting spectre of Zoulikha herself.

In addition to *L’Amour, la fantasia* and *Vaste est la prison* we must add Djébar’s 2002 novel *La Femme sans sépulture* which is also haunted by the memory of Zoulikha and Djébar’s ‘besoin de cinéma’ (1999: 174). The years between 1974 and 1977 (when Djébar filmed *La Nouba*) function as an organising framework for the narrative, in which

the unnamed narrator meets and gently questions the women of Césarée on their memories of Zoulikha. The narrator describes the film in the opening lines of the novel:

Deux heures du film s'écoulaient ensuite en fleuve lent : fiction et documentaire, son direct souvent, quelques dialogues entre femmes ; des flots de musique, traditionnelle aussi bien que contemporaine. (2002: 18)

However, soon after this pretext is established, the visibility of the filmmakers and of the camera's gaze dissolves into the narrative itself, until only the ghostly traces of the film are left. The use of the film as a narrative framework, as Gloria Onyeoziri notes, results in 'a complex reflection on the significance of that [cinematic] form of remembering' (2011: 384). In a way, Djébar's repeated return to the subject matter of *La Nouba* in her writing is not surprising if we take into account the aesthetics of fragmentation and unfinished action that constitute this film. As Réda Bensmaïa argues, the film's 'centre of gravity' is displaced, its fragmentary narrative and storytelling splinters 'into a primordial chaos, and no sum total preordains the constituent units' (2003: 92). The film's resistance to the idea of a narrative product as a constituent whole is part and parcel of Djébar's feminist memory work, as a process that is in constant flux and that cannot be crystallised by a single artistic intervention. Therefore, we should not think of *La Femme* as an alternative written account of the film *La Nouba*, but rather as an extension of this ongoing work of memory.

As in the film *La Nouba*, *La Femme* is framed by a rigid musical structure: there are several movements, and each one appears devoted to the voices of particular women who contribute to this polyphonic chorus. The opening pages of *La Femme* are not called a 'prologue' but a 'prélude', voiced by the filmmaker-narrator. The main chapters of the novel are shared out between the principal contributors; Dame Lionne (or Lla Lbia as she is known in her own language), Hania, and Mina (the surviving daughters of Zoulikha)

and Zohra Oudai (Zoulikha's sister) who all together 'sing' their testimonies of war and loss. Pepered in between their songs are four chapters entitled 'monologues de Zoulikha' which re-stage the bodiless voice of Zoulikha herself (which I will examine more closely in section three). The questions of voices, language, and the problems of cultural effacement with translation is paramount in *La Femme*. As has been noted by Irene Ivantcheva-Merjanska, Djebbar refuses 'l'isolement culturel' of choosing French against Arabic as her writing is constantly seeking ways to go beyond 'l'assujettissement' whether it be linguistic, sexual, gendered, or racial (2015: 102). There is the dangerous potential of Zoulikha being spoken for, erased from her own story through 'false' or ideologically-charged representation. As Hania says in the novel, there is a confrontation, on the one hand, between the aims of the documentary film to shine a light on the occulted story of Zoulikha's heroism, and, on the other, the fear that this would be a false representation, an effacement of her lingering memories:

- Face aux journalistes, déclare enfin Hania, quand ils viennent m'interroger sur Zoulikha, j'ai l'impression, en déroulant des mots ... (elle passe soudain à la langue arabe qu'elle a plus raffinée), en parlant de Zoulikha, il me semble que, à mon tour, je la tue! (2002: 50)

This extract displays the concern that runs throughout the novel: whether, by restaging Zoulikha's ghost, Djebbar contributes to the aestheticisation (after all, the novel follows the making of a film, a visual representation) and mythologisation of Zoulikha's memory. For O'Riley this dilemma of representation 'attests [...] to the return of colonial history as a formal aesthetics' (2007: 65) and the risk of repeating imperialist aestheticism and, therefore, 'the politics of ideological positioning, a politics linked to the colonial contest over place and metaphorical, gendered images of territory' (73). It is these political

pitfalls of visually representing colonial ghosts in the present that Djébar navigates by self-consciously re-staging the cinematic in a written narrative.

The voice of the filmmaker-narrator is not the driving force of the narrative. She slips in and out of the narrative and self-consciously gives way to the voices of the other women. We are nonetheless constantly aware of her presence as an active listener, documenter, and mediator through her shifting subject positions: the narrative voice switches fitfully between first-, second- ('Pourquoi t'es-tu installée sans coup férir à l'hôtel?' (Djébar 2002: 113)), and third-person subject positions, such as 'la visiteuse' (47) or 'l'écouteuse' (238). This anxiety around fixing the narrator in relation to the voices of the other characters points to Djébar's awareness of the problematic act of 'giving voice' to the voiceless, which could easily slip into the effacement of the voices she hopes to empower. In *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1980) she stresses the need to speak *alongside* other women, as opposed to speaking *in their place*: 'Ne pas prétendre « parler pour », ou pire « parler sur », à peine parler près de, et si possible tout contre' (1980: 8). Using cinematic techniques in her writing allows for the displacement of Djébar's authorial eye/I from the centre of the narrative, and leaves space for the polyphonic song of the women of Césarée and Chenoua to sing through instead. Hiddleston suggests that 'meta-commentary' allows Djébar to delineate her authorial relationship to the narrative (2004: 384). As Anne Donadey puts it, 'il s'agit là de porter témoignage au témoignage des autres', to underline the mediated nature of memory (2010: 80). In other words, in self-consciously highlighting her own voice in the craft of narrative, she also distances herself from the text (Hiddleston 2004: 383-4) leaving, instead, the voices of the women she interviews.



Figure 3: (*La Nouba* 1977)



Figure 4: (*La Nouba* 1977)

Deferring the eye/I from the centre of the narrative is a particularly important quality of Djébar's filmmaking. In *La Nouba*, Lila interviews her relatives and other women of her mother's tribe to gather their stories of local history, folklore, but also their lived experience of supporting anti-colonial fighters during the War of Independence. In the first movement of the film, Lila reflects on her role as interviewer stating: 'I'm not looking for anything. I only remember that I was looking. I'm not looking for anything,

but I'm listening, Oh, how I love to listen!' (Djebar 1977).²³ As the women of Chenoua tell their stories, the frame focuses on their faces, cutting occasionally to dramatisations of their narratives, or scenes of daily life around their homes and land. In Figures 1 and 2, Lila is outside the frame, so the women's head and shoulders turn away from the camera as they address their stories to their interlocutor. This subtle, but effective, framing puts them at the centre of their own stories and simultaneously reminds the viewer of the deferred presence of the film's mediator. Thus, *La Nouba* is not a typical documentary which is didactically driven by the questions of a central interviewer-narrator. Rarely are questions ever directly asked in the dialogue. In a 1978 interview for *Algérie-Actualité*, Djebar claims that 'poser une question, c'est déjà limiter le champ de la réponse, limiter la personne elle-même' (Ameyar 1978). Therefore, Lila avoids all questions and simply listens to the voices of the women who speak for themselves.

In *La Femme*, the narrative also integrates these concerns for voice, performativity, and narrative authority into the written representation of interviews with women from Césarée. For example, during her interview with Zohra, Zoulikha's sister, the filmmaker-narrator intervenes when she falls into silence:

Zohra Oudai s'arrête: sans voix. Oui, la face pâlie, une main soudain tremblant spasmodiquement : elle ne peut continuer. Elle se lève, va et vient. Revient s'asseoir, avec soudain, entre les doigts, un chapelet aux grains noircis.

- Et donc, aux jours de l'indépendance ? intervient la visiteuse qui a vu l'émotion étreindre leur hôtesse. (Djebar 2002: 147)

²³ While the titles and credits of the film are in Arabic, there are two dubbed versions of the film currently available, one dubbed in Arabic and another dubbed in French. The version available to me during the course of my research was dubbed in Arabic, with English subtitles.

Here, the narrator carefully takes note of Zohra's corporeal and emotional enactment during her testimony, in order to re-create her silences as well as the voice, slipping from her testimony into a painful wordlessness. As a result, one is aware of the staging of this scene and 'the fact that fiction is being used to supplement history' (Donadey 2008b: 85). In other words, what is being stressed here is the fluctuating relationship between the oral testimony of the women from Césarée and the narrator's voice that bears witness to their stories. This is clear when we consider how the filmmaker-narrator is identified within the text; initially as 'la visiteuse' (47) but this soon becomes qualified with other references such as 'cette voyageuse mais d'ici' (49), 'l'étrangère pas tellement étrangère' (77), and 'l'hagiographe' (231). These titles complicate the narrator's relationship to her native village and to those who still reside there as she is both from there and yet foreign due to her long absence. Alison Rice has suggested that in taking to the witness stand, as Djébar can be seen to be doing in *La Femme*, the writer 'adopts a stance' and this act of '[t]estimony is ... by definition, other-orientated' (2012: 9). This other-orientation in *La Femme* comes to the forefront in the scenes in which the women of the village testify.

In another example, Hania describes how she imagines her mother and each detail of her testimony is carefully documented by the narrator:

- Surtout, déclare-t-elle sur un ton de tragédienne, avec un début de rire léger, Zoulikha, de cette façon, n'a jamais vieilli. (Elle se rassoit.) Elle est devenue, à jamais, ma sœur ... Ma sœur jumelle? J'aimerais bien. (Djébar 2002: 53)

Details of Hania's voice and action are documented in parenthesis in the present tense like a stage-direction and the narrator clearly draws out the dramatic performance with the note of 'un ton de tragédienne'. In a later scene with Hania, at every pause in the dialogue, she is carefully and intricately described while the narrator is waiting attentively for the next part of the story:

Je me souviens, murmure-t-elle, quinze jours plus tard environ, mon mari commençait à être malade : il était au lit, avec une forte fièvre ! Nous attendions le docteur ...

La chroniqueuse se saisit de la cruche à ses côtés : dans la pénombre, les deux auditrices tournent, d'une façon concomitante, la tête. Hania va-t-elle boire ? Non, d'une seule main, elle verse de l'eau dans l'autre paume et s'asperge la face dans un éclaboussement. Comme si les souvenirs devaient, perles froides sur sa joue, s'écrouler vite, vite ... Elle reprend le récit, la voix plus lasse [...] (97)

Rhetorical questions and ellipses frequently interrupt and suspend the story-telling, stressing the sense of orality and the uneven passage of time as they give their testimony. The use of categories such as 'chroniqueuse' and 'auditrices' is particularly important as it demonstrates Djébar's desire to stress the ritualistic roles that women occupy when sharing stories.²⁴ The intimate description of Hania's hand motions, accompanied by a certain degree of self-conscious uncertainty ('va-t-elle boire?'), creates the impression that the eye/I of the filmmaker-narrator zooms to her face for a close-up to capture the 'perles froids sur sa joue, s'écrouler, vite, vite'. The poetic attention to the rhythm of oral expression and the lyrical repetition of 'vite, vite' draw the reader into the intimate descriptions of Hania's voice, hands, and face in a way that is as much a cinematic staging as a literary representation.

In the staging of women's testimonies, Djébar's 'écriture de cinéma' stresses the sensual and corporeal transmission of memory. Perhaps more than any of the other voices, it is *La Dame Lionne* (Lla Lbia) whose testimonies are able to conjure the ghost of

²⁴ Furthermore, these non-personal titles highlight the historical significance of this oral history. This is not a story that can be dismissed as unofficial or unimportant, but as part of the historical chronicles of the Algerian war which have predominantly canonised the actions of men, and a few 'exceptional' women.

Zoulikha in a corporeal manner. On the one hand, she is characterised as the physical embodiment of memory itself: ‘Dame Lionne, elle, ne reproche rien à personne: elle enjambe les temps, elle est mémoire pure’ (2002: 167). On the other hand, her testimony has a corporeal effect on those who listen to her story, in particular Mina and the filmmaker-narrator. It is important to note that it is specifically through the bodies of other women that Dame Lionne seems to impart memory. In this way Djébar centralises women’s corporeality in the transmission of memory:

Et Mina se rappelle la nuit où les trois fils Saadoun ont été assassinés, cette nuit qu’elle croit avoir vécue, à travers la voix, et presque le corps, corps mobile et sans peur de Dame Lionne, toutes les dames de la ville formant, pour ainsi dire, un chœur, tantôt tumultueux et tantôt lointain, autour de Lla Lbia, cette nuit-là où celle-ci, la laveuse des morts, elle qui, pour cela peut-être (est-ce l’effet analgésique de l’eau à verser, dernière caresse à imprimer aux corps jeunes et suppliciés, bénéfice de la liturgie et des prières nécessaires?), garde mémoire non pas des faits mais du rythme lui-même, une danse esquissée entre courage et désolation des uns, peur tremblée, prudence ou lâcheté de quelques autres, elle seule, Dame Lionne ... (166).

This passage is significant in terms of the corporeal experience of memory in three ways. First, Mina is transported, through the voice and ‘corps mobile’ of Dame Lionne, to the night when the three Saadoun sons were murdered. Second, Dame Lionne is the focal point around whom the women of the village gather as ‘un chœur’, significant for its musical reference as the polyphonic gathering of voice. Third, Dame Lionne’s task as ‘laveuse des morts’ renders her the last interlocutor with the dead and, consequently, guardian of their memories, a role which takes on a musical resonance ‘du rythme lui-même, une danse esquissée’. The theme of sketching here is very important, one which

resonates throughout Djébar's work. In terms of cinema, Djébar highlights the difficulties of establishing an Algerian cinema: 'C'est une esquisse pour un cinéma d'allégement, de traces et de renaissances. De quête, certainement ...' (1999: 173). Like in Djébar's cinema of sketching and tracing, the filmmaker-narrator of *La Femme* can only draw the outlines of what happened, deferring any attempt at a complete or 'factual' representation of the past. It is for this reason, for her sketching dance of memory, that Dame Lionne is described as 'mémoire pure'.

In this passage, the memory of others is experienced through the body. I suggest that this is a characteristic of Djébar's 'écriture de cinéma' which transfers memory as a visceral and bodily experience. In her discussion of 'intercultural cinema', Laura Marks has described the strategy of 'brushing against' the lives of others in filmmaking. She suggests this produces a 'haptic visuality', in which cinematic works 'evoke memories both individual and cultural, through an appeal to nonvisual knowledge, embodied knowledge, and experiences of the senses, such as touch, smell, and taste' (1999: 2). According to Marks, these strategies are employed in films that are marked by a suspicion of the supremacy of the 'visual archive's ability to represent cultural memory', favouring instead 'the use of silence and absence of visual image' opening the film up to 'new languages, new forms of expression' (1999: 21). The notion of embodied knowledge as conveyed through (the absence of) sound and image is important not only for the film *La Noubia*, but also *La Femme*. In this narrative, Zoulikha's body is never found but nor does the narrative ever 'show' her body before or after her death. However, this does not mean that Zoulikha's embodiment is absent or that her memory is shapeless. Rather, her embodiment is mediated through the memory of others, her story 'brushes against' the bodies of others such as Dame Lionne, Hania, and Mina.

For example, in the narrator's dream-episode, the voices of the women, the image of Zoulikha, and the topography of the town mingle into one cinematic hallucination. Voice and image are physically embodied within the filmmaker's-narrator's corporeality as she slips in and out of sleep:

Au cœur de la nuit, revenue dans ma chambre, pendant une insomnie longue et languide, le récit de Dame Lionne que j'avais écouté sans poser la moindre question *commence à se dérouler en images successives* ; d'abord, la silhouette de Zoulikha soudain envahit la chambre, allant et venant, moi ne me demandant même pas la raison de cette hallucination – en vérité, dans ce demi-rêve fait autant d'actions que de couleurs nostalgiques un peu passées, il me semble – moi, dans mon lit, les yeux ouverts, tandis qu'à travers les fenêtres non fermées la clarté de la nuit facilite cette irréalité – il me semble que mon corps, ainsi étendu, est devenu la ville elle-même, Césarée avec ses ruelles du quartier ancien, d'El Qsiba et, béantes, les portes de l'enceinte telle que celle-ci existait du vivant de Zoulikha ... (Djebar 2002: 120, added emphasis)

The embodied act of writing the recorded voices that she has heard all day is transmuted into a hallucination which 'commence à se dérouler en images successives', like a reel of film projecting onto the wall of her bedroom. This projection allows for the entry and exit of Zoulikha and the eye/I of the filmmaker-narrator is led to the bedroom window at night, bathing the room in an unreal light. Through this threshold, the oneiric vision of the hallucination expands and transforms the body of the filmmaker-narrator into the map of the town. The writing of the body as the town proposes an alternative topography and history to the one standardised by Algerian nationalism. The image conjured by the body layered over and into the topography of the town produces a palimpsestic effect of overwriting and superimposition. As Donadey has pointed out, the palimpsest refers to

historiography as well as space. Djébar, she suggest, writes over the palimpsest of historiography in *La Femme*, ‘filing out its blanks and responding to its misrepresentation through fiction’ (Donadey 2008a: 66).

In this dream-episode, the palimpsest is formed through the layering of the filmmaker-narrator’s body over and into the town’s topography, its streets and monuments, some of which no longer exist. According to Andreas Huyssen, the project of modernity was to create an urban space ‘replete with monuments and museums, palaces, public spaces, and government buildings – [which] represented the material traces of the historical past in the present’ (2003: 1). In this dream-sequence, however, the focus is not on recuperating a sense of modernity through monuments to the past (the project of all nation building) but in reframing memory of the town from a feminine perspective. The layering of the image of the body ‘ainsi étendu’ into the streets and monuments of the town is important for this feminist reclaiming of public space (and also public memory). Here, the palimpsestic memory points to the sedimentary inscription of time into the archaeology of place. The palimpsestic is also a distinctly cinematic image and also appears in *La Noubia*. According to Max Silverman, who draws on Benjaminian concepts such as historical constellation and the dialectical image, filmmakers (namely Godard, Marker, and Haneke) who reconfigure history in non-linear ways establish connections (often controversially) between seemingly disparate historical events or groups of people, in particular through the technique of superimposition (2013: 130). Montage and superposition in *La Noubia* reveal how every image is haunted by another, and the juxtaposition of images can shock ‘each out of their containment within a chronological historicist narrative’ (Silverman 2013: 130). The dream-episode in *La Femme*, with its successive rolling out of images, functions in a similar way to montage in film, and ekphrastically cites the dream/nightmare sequence in *La Noubia*:

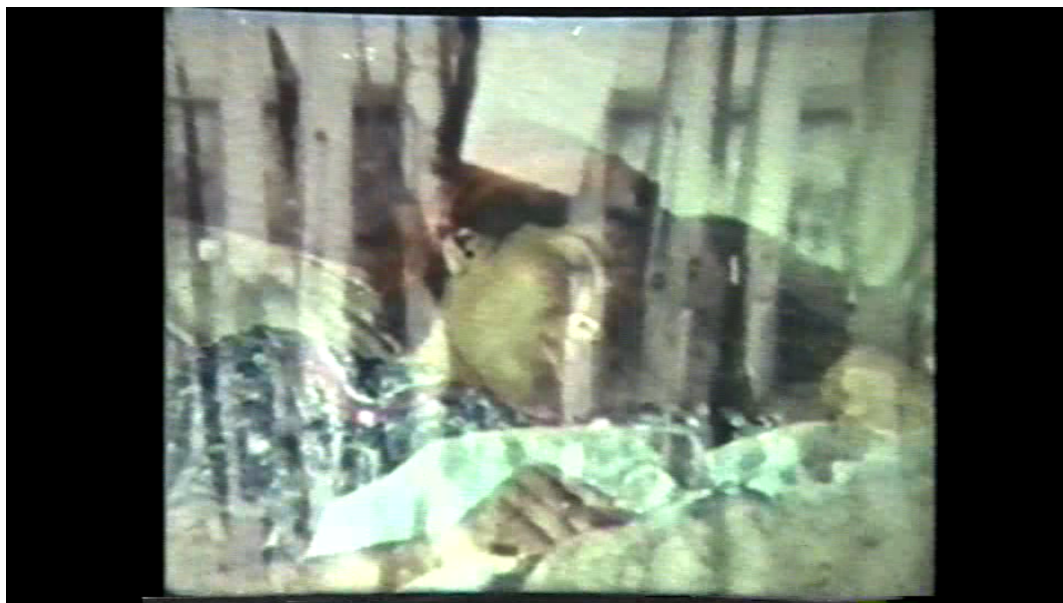


Figure 5: (*La Noubba* 1977)

In Figure 5, Lila's sleeping face is obscured from view by the superimposed images of her nightmare in which the guns of resistance fighters are lined along the side of a house by French soldiers, each one symbolising a fallen compatriot. This sequence is preceded and followed by a montage of violent images from what appears to be archive footage of Algerian men being murdered outside their homes by French soldiers. In the background, the whirr of aircraft and falling bombs obscures the sound of voices. In these images, Djébar's use of the palimpsest conclusively entangles dream and memory. Tamzali asks whether this scene of violence concerns history, or lived experience: 'les six images des massacres d'Alger sont montées dans les premier plans du film, pendant que Lila dort. Est-ce un rêve alimenté par l'histoire ou un moment vécu?' (Tamzali 1979: 100). This palimpsestic image of Lila's body, over-layered as it is with these images of violence, is powerful because it confounds the spectators' ability to interpret the image as a direct representation of the past, either as memory, history, or imagination. The palimpsest is clearly a valued technique for Djébar, appearing as it does here in *La Noubba* and 25 years later in *La Femme*.

Additionally, it is important to note that this sensorial process via the body not only brings the past directly into the present, but stresses the femininity of this embodied memory in two ways. First, in both *La Nouba* and *La Femme*, the palimpsestic memory of the war and the town is presented via the image of a woman's sleeping body. Memory connections are made possible via the words of women such as Dame Lionne, Zoulikha's silhouette, and the feminised references to the town, such as 'les portes de l'enceinte'. These references to the body in her oneiric wanderings through the town blend haptic and visual genres, and seek out a new language to express the past. States of waking and dreaming intermingle in this passage as do references to voice and image, time and space in what Zimra calls Djébar's 'full ludic mode'. This refuses all boundaries and privileges instead the threshold as the symbol of liminality *par excellence* (2011: 112).

Second, the generic blurring of 'écriture de cinéma' encourages the transgression of borders established by gender norms. Djébar transgresses generic borders to reflect on the limits placed on Algerian women as sequestered and silent. The corporeal experience of the town's memory stresses what Gloria Onyeoziri has called Djébar's 'desire to establish a cinema not of experimentation but of experience, a cinema that would restore the visibility of both tradition and present suffering' (2011: 385). In other words, it is the radical visibility of *women's* subjectivity, suffering, memory and experience past and present which is underscored in this dream-sequence. In the palimpsestic image of the body-town, Djébar privileges the embodied sharing of memory through and across women's subjectivities, and simultaneously lays claim to the public spaces of the town and, by extension, the national narrative of the revolution.

In this section, I have sought to demonstrate the ways in which Djébar constructs a new way of expressing the past that moves between cinematic and written language in the form of 'écriture de cinéma'. The emphasis on liminality, thresholds, and

superimposition responds to a mistrust for forms of representation which claim to represent the memories of women, but also risk *effacing* them. If the voices of the living women of Césarée are mediated by this ‘écriture de cinéma’, how does Djébar present the voice of Zoulikha’s ghost? As I will show in the next section, the haunting of Zoulikha does not just refer to the ghost of colonialism and character psychology. She also haunts the very text itself in the form of her performative ‘monologues’.

1.3 Zoulikha’s Haunting Monologues

Djébar’s ‘écriture de cinéma’ is a means to engage with this process of haunting, to work through and speak to the ghosts of the Algerian Revolution. However, I do not suggest that Djébar’s writing and filmmaking substitutes Zoulikha’s absent tomb with a ‘linguistic mausoleum’ (Brisley 2015: 103). Rather, her use of ‘écriture de cinéma’ and the textual haunting between *La Noubia* and *La Femme* demonstrates that turning to the past is an act of constant *working through*. Therefore, it is very different to the static nature of forms of monumental memory. Using the pluralistic and multivalent languages of film in *La Femme*, Djébar performatively and self-referentially engages with Zoulikha’s ghost, but also with haunting at the level of the text itself.

Before turning to the text itself, it is worth spending more time on the question of how haunting and cinematic aesthetics pertain to a gendered memory of the Algerian War in Djébar’s writing. The return of haunting at the end of the 20th century is marked by Derrida’s influential *Spectres de Marx* (1993) in which he reads Marx’s Communist Manifesto in terms of filial memory from Shakespeare to Marx. In other words, he suggests that affiliation between different generations of thinkers is established as a patrilineal haunting. However, this does not constitute a straightforward form of

inheritance from father to son. In his analysis of Hamlet's famous declaration that 'Time is out of joint' (1993: 43), the spectre captures a disjointed temporality which moves both forward and backward so that 'ce qui paraît au-devant, l'avenir, revient d'avance: du passé, par-derrrière' (31).

The key to time being 'détraqué, traqué et détraqué, *dérangé*' (42, original emphasis) is Derrida's concept of *hantologie*, which is closely linked to *spectacle* and visual representation on film and television. Derrida notes that the act of recording the present moment on film puts time out of joint. The recorded image is a crystallisation of both the first *and* the last 'time' and those captured by the image 'are spectralized by the shot' (Derrida and Stiegler 2013: 39). This haunting tension between past and present, which is brought together in the recorded moment of television and film, is highly indicative of the processes involved in the act of remembrance. In Ken McMullen's 1983 film *Ghost Dance* Derrida ('playing' himself) is invited to meditate on ghosts and cinema. When asked by actor Pascale Ogier 'Est-ce que vous croyez aux fantômes ?' (McKullen 1983), Derrida replies by asking whether one asks a ghost whether they believe in ghosts, since 'ici, le fantôme est moi' (Ibid). In playing his own role, he claims that 'je laisse [...] un fantôme me ventriloquer' (Ibid), in other words, his own ghost is speaking in his place. Derrida goes on to claim, 'le cinéma [...] c'est un art de laisser revenir les fantômes' (Ibid), and that this haunting is intimately connected with the processes of memory:

Être hanté par un fantôme c'est avoir la mémoire de ce qu'on n'a jamais vécu au présent, avoir la mémoire de ce qui, au fond, n'a jamais eu la forme de la présence.
(Ibid)

The notion of haunting as the possession or experience of a memory from the past, which has never been experienced in the present, collapses traditional and linear notions of the

generational transmission of memory. For Derrida, cinema has the formal qualities for expounding disjointed time which is always present in the act of remembrance, since memory places moments in time ‘hors de ses gonds’ (42).²⁵ Ostensibly, then, this Derridean framework of cinema as haunting lends itself as an analytical framework for understanding Djebarian ‘écriture de cinéma’ as a haunted form of writing, writing which is possessed by the memory of another text.

However, as Esther Peeren questions, how do we employ Derrida’s theory of *hantologie* as developed in *Spectres de Marx* when the spectral bodies and memories pertain to feminine experience? Derrida’s concept of the spectre has been criticised by feminist scholars for its linear, patriarchal, filial and ‘decidedly gendered relation between fathers and sons’, and thus excludes forms of relationality with feminine subjects (Peeren 2012: 306). This is not to dismiss Derrida’s concept all together, but to ask, ‘what becomes of the daughter in hauntology’ (Holland 2001: 65)? Peeren suggests that multidirectionality allows the belated entrance of ghostly women into Bret Easton Ellis’s novel *Lunar Park*, since ‘[t]o be truly appropriate as a figure for a new ethics of intersubjectivity (whether the other represents our ancestors, our children, or our contemporaries), the spectre needs to include women as those who potentially haunt and are haunted differently, and it needs to haunt in multiple directions’ (2012: 319). In other words, the burden of the spectre cannot just lie on those *being haunted* but moves multidirectionally with the ancestors. For Ellis, this multidirectionality also challenges the concept of haunting as a patrilineal descent or progenitor (from Hamlet the Ghost-King, to Hamlet the Prince).

²⁵ See also Fiona Barclay’s analysis of Derridaean cinematic haunting in Herbiet’s film *Mon Colonel* (2013).

In her essay ‘Ghostwriting’, Spivak draws from Djébar’s *Loin de Médine* (1991) to hint at the ways Djébar has been able to take ‘ghostwomen’ into account in *hantologie*. In this novel, Djébar recalls the spectral women of Islam such as Fatima, Muhammad’s daughter, who ‘will not remain a spectator. She rises as a spectre to perform the impossible deconstruction of the binary opposition between male and female Muslims’ (1995: 79). The emphasis on ‘spectacle’ and ‘spectre’ in Spivak’s analysis draws our attention to the words’ shared etymological root in the Latin *specere*, to look. As Spivak’s account shows us, to include ‘ghostwomen’ suggests that the burden does not just lie on those ‘being seen’ (the feminine subject of the male gaze). Spectres are also ‘looking (in the sense of examining)’ (Blanco and Peeren 2013: 2). Likewise, in *La Femme*, Zoulikha’s spectre is not relegated to being the *spectator* nor the *spectacle*, but is given an active voice in the form of monologues throughout the narrative of *La Femme*. These monologues stage Zoulikha’s ghost and she actively looks and observes the scenes of memory being played out in the narrative. According to the opening ‘avertissement’ of *La Femme*, the monologues ‘sont rapportés avec un souci de fidélité historique, ou, dirais-je, selon une approche documentaire’ (2002). Djébar’s ‘avertissement’ is a clear provocation, inviting the paradox of historical and documentarian reportage with her own fictional and cinematic reinvention of Zoulikha’s memory in the form of the monologues. Thus, Djébar self-consciously stages Zoulikha’s memory through the monologue and brings them into conversation with her anxiety concerning historical and documentarian conventions.

In the ‘Premier monologue de Zoulikha, au-dessus des terrasses de Césarée’, the ghostly Zoulikha recounts her capture by French soldiers to her daughter, Mina. The spectacle of her haunting demands that there is a *spectator* and she calls upon Mina to bear witness to an event for which she was not present and of which she has no memory.

In this case, Zoulikha describes the crowd of villagers who witness her abduction by French soldiers, and Mina is cast as the ‘spectatrice’, addressed as ‘toi’:

[...] j’entends pourtant le bourdonnement des hélicoptères qui vont prendre de la hauteur, les ordres lancés par les soldats qui accourent pour faire reculer cette foule. [...] comme si, pour toi, spectatrice de toujours aux yeux ouverts, au visage tendu par l’attente, nous nous mettions tous, y compris les gardes et leur matériel bruyant, à jouer quelque répétition de spectacle antique pour la cité assoupie.
(2002: 70-1)

Zoulikha’s account is an intimate address from mother to her daughter, for whom this scene is re-performed through the monologue. She gives Mina the opportunity to bear witness to her mother’s departure. However, this ‘toi’ of course also extends to the reader. The reader is now implicated as a bystander in this military abduction, which is reimagined as a kind of popular theatre performed for the inhabitants of the village. In other words, Djébar stresses the *staged* nature of this scene and Zoulikha calls up her daughter and the reader to pay heed to the ‘répétition’. Mina is called upon by Zoulikha to notice the performativity of such a scene as she calls out ironically to her audience:

Regardez tout ceci (mon geste est à nouveau pour toi, spectatrice de cette scène immobilisée, ou dans vingt jours, ou dans vingt ans, quelle importance, mon geste dénonce ce harnachement de leur armée), regardez, ô mes frères, tout ceci, seulement pour une femme ! (71-2)

The command ‘Regardez tout ceci’ is also directed to the reader, in an ekphrastic gesture that calls upon the reader to *look*, to raid an imaginative repertoire of images to imagine the scene at hand, where the demarcations between past and present, visual and verbal clash and are contested.

What is particularly striking in this monologue is the use of visual metaphors. O'Riley notes that the visual is very often overlooked in responses to Djébar's *œuvre* and yet 'Djébar's theorization of the visual can [...] confront the problem of the duality of language and its oppositional poles that reincarnate a spectral Manichean battle between the West and its Other within contemporary Algeria' (2007: 28). For example, the use of light in 'Premier monologue de Zoulikha ...' stresses the cinematic quality of Djébar's writing, but also stresses the question of who can see, who is seen, and how clearly. In this monologue, Zoulikha is marched out of the dark forest where she had been sheltering in its obscurity, into the glaring daylight of a village clearing by the French soldiers. When a villager honours her by crying out 'Ô ma Hadja!' her reply goes unheard:

Il ne m'entendit pas. Je ne l'aperçus plus. De fait, la lumière blanche, irréaliste, nous inondait, nous aveuglait tous ; je m'acharnais à penser, en avançant jusqu'au premier camion militaire qu'eux, les bourreaux, les chasseurs silencieux, les hommes gris portant casque et grenades, allaient me disperser aussitôt dans l'air purificateur. (2002: 68)

Hiddleston's analysis of light in this passage is particularly revealing as she notes that light not only suggests over-exposure but 'falsity and performance, like powerful stage lamps that shine upon actors in order to make them hyper-real' (2006: 164). In this respect, the sensorial depiction of light and sound stresses the performative staging of this monologue, rendering it highly cinematic with carefully crafted lighting, haloing Zoulikha as she is led away ('Lights, Camera, Action!'). The blinding light effaces and interrupts the exchange between Zoulikha and the villager. It also anonymises her captors as 'hommes gris'. As the details of the image are effaced, the lasting imagery that remains is that of 'l'air purificateur'. In other words, the blinding and affective lights of Zoulikha's abduction actually work to obscure the differential identities of 'bourreaux' and the

spectators, complicating, as O'Riley argues, the Manichean distinction of colonial Algeria (2007: 74).



Figure 6: (La Noubia 1977)

The monologue's employment of the blinding lights is evocative of the blurred, over-exposed lighting of Djébar's film *La Noubia*, which frequently obscures who is looking and who is being seen. For example, transitions from interior scenes to exterior ones are often accompanied by such blinding lights, blurring the image and forcing the viewer to deduce information from the sounds and music of the film. In Figure 6, Lila's husband, bound to a wheelchair, is blurred from view on a backdrop of a bright blue sky, framed by a dark doorway. Here, there is a play on the gendered roles in the cinematic gaze; the principal masculine character does not play the protagonist, nor does he fit the stereotypes of the heroic and disabled war veteran (his injury is from a riding accident). As Djébar claims in *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*, the film plays with the notion of the male gaze; here the gaze (that of the spectator and of the husband) is blurred, disturbing the traditional, colonial and patriarchal balances of power where it is the Arab woman who is watched (1999: 162).

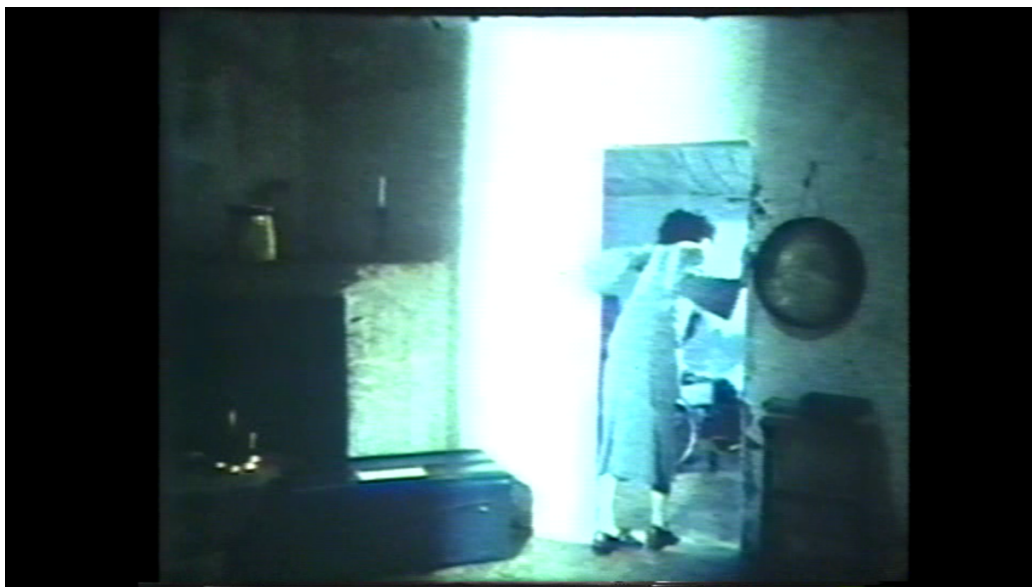


Figure 7: (*La Noubia* 1977)

Figure 7 is a typical interior shot from *La Noubia* in which light pouring in from outside over-exposes the dark interior. The stark contrast between light and dark throughout the film often distorts the spectator's ability to tell where Lila is in relation to interior and exterior settings. Is she exiting or entering? These images illustrate Djébar's 'poetics of the threshold' (Zimra 2011: 109) and her formal hesitancy to choose a singular form or a singular language with which to represent the memories of women. In turn, this impacts on her politics of memory. Feminine memory, in Djébar's work, resists the singular narrative of nationalism in favour of this pluralised formal of expressing the past and its legacies in the present. For Jeanne Marie Clerc, writing about the cinematic influence on Djébar's writing, this prioritising of light (but also sound) reflects 'une nouvelle forme d'écriture' (1997: 13), 'l'image-son' which registers both 'silence et captation du non-visible' (15). In other words, the foregrounding of the 'image-son' in Zoulikha's first monologue paradoxically records the silences and the absences inherent in all forms of representation. Significantly, Clerc calls this the 'au-delà des évidences sensibles' (1997: 15), evocative of the ghostly present-absence that Zoulikha represents in both the film *La Noubia* and then later in *La Femme sans sépulture*. Therefore, even if *La Noubia* does not

attempt to visually represent Zoulikha's body, a haunting aesthetic of this ambiguous sight draws attention to her presence-absence at the level of the image itself.

This haunting presence-absence of Zoulikha's body reappears in *La Femme sans sépulture*. In the 'Premier monologue de Zoulikha ...' Zoulikha's body is absent from the description, but the narrative is overwhelmed by sensorial perceptions, in particular in relation to light and sound which, through excess, leads to blinding: 'la lumière blanche, irréaliste, nous inondait, nous aveuglait tous' (Djebar 2002 : 68). In fact, Djebar avoids staging the material body and these exaggerated sensorial depictions of light and the sound only enhance the *absence* of Zoulikha's body. It appears that the materiality of the body must be deferred from the reader, since it is only the *absence* of Zoulikha's body that can be presented. For Hiddleston, it is this resistance to representation that characterises the ghost of Zoulikha as 'both same and other, transferable to the present and resistant to that transfer, to translation' (2006: 171). The deferred and unrepresentable nature of Zoulikha's absent body has also been understood by some critics in terms of Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory (1997, 2012) which examines the suspended transmission of memory and the filling in of blanks left by time or trauma (O'Riley, 2007: 65, Hiddleston, 2006: 167). Hirsch specifies that '[t]he aesthetics of post memory [...] is a diasporic aesthetics of temporal and spatial exile that needs simultaneously to (re)build and to mourn' (1997: 245). In other words, trauma interrupts the generational transmission of memory, and second- and third- generations are *exiled* temporally and spatially from the memory of their parents and grandparents. In resisting the material presence of Zoulikha's body in the novel, Djebar allows the hollow left by Zoulikha's absence to emerge in the monologue as a kind of postmemory. This postmemory is an imaginative effort on behalf of the filmmaker-narrator via the

testimonies of the daughters, to represent a memory from which they are fundamentally cut off.

If Djébar presents the absence of Zoulikha's body in her memory narratives, how does she do this without paradoxically fetishizing it? In her analysis of *Les Nuits de Strasbourg*, Debarati Sanyal acknowledges the importance of 'embodiment' for Djébar's 'ethics' of memory transmission between differentiated or unrelated bodies:

Djébar's ethics of embodied memory, in which past, bodies and languages brush up against each other without fusion, serves as a model for recognizing and transmitting memories while maintaining their particularity and resistance to assimilation within national narratives. (2015: 240)

There are obvious differences between *La Femme* and *Les Nuits*; while *Les Nuits* depicts the city of Strasbourg as a transnational palimpsest which crosses the borders of Europe and North Africa, in *La Femme* Djébar's writing remains largely within the confines of the environs of Mount Chenoua. However, a similar 'ethics of embodied memory' is at work in the representation of Zoulikha *via* the individual women that the filmmaker-narrator encounters. The memories are transmitted to, but not necessarily assimilated or appropriated by, the other, when they 'brush up against each other'. Similarly, Marks's 'haptic visuality' of an intercultural cinema of the senses also describes its potential to brush against the lives of others (1999: 21). Bearing in mind Sanyal's ethics of embodied memory and Marks's 'haptic visuality', we can argue that Zoulikha's monologue 'brush[es] up against' the experiences of the women who she left behind; her sister, daughters, and the other women of Césarée. Zoulikha is the eponymous *femme sans sépulture* but, at the same time, the narrative encompasses the voices of *other* women from her region by paradoxically representing the embodied memory of her absent body. This is what Hiddleston has called Djébar's 'specific plurality' (2004: 371) and can be

applied to Zoulikha's monologue to explain how her memory becomes a composite text made up of the reconstituted testimonies, folklore and oral history that is assembled by the fictional Lila in *La Noubia* and the narrator-filmmaker of *La Femme*. Furthermore, by stressing the cinematic staging of Zoulikha's *absence* (the bodiless-embodiment of her memory), Djébar is able to defer a singularity that would actually mask or hide the wider histories at work in Zoulikha's story. By highlighting the paradoxical ghostliness through cinematic references in light and performativity, Djébar avoids fetishizing Zoulikha into a postmemorial receptacle, an empty, symbolic figure of mythic pasts.

In the 'Deuxième monologue de Zoulikha', Zoulikha confesses a secret to her daughter concerning an encounter with the colonial 'commissaire Costa'. During her interrogation, Zoulikha imagines a dance of sexual attractions (Donadey 2008a), seemingly in contradiction to the antagonistic relationship of a female resistant fighter being interrogated by a male agent of French colonialism. Donadey has noted the controversy provoked by the representation of desire for agents of French Algeria. She suggests that this is part of Djébar's project to position her texts 'at the border between the oppositional and the complicit, in matters of sexuality as in matters of colonialization' (2017: 13). Indeed, Zoulikha's confession in this monologue is not an admission of guilt as one might expect of an anti-colonial, nationalist narrative. On the contrary, she describes Costa and Zoulikha's encounter as theatrical and historical metaphor:

Il faudrait se dire : sur cette terre, la condamnation vient-elle du fait que nous nous trompons parfois d'ennemi ? Que notre défi est nécessaire pour sortir du sommeil et que peu importent le visage et le corps adverses qui nous servent du butoir, j'aurais dit de point d'envol ? Nous cherchons la scène, nous nous avançons irrésistiblement comme des acteurs de théâtre ; or, devant le vide des spectateurs, nous nous construisons au hasard un cadre, un trait de craie esquissé à la va-vite ...

Vite, un ennemi, vite, une voix à défier : et nous, cherchons hors de notre sang alors que, la première des énigmes, nous la portons en nous, non ... (Djebar 2002 : 135).

By transforming the confession into a meta-commentary on staging and the performativity of political resistance, Zoulikha's ghost reflects on a zone of human encounter beyond the binaries of perpetrator-victim, masculine-feminine, coloniser-colonised. Any expectation we might have for a narrative of colonial antagonism and nationalist heroism is suddenly interrupted by Zoulikha's reflection on the performativity of her subject position as anti-colonial resistant. This passage therefore problematises the borders of complicity and sexuality in the context of anti-colonial antagonism. Rather than the heroic protagonist, she performatively casts herself and Costa as actor-vehicles on the stage of history 'devant le vide des spectateurs' (Ibid).

Zoulikha's self-awareness of the performativity of resistance, of femininity, and of memory is shown to be riddled with self-doubt and anxiety. Such reflexion requires the act of *looking* and the trope of the actor of history once again recalls the narrative's debt to cinematic forms. According to Florence Martin, this frustration of antagonistic binaries is already present in *La Noubia* since 'on either side of the Mediterranean, Djebar narrates history/herstory to both audiences' (2011: 48). Martin suggests that Djebar's film combats the competitive victimisation that Stora describes in *La Gangrène et l'oubli* (1991) whereby the atrocities of colonialism and the revolutionary war are remembered according to inflexible lines of identity politics:

Here, Djebar succeeds where Benjamin Stora thinks historians have failed: for once, audiences on both sides of the sea have access to the same story. That very story, one articulated in specific ways for one or the other audience, becomes not a *lieu de mémoire* [...] but, rather, the fertile meeting ground for several

memories: the memory of the ChercHELL women and the French nation. (2005: 167)

The production of a ‘fertile meeting ground’ for memory is made possible by the meta-theatricality of Zoulikha’s confessional monologue. In this way, Zoulikha’s performative confession is radical not only as it interrupts the nationalist narrative of ultimate victimisation and perpetration, but also draws our attention to the pitfalls of memorialisation that denies desire, empathy, and historical agency for feminine subjects. Once again, Zoulikha’s ghost is shown to be more than a symptom of the unresolved traumatic legacy of the Algerian War. Rather, her haunting monologues actively interrogate a meta-commentary on the mediums of cultural memory.

In this section, I have focused on Djébar’s self-conscious textual awareness of Zoulikha’s haunting. The voice of Zoulikha interrupts the novel’s progression, but the narrative itself is haunted through its ‘écriture de cinéma’, privileging the themes of staging, theatricality, and self-reflexivity. This is an effective strategy for reimagining the post-Independence narratives that would reduce Zoulikha’s memory to an emblem of feminine sacrifice or passive spectacle – rather, her ghost actively and self-consciously engages with the narrative. In the next section, I will discuss how this haunting presence brings the performativity of mourning to the forefront of the text. However, it is important to note that this performative mourning is also a gendered one, which disturbs the dichotomy between effacement and presence, forgetting and remembering.

1.4 Performative Mourning

As I have discussed so far, in *La Femme Zoulikha*’s monologues and testimonies by her loved ones are presented through Djébar’s performative ‘écriture de cinéma’. I have

suggested that 'écriture de cinéma', as a cinematic form of writing, is a textual strategy for working through the ideological production of Algerian women in post-Independence nationalism. This last section will now examine how Zoulikha's monologues performatively work through the processes and tropes of mourning *by* and *for* women.

According to Patrick Crowley, Djébar uses performative approaches to writing to comment on the different ways of knowing about Algerian histories. In his study of Djébar's epistolary intertextuality, he traces an oscillation between 'constative' approaches to history, where 'she inserts citations from historical archives that, cumulatively and over time, had an effect of repeating a view of Algeria, of Algerians, which was always already a citation and that always presupposed a normative structure that privileged the Western 'universal' viewpoint' (2011: 144), and her 'performative' metanarratives that place these citations in new contexts. In this way, Djébar's writings move between 'modes of knowing' (historical discourse) and 'modes of supposing' which refer to the 'fictional narratives of what-might-have-been of events left muted within the colonial palimpsest' (Ibid). Taking Crowley's approach to Djébar's oscillating performative and constative histories, I suggest that *La Femme* switches between discourses of 'knowing' – we know that Zoulikha was martyred for the cause of Algerian Independence – and of 'supposing', in which Djébar performatively speculates as to the nature of Zoulikha's experience of the *maquis* as an Algerian woman. As such, the 'supposing' lies in Djébar's imaginative monologues where she stages Zoulikha's memory.

We can add that Djébar's performative 'modes of supposing' (Crowley 2011: 144) vis-à-vis the life and death of Zoulikha are sensitive to the ways in which Algerian womanhood has been reiterated in the post-Independence period, where mourning the martyrs of the Algerian Revolution became a central tenet of Algerian nation-building

(Vince 2015).²⁶ Lamia Ben Youssef Zayzafoon's makes the case for the 'invention' of Muslim women, 'as an unfixed yet situated signifier' as opposed to the 'representation' of Muslim women, 'which posits a binary opposition between true and false representation' (2005: 1). In addition to Zayzafoon's notion of the 'invention' of the Muslim woman, I suggest that Zoulikha's monologues highlight the *performativity* of femininity in colonial, decolonising, and post-colonial contexts. The use of the terms 'invention' or 'performativity' in relation to Muslim women should not imply that these women are simply 'made up', or not rooted in socio-cultural reality. Rather, this terminology resists the ideological fixed notions of Algerian women that have been formed either in Orientalist discourses, North African nationalism, and, more recently, discourses of terror. In her performative staging of Zoulikha's monologues, Djébar reiterates the 'invention' of Algerian womanhood and female martyrdom in the post-Independence period, but her performative 'modes of supposing' offers the possibility of subverting some of these tropes and stereotypes.

For example, in the 'Troisième monologue de Zoulikha', Zoulikha's memory-performance takes us further in the past to her childhood, to a moment where she was first confronted with the political and cultural capital of performative identity. As the first Arab child to attend 'l'école française', Zoulikha recalls her pride at walking to school in a French school uniform. She cannot understand why she is met with derision by others. A passing peasant man spits on the path as he passes the young Zoulikha, calling out with disgust 'La fille Chaieb déguisée en Roumia' (184) ('Roumia' being the feminine adjective for 'Roman' in Arabic, i.e. Christian or European). However, rather than being

²⁶ Brigitte Weltman-Aron has also noted that *La Noubia* pays careful attention to the 'cultural value of reiteration' which reveals how 'women's narratives, songs, or dances acquire unsuspected and unscripted significance' over time. However, according to Weltman-Aron, Djébar is also 'wary of the rehearsed immutability that such traditions or recitals might induce' (2015: 93).

wounded by ‘Roumia’, it is the use of the term ‘déguisée’ that reverberates in this passage as the child-Zoulikha silently responds to this accusation. On the one hand, she is ‘figée’ by this hailing, it stops her mid-step and she is frozen by this definition as a physical reaction to his attempt to define her identity. On the other hand, her later reaction to this hailing demonstrates that the reality of her performance is more complex than simply betraying her kin by ‘dressing up’ as a ‘Roumia’, and she is even ‘presque heureuse’ with her disguise:

J’étais déguisée, mais à force de narguer les colons et leurs femmes, à force de faire la fière avec leurs filles, à force d’insulter leurs garçons quand ils tâchaient d’approcher de moi [...] (184)

Zoulikha may be disguised, but this disguise is an essential part of her survival as an Algerian girl in the hostile environment of colonised French Algeria. In her memory, the child Zoulikha defends her position, that her disguise *enables* her resistance to the women and men that would suppress her, to their children who dare approach her. Zoulikha’s disguise can actually empower her to infiltrate the other by wearing their clothes. By donning the European dress, she enjoys the significance of being singled out, to be made special; ‘Moi, ce jour-là, je me sentis comme couronnée! Ai-je d’emblée vraiment compris pourquoi?’ (185). Typically, Djébar leaves this question unanswered.

Djébar’s rendering of Zoulikha’s imagined memories complicates the narrative of a binary distinction where wearing European clothes in the colonial period is thought of as a harmful act of assimilation, and wearing the veil is equated with an act of resistance. Here Djébar takes a different approach to Frantz Fanon’s analysis of the veil and resistance in *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* (1959). In the chapter ‘L’Algérie se dévoile’, Fanon notes the historical and metaphorical significance of unveiling in French colonial discourse as a means to win over the bodies of Algerian women in the fight to

control Algerian territory (2011: 21). However, Djébar's description of veiling in *La Femme* presents dress as a practical tool for feminine survival in the quest for independence, as opposed to a masculine symbol in the struggle for a nationalist identity.²⁷ In the same monologue, Zoulikha's ghost explains veiling in terms of costume and disguise, as she wears the veil in mourning for the death of her husband, but also as a means to pass unseen and avoid capture by the French:

J'allais de nouveau me déguiser, sinon ce voile accepté jusque-là deviendrait linceul, ou prison, il me fallait l'arracher, ou alors le mettre comme costume pour quel théâtre, pour quel jeu immense, quel affrontement nouveau ? (Djébar 2002: 192)

Both veiling and unveiling occupy ambiguous roles for Zoulikha – it is both a means of liberation and a burden. As Hiddleston points out, 'in addition to offering protection [...] the veil is also frequently associated with the shroud, with death or the metaphorical extinction brought about by sequestration and the restriction of women' (2006: 163). However, what is especially significant is the stress of disguise and performance – the theatricality of veiling and unveiling as a ritualistic act of mourning and resistance (either to colonial oppression or nationalist patriarchy). In both her guise as a 'Roumia' at a French school and veiled, mourning widow, the emphasis is on a performance which produces an 'affrontement' (Djébar 2002: 192), one which crosses thresholds in a dangerous act of transgression. In dealing with these questions of dress, performance, and feminine resistance in this monologue, Zoulikha both reiterates *and* subverts the rules of this 'jeu immense' (Ibid). Performance through dress is a way to disguise and transgress, but the consequences of such 'jeux' are always perceived as something dangerous.

²⁷ We can also think of the political and insurrectional code-switching of the *poseuses de bombes* and the cross-dressing Ali La Pointe who veils himself to hide his gun and identity in the film *La Bataille d'Alger* as I discussed in the Introduction.

In Zoulikha's monologues, the dangers of feminine performativity are policed by both coloniser and colonised in unwelcome ways. In the 'Dernier monologue de Zoulikha sans sépulture ...', Zoulikha describes her memories of being called 'ma mère' by the men of her resistance cell who, without asking her, automatically assign her the maternal role of guardianship:

Ils m'avaient alourdie, ils m'avaient vieillie puisque je me découvrais à la tête de cette quinzaine d'hommes vigoureux [...] tous baissant le front devant moi par pudeur et, quelque fois même, me baisant la main sur le revers et, en le retournant, sur la paume. Ce geste de dévotion, pour ancrer dans leur mémoire leurs aïeules et leurs mères silencieuses chacune dispersée et dans l'attente.

Ils m'annexaient donc. (230).

Being designated as a mother to men who are largely her age, if not older, desexualises Zoulikha but also appropriates her femininity at the service of her masculine counterparts. This corresponds with Natalya Vince's study of *mujahidat*, in which she notes that '[w]hen women who were in the *maquis* talk about the war now, many of them describe it as a completely desexualised period, in which they lost all sense of their femininity' (2015: 92).²⁸ Zoulikha's memories of the *maquis* attest to a ritualised recognition of her desexualised femininity as a mother. Gestures of 'dévotion' perform Zoulikha's identity *on her behalf* as a symbolic mother. Furthermore, this passage is significant since it demonstrates the gendered politics of commemoration. Zoulikha is 'honoured' by the actions of these men who anoint her as a surrogate mother. However, they also inscribe her into their memory of their 'aïeules' and distinguish Zoulikha's efforts from her

²⁸ Vince also highlights how this oral evidence contradicts archival evidence of sexual abuse within the FLN and the carefully orchestrated marriages which policed and codified interaction between men and women within the *maquis* (2015: 94).

masculine counterparts. She is weighed down by their blessings, and in a contradictory movement in which she is separated from the men but also ‘annexed’ by their memory. Her agency as a woman, fighting in the resistance, is not her own but is appropriated into the soldiers’ memories of their mothers and grandmothers. Performance and commemoration, therefore, intersect with the gendered politics of Algeria’s decolonisation.

Zoulikha’s memory of being honoured as a ‘mother’ by the men of her *maquis* is a brief moment in a chapter which is predominantly about her interrogation and torture by the French. From her posthumous spectral subjectivity, she narrates in the first person how her dead body is dumped in a village. The villagers are too terrified to move her body, yet they nonetheless come to observe her and offer some form of care. Zoulikha speculates ironically how these villagers would exchange her body for a commemorative statue in a future independent Algeria:

Ils disent : « mon cadavre » ; l’indépendance venue, peut-être diront-ils, ma « statue », comme si on statufiait un corps de femme, n’importe quel, comme si, simplement, pour le dresser dehors, contre un horizon plat, il ne fallait pas des siècles de silence bâillonné pour nous, les femmes ! En tout cas, chez nous. (Djebar 2002: 227-8).

With the benefit of her spectral hindsight, Zoulikha addresses her frustration with the limitations of public mourning in post-Independence Algeria. She questions if a statue of her body, any woman’s body, is a sufficiently reparative gesture in the wake of extensive historical silencing. The transformation of the cadaver into a statue is a morbid perspective on the socio-political ventriloquisation of martyrs in the wake of Algerian Independence. Zoulikha’s monologues do not simply speculate on the details of her death

and disappearance, but actively interrogate modes of mourning and commemoration for women.

In these monologues, Djébar refuses to speculate on the burial of Zoulikha's body and thus contribute to the 'statufication' of her memory. Mourning Zoulikha's absent tomb in these texts seeks to find new modes of contestation that do not simply re-iterate the post-Independence sanctification of martyrdom. Instead, Djébar's narrative *performs* the story of her death as a form of mourning-as-contestation, theorised by Judith Butler in her 2004 book *Precarious Life*. Butler queries the categories and conditions by which we cannot mourn the passing of a life because we do not recognise that life in the first place. She claims that to mourn the lives of those who are deemed 'ungrievable' is to protest against the normative 'frames' that would exclude certain lives from the norms of recognition. Mourning is not a private, depoliticising process but can furnish 'a sense of political community' (Butler 2004a: 22). To mourn the 'ungrievable' is a complex process, since it has not qualified as a life, it 'is already the unburied, if not the unburiable' (34). In *La Femme*, Djébar's narratives engage with this aporia in the duality of mourning. Zoulikha is already unburied ('sans sépulture'), but is also impossible to bury her since a cathartic entombment would efface her memory as a commemorative monument – commemoration simultaneously effaces the subject of mourning as it asserts the subjectivity of the buried subject.

For O'Riley, this question of burial is linked to the oppression of the Algerian woman in the aesthetics of a national body politic. In his discussion of Djébar's search for a 'national cinema', he likens Djébar's engagement with a plural and feminine 'Algerian body politic' to Antigone's defiance of Creon's Law: '[l]ike Antigone after the crime, Djébar repudiates the State interdiction on the body' (2007: 55). Antigone's classic example of resistance is, ostensibly, a helpful analogy for thinking through women's

mourning in Djébar's work. Antigone's act of burying her brother's corpse is in rebellion against not only the law and government, but the tyrannical, patriarchal will of her uncle, Creon. In contrast, I want to suggest that Zoulikha's monologues demonstrate the limitations of Antigone's burial as a feminist mode of mourning. The metaphorical reference to Antigone as a symbol of feminist rebellion and protest against patriarchal tyranny is not entirely unproblematic. Butler argues that Sophocles's Antigone is only able to defy Creon by performing the burial and by declaring her defiance as 'act in language' (Butler 2000: 10). She proposes that 'to publish one's act in language is in some sense the completion of the act' and borrows the 'manly' qualities of hubris and the law. As such, Antigone's act is never fully hers, she can 'act only through embodying the norms of the power she opposes' (Ibid). Antigone, in this respect, cannot easily be appropriated as a symbol of feminine heroism or gendered civil disobedience.

Djébar struggles to complete the ritualistic act of burial by 'publishing' this act in language. Her textual strategy of 'écriture de cinéma' and the performative monologues refuse to actively complete the act of burial through the written word. This, too, would only reinforce 'the norms of the powers she opposes'. In her performative poetics of mourning and memory, the cinematic and the literary are constantly cross-pollinating and, as such, the act of mourning never ends, it is never 'published' in a singular language. Thus, Djébar resists the language of monumentalisation that would petrify Zoulikha's memory and replace her absent tomb with a cultural one.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how the performativity of gendered memory is a central concern in Djébar's project of seeking a pluralistic medium to portray the memory of

Zoulikha Oudai and the other women of her mother's ancestral home. Djébar uses a textual strategy which oscillates between visual, aural, oral, and textual modes of representation, to problematise modes of haunting, mourning, and commemoration in relation to the women of Césarée and Chenoua and their memory of the Algerian revolution.

Reading *La Nouba* and *La Femme* comparatively highlights the dangers and pitfalls that the very act of memory poses to women in history. *La Nouba* uses the aesthetics of the palimpsest and the threshold to complicate a straight-forward 'making visible' or 'audible' of women's voices. As Djébar shows with Zoulikha's monologue in *La Femme*, integration into the predominant national narrative also entails a certain amount of effacement. Therefore, bearing witness to women's memories requires a new kind of commemorative practice. It is not just a question of making women visible in memory narratives, or of producing physical, literary, or cinematic statues that 'represent' women, but finding new formal approaches to engage with their memories. It is this sensitivity to problems of visibility, effacement, presence, absence, voice, and silence that enables Djébar to undertake the unending task of producing a gendered memory as a kind of formal haunting in the form of 'écriture de cinéma', oscillating between her written and cinematic modes of expression.

This chapter has analysed gender performativity and memory in terms women's memories of the Algerian revolution. In the next chapter, I will address a *transnational* approach to gendered memory in a comparative analysis of autofictional and theatrical works by Hélène Cixous. This will shift the focus from a feminist critique of nationalist forms of collective memory, to explore how gender can be a framework for transnational memory transmission, in this case from Cixous's Algerian narratives, to her depiction of Indian Independence on the stage.

Chapter Two: Gendering Transnational Memory in Writings

by **Hélène Cixous**

‘Car le Théâtre c’est le lieu du Crime. Oui le lieu du Crime, le lieu de l’horreur, aussi le lieu du Pardon.’

‘Le lieu du Crime, le lieu du Pardon’ (Cixous 1987: 257)

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, I suggested that Assia Djébar employs ‘écriture de cinéma’ as a formal strategy to mediate and negotiate the representation of women’s memories from her mother’s tribe. ‘Écriture de cinéma’ oscillates between cinematic and literary expression in self-conscious narratives to performatively stage women’s memories of the Algerian revolution. Her film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* and novel *La Femme sans sépulture* are interspersed with self-reflexive interventions by the haunting presence of Zoulikha’s ghost. I suggested that this highlights Djébar’s anxiety concerning the representation and effacement of women’s memories in literary and public discourse. I concluded that ‘écriture de cinéma’ provides Djébar with a new language with which to express the women’s memories.

In this chapter, I turn to the works of Hélène Cixous, a contemporary of Djébar, who also engages with memories of colonial Algeria in her writings but from a ‘transnational’ perspective.²⁹ In my comparative study of her autofictional writings about her early life in Algeria and her play about Indian decolonisation *L’Indiade, ou l’Inde de leurs rêves* (1987), I will explore how Cixous’s gendered imaginaries facilitate the

²⁹ Sections of this chapter are published as the following: Ivey, B. (2017) ‘Hélène Cixous’s *L’Indiade ou l’Inde de leurs rêves*: Gendering Memories of Colonialism in India and Algeria’ In: Atack, M., Fell, A., Holmes, D. and Long, I. Eds. *French Feminisms 1975 and After: New Readings, New Texts*, Oxford: Peter Lang, pp.93-116.

transnational movement of colonialism from Algeria to India.³⁰ My analysis is also concerned with the aesthetic and ethical consequences of Cixous's gendered transnational memory. Djébar's self-conscious 'écriture de cinéma' highlights the problematic notion of writing *for* or *as* the other. I will suggest that we can understand Cixous's depiction of Indian decolonisation *through* her depiction of colonial Algeria in her autofictional writings, which shows the *potential* of a transcolonial connectivity. However, this gesture of connection between her Algerian autofiction and Indian history also risks being more appropriative, rather than espousing a 'multidirectional ethics', where connective memory in literature takes place 'with a sustained reflection on complicity' (Sanyal 2015: 9).

The first section of this chapter will announce the terms of my analysis. How does 'transnational' memory pertain to Cixous's work? What kind of memory movement does this term describe in relations to others, such as 'transcultural' or 'transcolonial' memory? What does it mean to 'gender' transnational memory in relation to Cixous's writing? This will situate this chapter within the wider concerns of the thesis, which addresses how transnational and 'connective' memory can be gendered, but also how points of connection can form through gendered imaginaries. Second, I examine how Cixous recalls the colonial family in her 'autofictional' novels *Dedans* (1969) and *Les Rêveries de la femme sauvage* (2000a).³¹ Published 31 years apart, these texts nonetheless share the general characteristic of 'life writing' as they recall Cixous's early life growing up in colonial Algeria, focusing particularly on the family. Cultural theories of the nation have theorised the family as a microcosmic model of the nation-state (Yuval-Davis 1997;

³⁰ I will define autofiction at more length on p.92.

³¹ These are not the only autofictional novels by Cixous, but I have selected them to provide examples from the earlier and later stages of Cixous's career. While it has not been possible to fully examine her numerous autofictional works in this chapter, this selection can offer a concise overview.

Gilroy 2004), appearing in various cultural manifestations of the mother- or father-country. Cixous's autofictional narratives about her early memories of family life in colonial Algeria defy the categories of a singular mother- or father-country which, I will suggest, originate from her melancholic association of Algeria with loss.

Third, I will examine memories of colonial Algeria which are rearticulated and re-mediated in her play, *L'Indiade ou l'Inde de leurs rêves* (1987) written for the *Théâtre du Soleil* company and directed by Ariane Mnouchkine. I will frame the transnational performance of memory in terms of Alison Landsberg's notion of 'prosthetic memory' (2004), to suggest that the history of Indian Independence and the formation of Pakistan in 1947 forms a 'prosthetic memory' for Cixous's Algerian recollections. Finally, I will consider how these prosthetic memories re-call and re-gender the colonial family of Cixous's autofiction through the gendered characterisation of Gandhi. In these last sections, I will underline some of the ethical limitations of this transnational movement of memory which is facilitated by the gendering of memory. This chapter, therefore, offers a case study of how gendered memory can limit the potential of an empathetic politics of memory in transnational, transcultural, and transcolonial contexts.

2.2 Reading Cixous Transnationally

The relevance of a transnational reading of Cixous's writings appears obvious when one considers her biography. Cixous was born in the Algerian coastal city of Oran in 1937 to Eve Klein, a Jewish German woman with Ashkenazic ancestors from central Europe, and to Georges Cixous, who was from a Sephardic family rooted in Algeria since the expulsion of Jewish populations from Spain and Portugal in the 15th century (Miller 2014: 61). Communicating in French and German and frequently playing language games, the

Cixous family was a multilingual and multicultural one. As Jewish-Algerians, they occupied an ambiguous place in the Manichean systems of value that bifurcated colonised from coloniser and Cixous's early life was marked by exclusion from both the *pied-noir* settler society and the largely Muslim population of Arab-Berber Algerians.³² The Cixous family's precarious situation at the intersection of anti-Semitic and colonial discrimination is most clearly expressed in the Vichy-era suspension of their French citizenship with the revocation of the 1830 *Décret Crémieux*— Georges was prevented from practising medicine and worked instead as a podiatrist until the US landing in North Africa in 1942.³³ Family life did not settle after the war or with their reinstated French citizenship. Georges died of tuberculosis on 12 February 1948 when Cixous was just 11 years old. Eve moved the family to Algiers having retrained as a midwife, providing maternal health care for the largely Arab population of the 'ravin de la femme sauvage', an area on the edge of the Clos-Salembier neighbourhood. Unlike her mother and brother, Pierre, Cixous left Algeria in 1955 during the War of Independence. From her teenage years Cixous travelled abroad to England and studied the works of James Joyce while earning her *agrégation* in English Literature in 1959. To this day, she continues to give presentations and publishes in English. The association of Algeria with profound loss was cemented with the death of her son, Stéphane, who had Down's syndrome and was in his grandmother's care in Algiers. Cixous recounts this loss in her novel *Le Jour où je n'étais pas là* (2000b), where the baby is renamed Georges, after Cixous's father.

³² See Claire Eldridge's 2012 article on the relationship between Jews and Muslims in French Algeria and how it is remembered more broadly.

³³ The *Crémieux* decree of October 1870 entitled Jewish people in Algeria to French citizenship. With the establishment of the Vichy regime in 1940 the decree was revoked. For a concise overview of the Crémieux decree in relation to memories of Algerian Jews see Nancy Wood 'Remembering the Jews of Algeria' (2003: 251-270).

It is difficult to define the generic modes by which Cixous explores memories of an Algerian childhood in her writings, and these details of the transnational trajectories in Cixous's family are one way to decode and understand her writing.³⁴ It is clear that Algeria is undeniably present in Cixous's works throughout her career, most obviously in her 'Algerian works'. Samuel Everett identifies two movements in her Algerian works; the 'Algériances' of the 1990s where her 'engagement as a feminist and her Algerian experience began to fit together' (2017: 209), and the Algerian return in her writings post-9/11, where the rise in nationalist and identitarian politics prompted 'renewed political bite, after the dark years in Algeria, to associate herself with Algeria' (213). However, Algeria, as her formative birthplace (if not ever a 'home' country), is found in some of her most well-known and widely read works of feminist theory. In her 1975 essay 'Sorties', for example, she identifies Algeria as the source of her philosophical thinking, a trajectory which is marked by the violence of colonialism:

J'ai eu cette étrange « chance » : quelques coupes de dés, une rencontre entre deux trajectoires de diaspora, et au terme de ces chemins d'expulsion et de dispersion qui ponctuent, à travers le déplacement des juifs, le fonctionnement de l'Histoire occidentale, je tombe – je nais – en plein sur une scène exemplaire, un modèle nu, brut, de ce fonctionnement même : j'ai appris à lire, à écrire, à hurler, à vomir, en Algérie [...] De ce premier spectacle, j'ai tout appris. (Cixous 2010b: 84).

On the one hand, Cixous describes her childhood in colonial Algeria as a misadventure of fate which exposed her to the profound division of the Hegelian binary; master against

³⁴ The transnational turn in cultural and sociological studies has helped complicate conceptions of family dynamics and the ways children inherit understandings of the past and present, as shown by Deborah Bryceson and Ulla Vuorela (2003). Mary Chamberlain and Selma Leydesdorf have demonstrated that the transnational family's sense of belonging, within the family, a community, and the nation, is 'located in the imaginary and in memory' (233). See also Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983).

slave, French against Algerian, man against woman. On the other hand, as a Jewish French-Algerian, Cixous had a unique perspective on ‘ce premier spectacle’ of colonial horror which then enabled her to produce a ‘response to forms of colonial violence and exclusion’ based on a refusal of singular national and gendered identity (Kaiser 2013: 23).

Everett suggests that Algeria’s unique status as three departments under the French republic meant the long standing, diverse communities of Algeria were differentiated ‘by antonomasia’. In other words, that the appellation of different groups within Algerian society by the French state also imparted ‘essential qualities to *les Arabes, les Français, les Juifs et les Catholiques*’ (2017: 215). With her Algeria texts, Cixous recalls her discovery of these divisions. But she also undermines the essentialising and dividing qualities of these ingrained boundaries, by stressing the transnational trajectory of her own identity as Jewish French-Algerian. In her short story ‘My Algeriance’, Cixous echoes her essay ‘Sorties’ by describing her birth in Algeria as the result of a series of transnational accidents:

My way of thinking was born with the thought that I could have been born elsewhere, in one of the twenty countries where a living fragment of my maternal family had landed after it blew up on the Nazi minefield. With the thought of the chanciness, of the accident, of the fall. (1998: 126)

This ‘chanciness’ of the fragmented family history across continents and in between the histories of the Second World War, the Holocaust, and colonisation in Algeria lends itself to reading her writing about these trajectories from a transnational lens. This does not simply mean understanding the ‘Je’ as a transnational or border-crossing object. Transnationalism, as Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplüg have argued, ‘characterises a new way of looking at different kinds of historical objects that transcend national or

cultural boundaries' (2014: 2). It is thus now a question of considering 'transnational perspectives' rather than thinking of men and women as transnational objects (Allen 2006).

For historians and memory theorists, transnational perspectives are increasingly important with the acceleration of cultural globalisation. Consequently, transnational perspectives complicate ideas of a homogenous nationalist narrative of identity based on discrete and singular narratives of memory (Jay 2010: 118). Maurice Halbwachs's theory of a socially constructed 'mémoire collective' (1950) as producing a collective identity cannot account for the ways that memory mediates categories of nationality, race, and religion on a transnational scale. What can be called the 'transnational turn' in memory studies highlights the fact that there can be no easy assumption that memory – collective, national or otherwise – *belongs* to a specific group, for example, that French memories *belong* to the French or an abstracted idea of France (Rothberg 2009: 5). The 'trans-' of transnational suggests the movement of memory across borders of national states or cultures which themselves may not be 'strictly isomorphic' (Rothberg 2014: 130), appearing in distinctly different contexts or histories. Rothberg argues that *transcultural* memory refers to the '*layering* of historical legacies that occurs in the traversal of *cultural* borders, while transnational memory refers to the *scales* of remembrance that intersect in the crossing of *geo-political* borders' (Ibid, original emphasis). I take from Rothberg's distinction that transnational memory engages in the hierarchy of remembrance attached to the nation-states (deciding what is and is not remembered by the national collective), while transcultural pertains to the sedimentation of memories in terms of cultural cross-pollination.

In Cixous's autofictional works of colonial Algeria during her childhood, the national context of remembrance is a highly unstable one and not easily differentiated

from the transcultural. The shape of her memory is transnational as it refuses the formation of a collectivity or community based on a homogenous national or religious identity, but it is transcultural in the sense that she demonstrates the various interconnecting cultural trajectories that fall under colonial history. While I use the term transnational throughout this chapter, it is important to stress that this is not distinct from the movement of memory across borders of culture. The transnational can also be traced in the ways the figures of the colonial family (the deceased father, the mother, and the brother) represent the relationality of the 'Je' with the many different historical trajectories that collide in her memories of colonial Algeria.

Claire Boyle describes Cixous's autobiography as 'a writing of self-estrangement' (2007: 127), where estrangement from the self and others 'generates creative forces' (146). Mairéad Hanrahan's 'Of Autobiography' discusses Cixous's paradoxical disdain and desire for writing the self, which, 'instead of seeking to provide a mirror-image of the author, are an exploration of the self as Other, an attempt to paint the alterity of the self. Not *auto*, but *altobiography*' (2000: 283). Hanrahan has also described Cixous's works as 'semi-fictions' in order to theorise the generic instability in the narrative dimension of her writing that 'troubles the border between fiction and its others' (2014: 12). In this study, I favour the term autofiction to describe Cixous's engagement with her own biography in the sense supported by Shirley Jordan's 2013 *État Présent* on 'Autofiction in the Feminine' as the generically and chronologically unstable form of fictionalising the feminine self in narrative. This is dependent on how the first person is narrated as both the ostensible *subject* and *object* of writing. Nathalie Edwards (2011) argues that Cixous writes autofiction with a shifting subject that oscillates between and refuses both a 'unitary' 'Je' and the 'non-unitary' plurivocality (142-3). Akiko Ueda posits that in *Dedans*, 'Je' paradoxically unites and separates with the Father, locking the narrative into

an incomplete but continuous mourning: ‘Il s’agit d’un commencement toujours possible et impossible, le commencement répété dans la finitude, la douleur de la perte’ (2011: 184). I want to add that this unstable ‘Je’ is also caught in the constant renegotiation of gendered and national identity *vis-à-vis* the memory of the colonial family.

In addition to these studies, I suggest that Cixous’s critical engagement with gendered subjectivity plays a central role in the deconstruction of homogenous, national memories in her work, through the reinterpretation of the father- or mother-country trope in her works. According to Nira Yuval-Davis, national identities are gendered and genders can be ‘nationed’ (1997: 21). Gender is at the heart of the symbolic value of nationhood, and the burden of representation is especially heavy on women through the value of maternity:

A figure of a woman, often a mother, symbolizes in many cultures the spirit of the collectivity, whether it is Mother Russia, Mother Ireland or Mother India. In the French Revolution its symbol was ‘La Patrie’, a figure of a woman giving birth to a baby [...] (1997: 45).

Yuval-Davis describes a quasi-universal vision of the maternal which is mobilised by nationalisms in both metropolitan (‘La Patrie’) and decolonising contexts (Mother Ireland and India). Paul Gilroy stresses the role of gender in the bio-politics of racism and nationalism which ‘connects men and women, boys and girls to the larger collectivity toward which they must orient themselves if they are to acquire a Fatherland’ (2004: 127). As Françoise Vergès has shown, colonisation is equally dependent on the symbolic power of gendered nationhood, which she calls the ‘colonial family romance’, where ‘[c]olonization was the expansion of republican brotherhood, and France was La Mère-Patrie, protecting her colonized children from the abuse of local tyrants’ (1999: 4). On the colonisation of India, Ashis Nandy’s seminal *The Intimate Enemy* discusses the

‘homology of sexual and political dominance’ practised by British colonialists (1983: 4). The work of Mrinalini Sinha on the ‘effeminate Bengali’ has shown how the colonial imagination gendered colonised peoples, in order to legitimise Britain’s role as the paternal figure in the imperialist family (1995). In all of these examples, the gendered discourses of power draw on the performative trope of femininity (maternity or submission) and masculinity (filiation or patronage) to enforce colonialism (effeminate natives) or to construct a symbol of anti-colonialism (Mother Ireland, Mother India). The question remains how Cixous represents the figures of the mother, father, and the brother in her autofictional works as performative reiterations of these tropes of gender.

The representation of the colonial family in Cixous’s autofiction is an issue that has received some critical attention. Fiona Barclay and Alison Rice have both compared the loss of Algeria in Cixous’s work to that of Marie Cardinal’s. According to Rice, both authors associate Algeria with the mother via the motif of an unattainable ‘terre maternelle’ (2006b: 132). Thus, the maternal is not a symbol of belonging for Cixous, but of its impossibility. Similarly, for Barclay, the loss of Algeria is a paradoxical one since the Evian accords forever divided Cardinal and Cixous from Algeria and yet ‘ensured that the motherland which was now lost to them became a constant spectral presence, as its ambivalence, associated at once with both unity and difference, becomes the driving force in the development of writing projects centered on the feminine and maternal’ (Barclay 2011: 70). Not only is Cixous haunted by the memory of a lost Algeria but this loss, for Barclay, compels her to respond to Algeria in feminine, maternal terms – a lost motherland. For others, the father’s death has been a constant presence throughout her works (Dobson and Rye 2000: 244).

Some commentators consider Cixous’s allegorical use of childhood objects as symbols for the father’s loss as a formative trauma; the dog gifted to Cixous and her

brother by her father, a doll in the shop window, the woman's bike given to Cixous's brother by her mother, a door opening and closing, a pair of white shoes painted red by a young Algerian boy (see Décaire 2004, Heathcote 2006, Silverman 2009, Kaiser 2013). Generally, Cixous scholars read the loss of the father as a catalyst for an identity crisis. For Jeannelle Laillou Savona (2001), remembering the father entails an ambivalent relationship to her 'judéité' which is intensified in the wake of the abrogation of the *Crémieux* decree. Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller's study concurs that 'écrire sur l'Algérie est alors le prétexte d'un retour à la source paternelle' (2009: 849). Along with Isabelle Décaire (2004) and Jennifer Yee (2001), Debrauwere-Miller has also remarked that illness functions as a metaphor for mourning conveyed by the neologism of 'Malgérie' that appears in *Les Rêveries de la femme sauvage*. Like the unhealed wound, Oana Panaïté describes the death of the father in Cixous as 'une empreinte vide, une main négative de l'écriture que la fille s'attache à investir, non de sens, ce qui impliquerait l'unicité abstraite, mais de corporalité multiple' (2014: 800). From the wound, to the 'vide', an emphasis on multiplicity is very common in readings of Cixous's Algerian writings. In contrast, in his study of Cixous and Derrida, Max Silverman has argued that their writings not only challenge dualist thinking in favour of multiplicity, but 'reveal the "knotted intersections" between "different" histories' (2009: 12), opening up Cixous's Algerian autofiction to the various transnational histories inherent in her family life.

These studies demonstrate how parental imaginaries represent the loss of a Jewish-Algerian identity. However, it is my contention that Cixous's 'Algerian works' complicate the metaphorical function of the imaginary colonial parent – La Mère-Patrie, Le Père de la Patrie – as the stand-in for a lost parent (the father), or native identity (Algeria) (Vergès 1999: 4-5). I want to suggest that, as well as loss, Cixous complicates the tropes of a lost mother- or father-country and produces transnational memory as an

ambiguously gendered space of non-belonging which is neither entirely maternal nor paternal, French nor Algerian.

2.3 Remembering the Colonial Family

The representation of the colonial family is a key arena where Cixous's transnational memories are mobilised and gendered. As already stated, Cixous's first novel *Dedans* is about the loss of her father in Algeria and her consequentially depleted sense of belonging; 'Depuis le silence de mon père, je vis sur mon maigre patrimoine' (1969: 55). As Cixous recalls the loss of Algeria, this loss is gendered by the memory of her father's death in complicated and indirect ways.

Although Algeria has been present from her earliest writings, Cixous has stated that she never wanted to write about Algeria for fear of repeating 'le geste des généraux et colons français qui s'étaient "distingués" sur l'Algérie' (2003: 160). Instead the 'Ne-pas-écrire-sur l'Algérie' became 'une sorte de silence moite, un voile d'oubli sans violence comme une surdité' (Ibid). Regarding Cixous's *Lettre à Zohra Drif* (2001), Pamela Marie Hoffer suggests that Cixous's silence surrounding Algeria is itself a kind of testimony (2006: 157).³⁵ A reluctance to testify directly to Algeria has meant that her 2000 novel *Les Rêveries* is sometimes understood as being a turning point in her writerly career, where she finally began to represent her childhood memories of Algeria (Yee 2001: 189, Debrauwere-Miller 2009: 848). The narrator reiterates her reluctance to write about Algeria – stating 'Je n'ai jamais voulu écrire sur l'Algérie ce pays natal inconnu' (2000a: 167) – and opens the novel by recognising the near impossibility of bearing

³⁵ This is one of the few of Cixous's texts that directly addresses the context of the Algerian War of Independence. The letter is addressed to Zohra Driff who was a member of the Algiers network of *poseuses de bombes*.

witness to an Algerian childhood: ‘Tout le temps où je vivais en Algérie je rêvais d’arriver un jour en Algérie, j’aurais fait n’importe quoi pour y arriver’ (9). Despite being born there, Cixous insists she never *came* to Algeria. Writing about Algeria responds to this painful, unfulfilled desire to come to Algeria. At the same time, this inability to come to Algeria is also about the loss of the father – one cannot be dealt with without the other. However, despite her best efforts, bearing witness, remembering, and writing about Algeria (and the father) does not yield any closure. *Les Rêveries* opens with a passage where the narrator passes an entire night in a frenzied act of writing, only for her memories and the pages of notes to evaporate in the light of a new day. She is left bereft anew by her lost writings:

Des cinq pages que j’avais écrites dans une joie sans garde, et que je n’ai pas inventées car je les ai vues écrites, je ne trouvais plus que la demi-feuille, la première, sur laquelle sans même allumer j’avais écrit les lignes «*Tout le temps où je vivais en Algérie etc.*» (Cixous 2000a: 11)

The mourning that she enacts for these lost pages of childhood memory metaphorically evokes the loss of Algeria, and by extension the incomplete act of mourning for her father. While *Dedans* and *Les Rêveries* are ostensibly ‘about’ her childhood in Algeria, it is very clear that any direct access to the past is entirely impossible. Instead, these narratives are concerned with the mediations, pitfalls, and silences of memory through which the narrator accesses an imaginative Algeria, rather than a reflection of any geo-political reality.

Expressing the memory of the father’s death in Algeria is frustrated by the difficulty of finding an adequate way of re-mediating this memory in writing. In *Les Rêveries*, one way of navigating this difficulty in the labour of writing, is the employment of wordplay and portmanteau. Cixous employs playful and childlike language throughout

Les Rêveries in the form of rich mots-valises, combining several words and phrases all at once such as ‘inséparable’ (2000a: 45), ‘Allaouabayazouinaleilaliaïcha’ (90), ‘Arabizarre’ (47), ‘tonpère’ (65), ‘Yadibonfromage’ (113). References to Algeria are circumnavigated by these bitter-sweet neologisms. Like in her essay, ‘My Algeriance’ (another play on words: *Algérie, enfance, errance*), in *Les Rêveries* she describes the ‘trace malgérienne’ whose presences and absences she notes throughout the novel. Here, she combines several phrases – ‘mal d’Algérie’, ‘mal d’amour’, ‘l’algie’, and also ‘maladie’ – to convey the doubling of meaning in language and ‘thus encompass both a love story and the diagnosis of a sickness’ (Yee 2001: 190). The sense of an internalised paradox is reiterated when she describes her memory of Algeria as a ‘sensation d’être possédée par une sensation de dépossession’ (Cixous 2000a: 16). Cixous’s sense of possessed dispossession is symbolic of a haunting trauma which refers to colonial and anti-Semitic oppression, but also to the personal tragedy of her father’s death from tuberculosis. The sickness of her father symbolically intermingles with her own ‘maladie algérie’ and it is at times difficult to distinguish her sickly ‘dispossession’ from the sickness that took her father. Furthermore, such wordplay sustains a logic which contradicts the Manichean world of ‘Algériefrançaise’ (142) which is based on segregation and taxonomy: are you French or Arab? Her neological creations reflect an inability to answer this question. Through the suggestion of the vulnerable and sickly subject, boundaries between words, between self and other, daughter and father, Algeria and elsewhere, begin to blur.

Similarly, the structure of *Dedans* reveals a preoccupation with binary systems. Divided into two parts, the first establishes the death of the father as the foundational moment of the daughter’s early life in Algeria, and the second part follows the adult relationships of the narrator with lovers and friends in France. Yet, this dual structure is undermined by the novel’s thematic engagement with the transgression of childhood and

adulthood, Algeria and France, inside and outside. The opening lines begin with an ending and end with a beginning: ‘Le soleil se couchait à notre commencement et se lève à notre fin’ (1969: 10). The father’s death is announced bluntly by the opening of the third chapter ‘ET MON PÈRE POURRIT’ (1969: 27). The capitalised exclamation, appearing as if *in medias res*, is decontextualised from the scene of the father’s death, his burial or mourning. Yet, the present tense stresses the immediacy of the traumatic legacy that this death has left in its wake; an open wound which cannot heal. Furthermore, the linguistic brevity of the sentence poses open-ended questions, troubling the reader rather than reconciling them with death as an ultimate conclusion. The verb ‘POURRIT’ elliptically brings to mind the father’s body, entombed in the Algerian soil and links his death to the locality of the Algerian land in which he was interred. In ‘My Algeriance’ she notes that the death of her father and his burial in Algeria simultaneously connects her with, and alienates her from, Algerian territory: ‘[t]o leave behind the grave of one’s father: through dust I acquire a sort of invisible belonging to a land to which I am bound by my atoms without nationality. Because of the phantom of my father I cannot be patriated anywhere. An abandonment retains my memory on the unvisited heights of Algiers’ (1998: 154). The sense of ‘abandonment’ of the father’s body in Algeria is similar to a Freudian melancholia for the loss of a love object, which, as Ricœur has argued, extends to abstract ideas of nationhood and identity (2000: 95). Therefore, her sense of ‘abandonment’ must also extend to Algeria. Remembering the father is a transnational movement, it requires the return to the father’s body, to Algeria via some imaginative effort.

This transnational imaginative movement is also a gendered one since to recall the father also entails a recognition of the father-as-Algeria. This is a recollection that foregrounds the lost love-object of the father in the same act of remembering Algeria, and evokes the idea of an absent ‘père-patrie’. The ambivalent masculinity of the lost love-

object (is it the father or the father-country?) is expounded in the second half of *Dedans*. Here, the ghost of the father returns but is marked only by an anonymous 'Il'. The identity of this 'il' is highly contentious, since it simultaneously refers to a series of anonymous lovers as well as the absent father:

Lui.

Moi autour et dedans lui.

Nous.

La mort autour et dedans nous. (1969: 150).

The narrative voice and subjectivity in *Dedans* is inextricable from the trauma of the father's death, a permeation that transgresses the borders of inside and out, the 'Lui' and 'Moi', into a 'Nous' which is surrounded and consumed by the memory of this death. In this way, knowledge of the self and the boundaries of the self are under interrogation (Boyle 2007: 147-8). Furthermore, the father's death is tied to a re-negotiation of sexual, as well as religious, forms of self-knowledge. For example, the narrator begins by renouncing God and replacing him with the image of the father, before deconstructing the distinction between man and woman as a form of storytelling:

Je commençai par révoquer Dieu, dont l'inutilité n'était que trop manifeste, et je le remplaçai par mon père. Ensuite, j'abolis la distinction entre l'homme et la femme, qui me semblait être l'excuse de toutes les paresseuses [...] le passé n'était qu'une histoire, je me raconterais un passé à la place de celui que ma mère n'avait pas conservé (1969 : 20-1)

Here, the narrator recalls the realisation that knowledge of God, 'la distinction entre l'homme et la femme', and of the past is only a matter of storytelling. As I will explore in more detail later in this section, her mother does not pass the father's 'passé' to the

children, ('celui que ma mère n'avait pas conservé'), and she is thus confronted with the realisation that history and memory are dependent on acts of storytelling. In replacing one story of the past with a new one, her own, the narrator compensates for the mother's neglected history. In mourning for the father, the narrator of *Dedans* must re-write her *own* story. This story does not simply internalise the lost 'père-patrie', but interrogates and deconstructs the fiction of gender and 'la distinction entre l'homme et la femme' all together.

As a kind of source and inspiration for writing, the father adopts maternal attributes as his death becomes an opportunity to bring new life to Cixous's concept of nonbelonging. Hanrahan has suggested the death of the father gives birth to Cixous's 'feminine "I"' (1990: 158) while Anne-Marie Picard reads the father as a masculine muse that paradoxically gives birth to Cixous (1999: 23). Such readings of the father in *Dedans* suggest that the father (as a nurturing maternal presence) defies gendered binaries associated with the symbolic mother and father. The paradoxically productive loss of the father becomes the ideal metaphor through which Cixous can articulate resistance to singular categories of gender and nationhood. In 'Sorties', Cixous states that turning away from territorial or familial belonging in favour of a literary or textual identity is a form of resistance:

Longtemps j'ai lu, j'ai vécu, dans un territoire fait d'espaces pris à tous les pays auxquels j'avais accès par la fiction, une antiterre (le mot « patrie », même nanti d'un « anti- » je ne peux jamais le dire) où n'avaient pas cours les distinctions de races, de classes, d'origines, sans que quelqu'un s'insurge. (2010b: 89)

Like the lost sheets of *Les Rêveries* and the father's grave in *Dedans*, the *patrie* – the homeland – is an unspeakable term, which pushes the writer to search for new literary 'antiterres'. In this way, Cixous does not replace the father with an idealised version of a

lost-Algeria or a lost *père-patrie*. Rather, the father's death symbolises a kind of maternal origin to her quest for a literary territory, a home in writing.

Dedans registers the mother's failure to conserve her father's memory: 'le passé n'était qu'une histoire, je me raconterais un passé à la place de celui que ma mère n'avait pas conservé' (1969: 20-1). In this sense, the maternal does not represent a return to origins or nativity, but an obstruction to memory. In *Dedans*, the narrator recalls this new stage in her mother's life as a kind of temporal abandonment; while her father was claimed by the past, her mother moved on, leaving the narrator and her brother dispossessed:

Tandis que notre mère filait à l'avenir, nous restions là [...] Ma rage à découvrir qu'elle avait égaré notre passé, accrue de ma terreur de ne plus savoir à qui me fier, me conduisait à cette mesure dangereuse : notre mère nous avait dépossédés. Elle ne savait plus d'où mon père était venu, elle ne savait plus où il était. Elle n'avait gardé d'hier que son enfance, ses rêves de jeune fille. (1969: 17)

Cixous rages at this dispossession, this isolation from her father's heritage. As Cixous is symbolically disinherited from her father's past by her mother's 'abandonment' she further loses the ability to know where to lay her allegiance, from where she can claim some sense of national belonging. In *Les Rêveries* this maternal origin is displaced onto the character of 'Aïcha' the woman employed as the narrator's nanny, who is singularly feminine: 'c'est une femme qui est-la-femme et il n'y a pas d'autre femme qu'Aïcha' (Cixous 2000a: 90). Alison Rice notes that Cixous could be accused of exoticism in her depiction of the ultimately feminine Algerian woman. The narrative does go on to expose such idealisation of Aïcha's memory, when it is revealed that her real name is Messaouda – recalling the common colonial practice of renaming any Arab woman 'Fatima'. Rice defends Cixous by suggesting that this is an admission of guilt:

Perhaps it is not ‘too late’ to learn the real name of this person after all, for her name is preserved in the writing of the text, and the wrong of the misnomer is rectified in the sincere autobiographical account. (2006b: 133)

In terms of gendered memory, what we can take from the Aïcha-Messaouda figure is the precarity of recognition and remembering. Recalling her Algerian childhood through writing for Cixous is a way of working through the trauma left by life in the French colonial system, but this working-through is an inherently gendered process. The narrator is both inside (*dedans*) the claustrophobic world of her desire for a maternal link to Algeria and outside due to her mother’s blocked memory.

The turbulently gendered imaginary of colonial Algeria is intensified by the various metaphors associated with the mother’s maternal health work as a midwife after the death of her husband. Memories of birthing and midwifery intermingle uncomfortably with the memory of the lost father and connection with Algeria. Just as *Dedans* begins with the ending, the notion of birthing is interrupted by the spectral presence of death and non-belonging. For example, in *Les Rêveries*, the narrator compares her mother’s relationship to Algeria with her own through the metaphor of abortion and miscarriage:

Elle [sa mère] était d’ailleurs si bien implantée dans le grand utérus que seule une violente manœuvre abortive avait pu causer son délogement. Tandis que moi je n’ai jamais cessé de ne tenir qu’à un fil tout ce qu’il y a de plus incertain jusqu’au jour où exténuée par le labeur de raccordement que j’opérais moi-même j’avais choisi d’en finir. (Cixous 2000a: 16)

Cixous’s mother, a midwife, can only be aborted violently from her life in Algeria (‘le grand utérus’) by the ambivalently described ‘manœuvre abortive’ – which could signify both a miscarriage and an abortion. The corporeal setting of miscarriage and abortion

highlights the intensely gendered Algerian imaginary. In a later passage, the mother recalls a difficult birth during which the mother presented with *placenta previa*. In this case, labour is obstructed by the placenta and ‘devant la tête tu as une obstruction, le placenta devant la tête comme une porte’ (164, original emphasis). Reimagining the cervix as a blocked doorway, Cixous reflects on her own inability to truly arrive in Algeria. On the one hand, Cixous admits to the tentative ‘fil’ that connects her to Algeria (16), but on the other hand, the notion of a closed door disavows the origin myths of a birth-place and the bio-political consequences of valorising the mother-country, which places the ‘burden of representation’ onto women as symbolic carriers of nationhood (Yuval-Davis 1997). It also unsettles the naturalising association of birthing with the mother, and recalls the father’s death as her link to her native country. Unsettling this umbilical connection to a mother country, no matter how painful, conversely releases Cixous from the obligation of a gendered sense of maternal belonging.

The representation of the brother in these texts also deconstructs the gendered metaphors of belonging and nationhood in colonial Algeria. In both texts, childhood memories are stimulated by the figure of the brother. In *Dedans* the narrative often falls into the present tense and the first person plural, placing the reader directly into the past of Cixous’s childhood alongside her brother: ‘[m]a mère est jeune et nous la trouvons belle; depuis un certain temps, elle n’est plus à nous’ (1969: 16). It is clear that Cixous’s recollection of life in colonial Algeria not only belongs to her but is shared through a bond with the brother. This constant recollection through the lens of her brother is something that she plays with in *Les Rêveries*, setting the scene in which she and her brother sit down in opposing armchairs to ritualistically conjure up images of the past and debate their meaning:

Tuterappelles dit mon frère et moi je dis tuterappelles alors mon frère dit tuterappelles et alors je dis à mon tour tuterappelles et là-dessus mon frère dit tuterappelles, puis je dis tuterappelles [...] (Cixous 2000a : 85)

As such *Les Rêveries* is structured by an ongoing conversation between Cixous and her brother, now in France, looking back on their childhood in Algeria. The rhythmic staccato of the ‘tuterappelles’ echoing between the two siblings reinforces their bond, symbolic of what Yee calls the ‘original couple, like the two halves of a hermaphrodite seen before, during, and after a painful separation’ (2001: 190). It is in remembrance that they can once again find a semblance of harmony, parroting each other’s refrain of ‘tuterappelles’ and recalling a union before their separation as childhood companions. As in the case of the mother and the father, Cixous is separated from the brother through a gendered trauma, related to the growing realisation of their sexual difference. This is all the more profound for the siblings, as Cixous stresses, since the world of their childhood was organised according to strictly gendered codes: ‘la différence entre Oran et Alger est sexuelle, Oran m’était femme et Alger l’homme, à Oran je faisais femme, à Alger l’homme’ (Cixous 2000a: 49). In this poetic passage, where sentences flow over long broken paragraphs, the narrator explains that the move from ‘Oran-femme’ to ‘Alger-homme’ is also a separation from the Brother since it is possible ‘avec ou sans frère’ (Ibid, original emphasis).

This separation becomes more obvious in the bike episode in *Les Rêveries* where Cixous’s mother purchases a woman’s bike for her brother to use. Outraged at this symbolic castration, the brother rejects the bike and leaves it to Cixous. However, she is also unable to ride out into the masculine streets of Algiers in his place; Algeria remains closed off to her, she is still unable to arrive in Algeria, even with the arrival of a women’s bike. The bike episode, where Cixous plays with both gender

denominations of ‘le Vélo’ and ‘une bicyclette’ (2000a: 22), highlights the gendered experience of their Algerian childhood:

Tout ce qui nous arrivait au Clos-Salembier nous venait en féminin et en masculin [...] il me semblait que notre couple tirait au masculin, mais selon mon frère nous étions menés par le féminin, et tout cela provenait de l’incessante turbulence nébuleuse algérienne sexuelle (Cixous 2000a : 24)

The mother’s gendered misdemeanour of gifting the women’s bike to her son cannot be corrected by Cixous’s adoption of the bike as her own. The masculine gendering of public space does not allow to her do so. Therefore, the bike episode stresses ‘l’incessante turbulence nébuleuse algérienne sexuelle’ that characterises all of Cixous’s autofictional writings. In her memories of Algeria, nothing can easily conform to a binary structure of logic.

We can see from this overview of the colonial family in Cixous’s autofiction, that the gendering of these figures is never straight-forward and that Cixous consistently refuses to replace a sense of loss (be it of the father or of Algeria) with the gendered and nationally homogenous constructions of a mother- or father-country. In other words, it is not enough to replace the lost father with a sense of an imagined ‘père-patrie’ or the mother with ‘la terre maternelle’ (Rice 2006b). As the lost hermaphroditic bond with the brother demonstrates, the violently gendered world of Algeria (shown in the images of aborted birthing and the narrator’s fear of cycling in public) is a foundation for colonial violence, one that demarcates the racial and nationalist camps between which Cixous falls. Thus, the colonial family is a productive imaginative site for thinking about gender because of these melancholy associations with loss. For Emma Wilson, Cixous’s melancholic representation of the father, above all, has more to do with the construction of the self through melancholic denial, which incorporates and internalises the lost love-

object (Wilson 2000: 267-8). Here, Wilson draws from Judith Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997b). In this study, Butler rereads Freud's understanding of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' as being established on 'the loss of certain sexual attachments, and demand as well that those losses *not* be avowed, and *not* be grieved' (1997b: 135, original emphasis). She posits that the naturalisation of heterosexuality depends on the prohibition of homosexual desire, which is presupposed by the prohibition of incest (Ibid). In this way, gender is melancholic as it is produced by the inability to grieve for the disavowed loss of homosexual desire. Although this prohibition of homosexual desire is not at the forefront of my considerations of Cixous's writing in this chapter, what I take from Butler's 'melancholy gender' is the idea that we can understand 'both "masculinity" and "femininity" as formed and consolidated through identifications which are in part composed of disavowed grief' (Butler 1997b: 139). Wilson and others such as Sarah Cooper (2000) and Sarah-Anaïs Crevier Goulet (2015) have used Butler's notion of melancholy gender to highlight the construction of the gendered self in Cixous's 'future repertoires of personae' (Wilson 2000: 124); be it personal, historical, individual or transnational. From these readings, we can describe Cixous's ambivalent gendering of lost mother- and father-country as an effect of melancholy and her writing as a performative 'acting out' (Butler 1997b: 145) of her ungrivable loss.

Cixous's autofictional works show the ambiguously gendered relationship between the memories of colonial Algeria and a sense of non-belonging. In Birgit Mara Kaiser's study of Derrida and Cixous's deconstructive postcolonialism, she claims that it is this unique placing of being Jewish in French-Algeria that crystallises their position on non-belonging; 'Their deconstructive postcolonialism examines the historical artifice of colonial structures and devises nonappropriative, noncolonial approaches to identification that are derived from their Algerian disorders' (2015: 211). This rest of this chapter will

examine the limits of this ‘nonappropriative’ approach to identification. I will explore how Cixous’s play *L’Indiade* traces a transnational movement of memory between Algeria and India. I will examine how the ‘melancholy gender’ of Cixous’s autofictional novels about Algeria can be traced transnationally in her theatrical depiction of decolonisation in India. Drawing from Alison Landsberg’s theory of ‘prosthetic memory’, I will consider whether this performance of Indian decolonisation is predicated on an appropriative drive or a politics of empathy. Reading Cixous’s autofictional novels alongside her theatre situates transnational memory at the heart of Cixous’s investment in creating a literary imaginary across borders, histories, and genders.

2.4 From Algeriad to *Indiade*

In ‘My Algeriance’, Cixous re-imagines Homer’s ancient epic *The Iliad*, implicitly comparing the ill-fated city-state of Troy to her description of her early life in colonial Algeria as an ‘Algeriad’:

We always lived in the episodes of a brutal Algeriad, thrown from birth into one of the camps crudely fashioned by the demons of Coloniality. One said: ‘the Arabs’; ‘the French.’ And one was forcibly played in the play, with a false identity. Caricature-camps. The masks hold forth with the archetypal discourses that accompany the determined oppositions like battle drums. (1998: 128)

Cixous’s Algeriad is staged by the brutal theatre of colonialism where the ‘battle drums’ enforce the archetypal discourse of colonialism where one is either ‘Arab’ or ‘French’. These are false identities used to populate the ‘caricature-camps’ of coloniser and colonised, and by extension, markers of the fictions of colonialism itself. This language of staging is significant as this is not the first time that Cixous has re-imagined *The Iliad*

in theatrical settings. Cixous also turned to *The Iliad* as a prototype for her writings on colonialism in the neologically titled play *L'Indiade, l'Inde de leurs rêves* in 1987. For the rest of this chapter, I will consider the theatrical re-mediation of memory from Algeria to India in *L'Indiade* where notions of 'Caricature-camps', 'play' and 'masks' will be particularly relevant. I will first examine the importance of the theatre and staging in the movement of memory between these two epic imaginaries; from Algeriad to *Indiade*. I will then explore how the transnational movement of memory is facilitated by the gendering of Gandhi as the idealised father-mother figure of Indian independence.

If Djébar's writing is permeated by 'un besoin de cinéma' (1999), Cixous attested to her own need for creative encounters outside of the literary in the form of a 'besoin de théâtre' (Cixous 1987: 253). Despite having already penned several plays, it was not until Cixous began working with Ariane Mnouchkine's *Théâtre du Soleil* as company writer in 1984 that she claims to have really engaged in theatre (Prenowitz 2004: 1). Of the Mnouchkine-Cixous collaborations, the 1985 play *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge* has received the most critical attention and has also been translated into English. In contrast, *L'Indiade*, first performed on 30 September 1987, received less sustained critical attention and has not been entirely translated into English.³⁶ At the time, the play was toured internationally and a filmed version by Bernard Sobel was broadcast on France Région 3 in 1989. *L'Indiade* is a four to six-hour long historical epic based on the political processes leading up to Indian Independence in 1947, the formation of Pakistan, and the consequential devastation of Partition. The extreme violence of this period cannot be overstated. In the wake of 15 August 1947, Partition

³⁶ An English translation of a short extract exists in Susan Sellers's (1994) *The Hélène Cixous Reader* (1994: pp.157-62) and a translation of Act 1 Scene 2 by Donald Watson appears in Marta Segarra's *The Portable Cixous* (2014: pp.236-49). India has also been the setting for Cixous's play *La Prise de l'Ecole de Madhubai* (1986), albeit an a-historical India of legend and myth. In 2017, Cixous also contributed to the *Théâtre du Soleil*'s production of 'Une chambre en Inde'.

displaced between 12 and 15 million people in the largest exodus of the 20th century: 2 million lives were lost and 100,000 Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh women and girls were abducted (Mohanram 2011: 921). However, *L'Indiade* is less concerned with staging the trauma of this extreme, widespread violence, than with plunging into the myths surrounding Indian and Pakistani independence itself. As Judith G. Miller puts it, Cixous 'invokes a myth in order to challenge the system that the myth supports and propagates' (2014: 218). The saintly figure at the centre of this myth is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), leader of the Indian Independence movement. The play dramatises Gandhi's 'dreamed' nation of a multi-faith, united India free of British rule. However, his tenet of non-violence and civil disobedience frequently puts him at odds with the leaders of other nationalist groups in colonial India. On the one hand, there is Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the inflexible leader of the All-India Muslim League, who campaigns for a separate Pakistani state for Muslims in India. On the other hand, Gandhi pleads with Jawaharlal Nehru, his former pupil and leader of the Indian National Congress, to seek a compromise with Jinnah. At the play's climax, Gandhi fails to mediate these nationalist factions as Partition takes place.

Algeria is never explicitly mentioned in this play, but Cixous's autofictional writings and *L'Indiade* are both epistemologically and thematically preoccupied with the violence (physical and systemic) of identitarian conflict, gender, and national belonging. Mireille Calle-Gruber claims that all of Cixous's writings are entangled in the legacy of her childhood so that 'tous les livres d'Hélène Cixous, sont « [l]ivre d'Algérie »' (2003: 17). In this respect, *L'Indiade* is also *une pièce d'Algérie*. In contrast, it is the very staging of Indian history as a vehicle for a Cixousian exploration of belonging and sexual difference that has resulted in mixed critical responses to the play. When the play was first performed at the Théâtre du Soleil in La Cartoucherie, the staging was criticised for

its apparent imitation of an ‘authentic’ Indian setting despite the pretext of a ‘dreamed’ India (Picard 1989; Carlson 1990; Pavis 1990; Scheie 1994); ‘authentic’ Indian food was served by costumed Indian porters, while the audience members were solicited by beggar women (Pavis 1990: 52).³⁷ Other critics have focused on the play in terms of Cixous’s wider *œuvre*. Judith Miller argued that Cixous reworked her feminine concept of the *méduse* from ‘Le Rire de la Méduse’ into the character of Gandhi, ‘this “mother” who is beyond gender and yet can birth the world, [and] encourages the spectators of the Théâtre du Soleil to find the holy and the heroic in themselves’ (1999: 141). Morag Shiach suggested that Gandhi’s national struggle in *L’Indiade* stands in for Cixous’s ‘own attempts to find ways of theorizing femininity which will allow common political and cultural struggle, without constraining plurality and difference’ (1991: 132).

However, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak briefly summarised in her influential essay ‘French Feminism Revisited’, the play does not conform with Cixous’s feminist writings and ‘can unfortunately be seen as perpetuating a kind of inspired, too-admiring ethnography’ (1992: 71). More recently, Julia Dobson suggests that the play ‘suffers from the apparent underestimation of the intransigent power of many tropes of colonial discourse and the inevitable danger that attempts to reclaim them will backfire’ (2002: 97). In her extensive study on the role of Indian independence in French political and cultural imagination, Kate Marsh argues that *L’Indiade* contributes to a French canon that depicts a metaphoric Indian subjectivity as a ‘space not for territorial but for epistemological occupation’ (2007: 171). In other words, both the script and staging of

³⁷ On 22 June 2017, I attended the performance of ‘Une chambre en Inde’ at the Théâtre du Soleil. Similar extra-theatrical staging was employed to submerge audience members in a semi-authentic Indian setting with food and music. Furthermore, silent South-Asian security guards in official Indian uniforms checked bags before allowing entry into the theatre.

the play has been criticised for its problematic postcolonial positioning, where French feminism sits asymmetrically with the project to decolonise narratives of the ‘Other’.

How, then, can we understand such political asymmetry in Cixous’s writing? Marsh and others are correct to criticise this appropriative representation of Indian history. However, it is important to also acknowledge the role that a memory of colonial Algeria has played in the forging of both a creative and geographic imaginary in Cixous’s works. Reading Cixous’s theatrical works together with her autofictional writing offers a new perspective on how her writing potentially shapes memory of colonialism in the form of *transcolonial* solidarity (Lionnet and Sinh 2005). In other words, can reading the play alongside Cixous’s autofictional works uncover the ‘connective’ nature of memory between these different colonial histories of Algeria and India? Understanding the transcolonial as a comparative approach to heterogeneous strands of colonial history, Olivia C. Harrison reads Maghrebi literature through the lens of transcoloniality to suggest modes of solidarity that are forged between various colonised sites, such as the Maghreb with Vietnam, Palestine, or the Western Sahara (2016: 103). The feminist potential of such transnational and transcolonial histories is particularly appealing. As Basuli Deb remarks, India and Algeria are frequently segregated in the formation of colonial historical discourse and recognising the shared trajectories of Algerian women fighting against French colonialism and the postcolonial struggle of Dalit women ‘opens up new cross-border frames of recognizing the disenfranchisement of women of the global south’ (2015: 160).³⁸ The extent to which Cixous’s theatrical writing achieves this empathetic relationality in transnational or transcolonial memory can be evaluated by

³⁸ See also Mohanalakshmi Rajakumar (2009) *Haram in the Harem* for a comparative study of Djébar’s writing and fictions by Indian women that responds to patriarchal and nationalist discourse.

considering how and why Cixous elects the theatre as the ideal space for such a mediation of colonial memories.

In many ways, Cixous's reasons for writing for the theatre is a logical development of her preoccupations with writing about the past in general. Writing for the theatre, like writing about Algeria, presents Cixous with a tension between a need to bear witness and, at the same time, the pain of doing so:

Voilà pourquoi j'arrive à faire du théâtre alors que j'ai toujours envie de ne pas faire du théâtre. Le théâtre, c'est douloureux, c'est insupportable mais on a des jubilations tellement intenses qu'on ne saurait y renoncer. [...] Autrement dit, on y éprouve les joies endeuillées qui sont les plus grandes joies. (Cixous, Derrida, Mesguich et al. 2002: 455)

Like her writing about Algeria, theatre involves the working through of grief which nonetheless yields these bitter-sweet rewards of 'les joies endeuillées'. The performance of these 'joies endeuillées' is not that far removed from Cixous's writing on Algeria which is also attentive to the performativity of this mourning process. Rice has argued that her autofictions are imbued with a performative musicality, to the extent that to read a text by Cixous is to read 'by ear' (2006a: 191). This is a mnemonic technique which 'carries meaning, and makes messages memorable' (206). Even in Cixous's written texts, memory is a performative act and, as Marta Segarra has noted, '[t]he vivid dialogues and some of the scenes in her fiction are truly theatrical' (2010: 14). Calle-Gruber goes as far to compare Cixous's books to the body of an actor since '[l]e Livre performe [...] Le livre est un acteur, un actant, un agent, un ange. Il travaille ses entrées et sorties' (2003: 19-20). Thus, although Cixous has sometimes isolated her theatrical writings as distinct from her earlier fictional and theoretical interventions (Segarra 2010: 14), we cannot ignore the

shared political, personal, and ethical impetus in Cixous's autofictional and theatrical writings, especially concerning the question of memory.

The theatre is especially pertinent for the study of memory as a *performance* of the past.³⁹ Cixous argues that the theatre is a privileged site for the representation of human cruelty on both personal and historical levels:

L'énigme de la méchanceté, de la cruauté humaine, celle des autres et la mienne, c'est cela que nous venons demander au Théâtre de nous révéler.

Car le Théâtre c'est le lieu du Crime. Oui le lieu du Crime, le lieu de l'horreur, aussi le lieu du Pardon (1987: 257)

In other words, when trauma is staged by the theatre, it re-enacts the crime of the trauma itself ('lieu du Crime'). Simultaneously, this re-enactment mediates the traumatic memory (that is to say, presents the memory via a medium – the theatre) and metonymically works through this trauma ('lieu du Pardon'). Cixous's description of the theatre as a site of crime but also forgiveness, ostensibly posits the idea that by performing memories of trauma one can work through this trauma.

However, it is also important to question *which* memories and *whose* trauma are being recalled in the 'lieu du Crime' and how the performance enables the 'lieu du Pardon'. If, for Cixous, the scene of Algerian colonialism, 'ce premier spectacle', is a theatrical one (Cixous 2010b: 84), this is also the case for India. In her essay '« Qui es-tu ? »' she makes the bold claim that '[I]nde entière est un théâtre' (1987: 277) recalling similar claims that 'North Africa was an arid and perfumed theatre, salt, jasmine, orange

³⁹ Cixous has insisted that writing for the theatre requires historical work. In preparation for *L'Indiade*, Cixous spent time in India conducting fieldwork and historical research: 'I have always envied Shakespeare who was able to draw on the chronicles of Plutarch and Holinshed for the subject matter of his historic tragedies, but as far as contemporary history is concerned, these chronicles don't exist. I was first of all obliged to become the chronicle of my story' (Cixous 1989: 127).

blossoms, where violent plays were staged' (1998: 155-6). Therefore, *L'Indiade* is a history play based on the drama of Indian decolonisation which also serves an allegorical function for her memories of Algeria. Judith Pike describes this allegorical relation as 'a weave of the historical and primordial' sustained by Cixous's 'unknown autobiography' (Pike 1994: xx). Of course, this is the very point, to defy and transcend simple, polarised categories such as fact, fiction, autobiography, history. The 'unknown autobiography' which liberates the story from the categories of either fact or fiction, also uproots the theatrical 'lieu du Crime' and 'lieu du Pardon' from a specific context. While the 'lieu' may be India, the 'crime' and 'pardon' need not be specific to that Indian setting. The 'crime' and 'pardon' could refer to *another* site of colonial memory, such as Cixous's Algeria.

How and why does Cixous use the memory of Indian and Pakistani Partition and independence in 1947 to work through the 'unknown autobiography'? On the one hand, as I have already stated, Cixous participates in a long French literary tradition of writing about India as a way of thinking about French republicanism, especially *vis-à-vis* British imperialism (Marsh 2007, 2009).⁴⁰ On the other hand, moments in the history of Indian and Pakistani independence correspond with formative moments in Cixous's own autofictional writings. In *Les Rêveries* Cixous's mother calls the final years of the father's life as the 'temps de tonpère – 1946-1947' (Cixous 2000a: 100). The years of 'tonpère' correspond to the crucial years in the drama of the play, portrayed in Acts III and IV, as Gandhi struggles to maintain the dream of a unified, independent India. The play ends in 1948, shortly after Gandhi's off-stage assassination in the last lines of the play. Gandhi was killed 30 January 1948, less than two weeks before the death of Cixous's father on

⁴⁰ One can recall other works by French feminists here, such as Marguerite Duras's film *India Song* (1975) and Catherine Clément's novel *Pour l'amour de l'Inde* (1993).

12 February. I am not suggesting that this historical correlation should be taken as empirical proof of a direct implantation of Cixous's father into her characterisation of Gandhi. However, Cixous herself has noted how the protagonists of her history-plays are often haunted by her father's memory: 'Mais j'ai pensé: « c'est mon père à nouveau, c'est bien lui et c'est bien normal. Ne fut-il pas déjà supplié, revenant, le premier personnage de mes textes de fiction, le héros de *Dedans* » ?' (1987: 264). In this way, while *L'Indiade* is clearly a play about the independence of India we can also trace memories of colonial India through the haunting presence of Algeria via the memory of the father.

I suggest that we can think of this transposed recollection of the father's ghost to Indian history in terms of what Alison Landsberg has described as a process of memory 'suture' (2004: 14). Landsberg studies technologies of mass media which produce 'prosthetic memories', memories of others that can be 'worn' as our own.⁴¹ Landsberg's theory is illuminating in relation to Cixous's *L'Indiade* in several ways. First, the concept of 'prosthetic' memory is inherently theatrical, suggesting the wearing of memory as a prop, a costume, a mask, or as prosthetic make-up. In other words, Cixous experiences or wears the memories of India at the violent moment of Partition *in prosthesis*. Second, her theory demonstrates the interchangeability and mobility of memory beyond and across socially anchored bodies. In the theatrical staging of traumatic histories in *L'Indiade*, these mediated memories of colonial violence have the potential to transgress categories of identity, such as race, gender, nationality, religion and so on. Finally, Landsberg argues, such prosthetic memories have the potential to be ethically and politically transformative since they involve 'a sensuous engagement with the past [which ...] is the foundation for more than individual subjectivity; it becomes the basis for mediated

⁴¹ For Landsberg, mass media refers to cinema, television, the internet, and multimedia museum exhibitions, but we can also add theatre to this list.

collective identification and the production of potentially counter-hegemonic public spheres' (2004: 21). Following Landsberg's arguments, the prosthetic 'wearing' of memory in *L'Indiade* may be a way to performatively subvert the rigid stratifications of race, gender, caste, and class of the various subjectivities involved in the performance and consumption of the play (Indian, French, actor, audience member, director, writer, reader etc.). Furthermore, the traces of Algerian memory could allow for an *empathetic* relationship to grow between these two seemingly disparate sites of colonial trauma.

The prosthetic quality of memory in *L'Indiade* is perhaps most clearly illustrated when it is juxtaposed with her Algerian memories. One cinematic example of this memory link occurs providentially in Lara Fitzgerald's short documentary film on Cixous's writings, *Mémoire noire des souvenirs* (1997), in which the film explicitly connects representations of Algerian and Indian independence in Cixous's *œuvre*. The film, shot in Morocco due to the conflict in Algeria, is based on reconstructions from a range of Cixous's autofictional texts and essays (*Vivre l'Orange*, 1979; *De la scène de l'inconscience à la scène de l'histoire*, 1990; *Photos de Racines*, 1994) but also features interviews with Cixous and her family. In one interview, Cixous explains why she had to leave Algeria in 1955, while her family remained behind despite the outbreak of war. She describes how Algeria was a country 'qui allait rejeter, qui devait rejeter, qui ne pourrait pas ne pas rejeter les envahisseurs, il ne pourrait pas ne pas chasser, et malheureusement avec haine, les étrangers [...] La guerre d'Algérie, quand elle est éclatée en 1954, moi ça faisait dix ans que je pensais qu'elle était là' (*Mémoire noire* 1997). As Brigitte Weltman-Aron puts it, Cixous diagnoses Algeria as war. Although she rarely directly addresses the Algerian war, 'she minutely evokes, in contrast, what motivated the conflict. She repeatedly shows that revolution and war were already readable outcomes in the violent text that French Algeria constituted' (2015: 116-7).

Directly following this interview with Cixous in *Mémoire noire*, the film cuts to a recording of a performance of *L'Indiade*. In this scene, Gandhi laments Britain's declaration of war against Germany in September 1939 that implemented India in the conflict by default as its colony: 'On nous a déclaré en guerre? Nous allons déclarer la paix ! Et nous allons la faire ! Faire ou mourir ! Voilà notre devise. *Do or die.*' (1987: 57).⁴² Here, extracts from *L'Indiade* serve as a point of reference for Cixous's memory of Algeria during a period of growing violence and dispossession leading up to the years of the War of Independence. In directly associating the play *L'Indiade* with Cixous's memories of the Algerian War of Independence, Fitzgerald's editing expounds a mnemonic link between Cixous's memories of Algerian colonialism and her theatrical depiction of decolonisation in India. The effect is a sense of transnational memory which draws these two historical moments together in a constellation of transcolonial resistance.

An examination of the 1987 staging of the Mnouchkine/Cixous production of *L'Indiade* demonstrates the political limitations of this transcolonial empathy suggested in Fitzgerald's film. One of the striking elements of the staging was the use of a technique known as 'cross-racial facing', where body and face make-up (as well as other prosthetics such as wigs) were employed to racially transform the cast into the protagonists of Indian independence.⁴³ In *L'Indiade* the politically problematic White-to-South Asian direction of racial imitation is complicated by the multi-ethnic cast who

⁴² The phrase 'Do or die' actually comes from Gandhi's famous 'Quit India' speech made in August 1942.

⁴³ To put this technique into context, 'cross-racial facing' is most commonly associated with the antiquated practice of 'black-face' - frequently cited examples from the Anglophone world are Lawrence Olivier in the 1965 film *Othello* and in British television as recently as 1978 in the *Black and White Minstrel Show*. While this practice has largely been condemned in North American popular culture as cultural appropriation and racist caricature, there has been recent controversy in the mutations of 'cross-racial facing' in contemporary European theatre, with accusations of cultural appropriation and the 'yellow-facing' of white actors directed towards companies like the Royal Shakespeare Company in their production of *The Orphan of Zhao* (see Rogers 2014). 30 years after the first production of *L'Indiade*, cross-racial make-up was used by the Théâtre du Soleil company for the performance of Cixous's co-authored play *Une Chambre en Inde* (2017).

all used make-up to adopt the ethnicity of their characters; whether it be the Chilean actor Andres Perez Araya who darkened his skin to play Gandhi, or French actor Asil Raïs who lightened his skin to play the character of Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of the British Raj (Figure 8). Amanda Rogers has recently criticised the use of ‘cross-racial facing’ by the Royal Shakespeare Company, but also suggested that, within a context of ‘colour-blind casting’, such practices could contain a subversive potential to challenge racial and social hierarchies and expose the lack of non-white actors, or roles for non-white actors, in western theatrical productions (2014: 454). Thus, the ‘colour-blind’ casting that appears in *L’Indiade* may ostensibly attempt to subvert ethnic difference in a move that appears to be a part of Cixous’s wider artistic engagement of moving towards the Other.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 8: Gandhi (centre) and Lord Mountbatten (right), background actors in dark cross-racial make-up, or black-face (Daniel Cande 1987).

However, Cixous also suggests that ‘un maquillage réussi’ facilitates the complete transformation of an actor into a character as a ‘voyage du visage’: ‘Il n’est

plus là. Le maquillage a disparu. Un visage s'est formé sur l'ancien visage' (1987: 270). A successful transition means that the actor must accept 'd'être zero' and no trace of his or herself is permitted to remain in order to become someone else. There are clear limitations to the progressive and subversive possibilities of 'cross-racial facing' when it presents such a '*tour de force* of imitation' to use Pavis's words (1990: 65). Imitation denies difference. According to Cixous's 1987 essay, a 'successful' transformation is determined by the inability to perceive the traces of a face under the mask. In this way, the cross-racial facing of *L'Indiade* risks the kind of racial impersonation which actively encourages the assimilation of racial difference rather than expounding and celebrating the threads of history and solidarity that transgress such difference.

The potentially empathetic politics of 'prosthetic' memory are hampered by the ways in which the bodies of the actors are staged to imitate Indian characters.⁴⁴ Timothy Scheie has argued that *L'Indiade* was a performance that laid bare the tension that exists between 'the live performing body and a subversive performativity' (1994: 32). He suggests that the obvious and performed artifice of 'Cixous's Indians' (39) produces a 'confused mimesis [... and] marks a possible channel for a subversive performativity to navigate' (44). Although, Scheie overlooks the dubious politics of 'cross-racial facing' in the play, his remarks do point to how 'prosthetic memory' may offer a channel for empathetic memory, but can never guarantee it. It seems that while the aesthetics of 'prosthetic' memory can be identified in *L'Indiade* in the 'cross-racial' use of prosthetic make-up, the politics of a transformative ethics of empathetic memory fails. Landsberg

⁴⁴ Audience members were encouraged to arrive early and watch actors prepare their makeup. During the long performance, dark makeup would rub off the actors' bodies on to their clothes. Surprisingly, there has been very little explicit mention of cross-racial makeup in critical responses to *L'Indiade*. In his discussion of the play Kiernander notes that the only Asian to perform in the play was cast as Lord Mountbatten (1993:123-43). Marsh has noted that commentators have criticised the 'mimetic incarnation' (2007: 195) of Indians by the performers. Timothy Scheie only acknowledges the 'striking Indian corporeality' (1994: 42) of the actors and the transformative effect of the use of makeup, so much so that a mother of a performer did not recognise her own son in makeup (41).

has argued that ‘prosthetic memory does not always produce utopian results [... but] can appear coercive, aimed at homogenizing a diverse population’ (2004: 22-3). *L’Indiade*’s staging may encourage a way of thinking in a geographically, nationally, and *ethnically* unbounded manner. However, in Landsberg’s words, for this process of prosthetic memory to be ethical it must be the recognition of ‘the alterity of the “other”’ (9).

Is it simply a case that the Cixous-Mnouchkine *L’Indiade* reappropriates and repackages Indian history and corporeality? While it can be suggested that the staging of Indian alterity in this production is simply part of a wider trend of the *Théâtre du Soleil*’s fascination with the ‘orient’ (Kiernander [no date]), the role of Indian colonial history in the production of France’s own colonial identity is, in fact, more profound. On the one hand, Marsh suggests that Cixous and Mnouchkine’s Indian history is represented ‘as an extension of the European self’ (2007: 110), and Carlson goes further to suggest that the play could have utilised any non-European settings for its universalising purposes (1990: 56). On the other, in order to understand the play’s political shortcomings, it is helpful to situate the play’s themes in relation to the role that Algeria, as a geographical and imaginative space, has had in Cixous’s depiction of Indian decolonisation. While the play does not explicitly reference a connective Algerian-Indian history, it hints at the potential for the ‘prosthetic’ and empathetic movement of transnational memory.

So far, I have focused on the specific *staging* of prosthetic memory in *L’Indiade* and the way the *body* of the actor is privileged for its mediation of memory through corporeal presence. When considering the corporeal mediation of prosthetic memory, it is also important to take into account the gendered inflection of this memory. Cixous posits that the corporeal presence inherent in theatre makes the actor the ideal vessel to explore concepts associated with *écriture féminine*; ‘l’acteur est toujours un peu saint,

un peu femme: il lui faut donner la vie en se retirant' (1987: 265). In Cixous's terms, since performances are other-orientated, or life-giving, they entail a certain kind of femininity. This gendered distinction makes it possible for them to enact the lives of others. Performance can be considered as prosthetic since, according to Landsberg, prosthetic memories are 'transportable' (2004: 19) and are carried by the performance. The final section of this chapter considers how the transportable 'prosthetic' memory is facilitated by the feminisation of Gandhi, which recalls the maternal patriarch of Cixous's autofiction. Rather than focusing on the performance itself, I will examine how the language of the written text shapes the performative gender of Gandhi in *L'Indiade*. Gandhi is depicted as the androgynous mother-father of the dreamed Indian nation which, I suggest, allows for this prosthetic transportation of memories of the colonial family in Algeria to play out in India.

2.5 Gendering Gandhi

In *L'Indiade*, Cixous plays on several gendered tropes associated with Gandhi as a popular figure of Indian nationalism, but also world history. To this day, Gandhi is referred to as the father of India, referred to as 'Bapu' in recognition of his role in the non-violent independence movement and his development of civil disobedience. Cixous frequently refers to this endearment throughout *L'Indiade* – Gandhi is called 'Bapu' and he addresses other characters as 'mes enfants' (1987: 43, 132). However, while Gandhi is clearly equated with the father of India in *L'Indiade*, he is also portrayed as a feminine and saintly hero(ine). This femininity is drawn, in part, from Gandhi's role in nationalist politics of civil disobedience against the British Raj, associating him with the concept of 'Mother' India. For example, Nehru pleads with Gandhi to support the war on Germany by employing paternal terms of endearment, but by also referring to India as the mother:

Bapuji, ma mère est l'Inde, mais l'Univers est mon père. Aujourd'hui l'Inde ne peut rester accroupie sous la tente asiatique tandis que le nazisme avance en dévorant peuple après peuple. Nulle guerre n'est bonne mais il y a des guerres justes et nécessaires. (Cixous 1987: 51)

Nehru insists that they go to war, since global politics, in its masculine pragmatism, trumps the feminine realm of domestic politics. Justifiable inter-state violence opposes and undermines India, the mother. Consequently, while Nehru and Jinnah represent the masculine forces of global warfare, Gandhi remains the beating heart and soul of Indian independence, the mother of non-violent resistance. When Jinnah insists on Pakistani autonomy, Gandhi laments that 'Il veut m'arracher l'enfant musulman' (85). Here, Cixous evokes the Judgement of Solomon, casting Gandhi as the good mother who cannot bear to see his/her child divided. Therefore, we are encouraged to think of Cixous's Gandhi as the maternal patriarch of a dreamed multicultural Indian nation who is fighting to keep hold of his/her Muslim children.

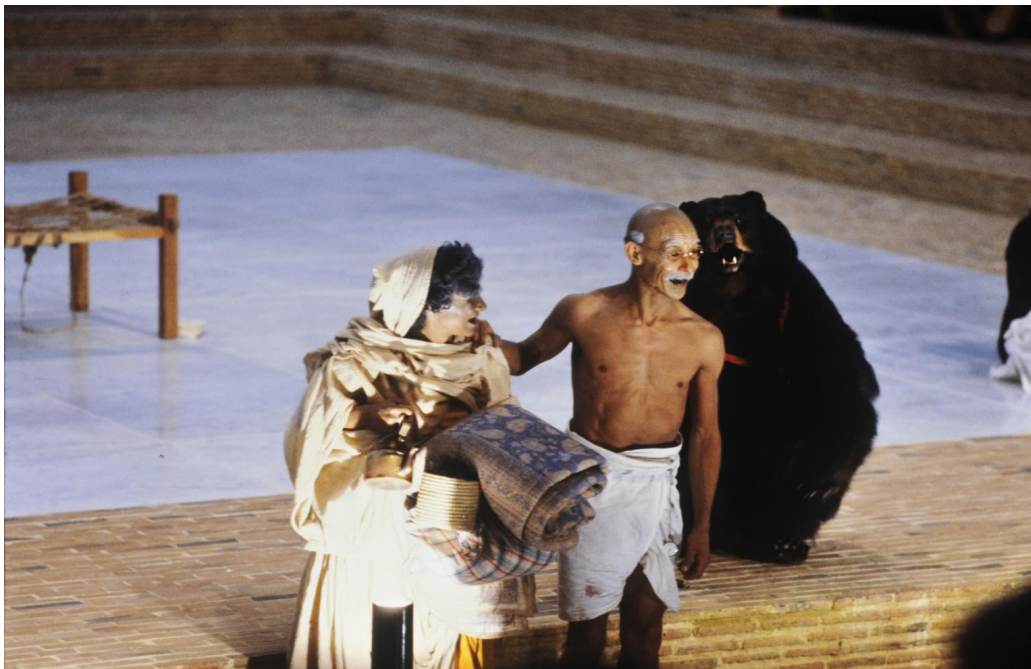
Like Cixous's memory of the colonial family in her autofictional work, national identities are not symbolised by singular gendered tropes of either maternity or paternity, but as a maternal father-country. Another link to Cixous's memories of Algeria can be identified in the play's central theme of national belonging and religious identity. For example, in one scene Gandhi encounters Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a famous Muslim Indian activist who fiercely opposed Partition with non-violent tactics. In his conversation with Gandhi, he condemns Pakistan's separation from India as an Islamic state by questioning whether being Muslim is truly incompatible with being Indian:

Nous ne sommes plus Indiens, dites, c'est cela? Répondez! Parlez-moi franc au moins! Que sommes-nous? Pakistanais [...] Nous ne faisons plus partie de vous? Nous ne sommes plus vos frères? Ce matin nous

étions du même sol, de la même mère. Ce soir, étrangers? Pourquoi?

(Cixous 1987: 165)

Khan's outraged questions at the idea of Partition echo the way that Cixous worked through her family's experience of marginalisation as Jewish Algerians in her autofictional works. Like Cixous's family under the Vichy abrogation of the Crémieux decree, or during the Algerian War of Independence, Khan's lament evokes the precarious liminality of being foreign in one's country of birth. Yet when Gandhi enters the stage Khan is able to turn to him in his desperation: 'Quelle que soit la nationalité que Dieu m'imposera, vous resterez mon père et ma patrie' (1987: 171-2). Gandhi is above nationality, above religion, and above family – he symbolises the father *and* mother of *all* Indians including those who have been rejected by their own homeland, such as Khan. Once again we can see a direct link with Cixous's concerns with belonging and citizenship which she herself lived as a Jewish Algerian.



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Figure 9: Haridasi (left), Gandhi, (centre), Moona the Bear (right) (Daniel Cande 1987).

However, it is important to note that these representations of a maternal, feminine Gandhi are a common trope, one which Cixous certainly did not start. Problematically, the concept of the feminine Gandhi derives from a colonial concept of the timeless other-worldliness of the Indian-Other which Cixous employs in Mountbatten's monologue in Act IV Scene I; 'Je pense à lui, antique déité sans dents, vieille mère sans mamelles, dernière preuve de l'existence des dieux et de leur impuissance à faire admettre leurs prophètes dans notre siècle politique' (1987: 148). Furthermore, Cixous's Gandhi seems to encompass many of the historically situated myths of a feminine Gandhi cultivated in India and in post-war Western liberalism alike, here summarised by Arundhati Roy in her essay on the anti-caste activist and critic of Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar:

the non-violent Gandhi, the Gandhi who spoke truth to power, Gandhi the nemesis of injustice, the gentle Gandhi, Gandhi the mother, the Gandhi who (allegedly) feminized politics and created spaces for women to enter the political arena, the eco-Gandhi, the Gandhi of the ready wit and some great one-liners. (2014: 42-3)

In her analysis, Roy illustrates the long-standing gendered Gandhian tropes which refers to a masculine body who harbours a feminine and saintly soul. The ambivalently gendered Gandhi can potentially be the ideal Cixousian binary-defying, androgynous hero. In *L'Indiade*, Gandhi's appeal to femininity is emphasised by the entourage of female companions who accompany and aid Gandhi on his pilgrimages across the subcontinent. They are led by Haridasi, a wandering peasant woman who regularly interacts with the audience as chorus and cultural translator (Figure 9). For Judith G. Miller, Gandhi is 'degendered', in the sense that his masculinity is neutralised by the presence of women, in a push to universalise Gandhi's message beyond that of Indian nationalism, in a sense transforming him into a hero of peace in contrast to his warrior counterpart in *The Iliad*. In this way, the de-gendering of Gandhi unfixes the 'nationalist-fuelled killings and blood

feuds' of Partition so that it can gesture to others, such as Israel and Palestine, the former Yugoslavia, Central Africa (2014: 220).⁴⁵

This movement to 'degender' Gandhi is important when we consider how it relates differently to concepts of androgyny and to Cixous's own writings on 'bisexualité'. On the one hand, androgyny, according to art historian Elémire Zolla, is central to Hindu metaphysics, conceived as Śiva fused into one being with his consort Parvati forming a 'supreme identity' (1981: 5). Indian social theorist, Ashis Nandy, has also noted that '[i]n classical Hinduism, in [the] Vedas and Upanishads, masculinity is defined in feminine terms' (Bilal 2017: 730-1). He suggests that pre-colonial concepts of masculinity were defined in androgynous terms:

Our concept of masculinity is a colonial product. There is also a so-called distinction with respect to martial races and non-martial races. Bengalis and Gujaratis are considered non-masculine and it was Bengalis and Gujaratis who became a real pain for the colonial state. Bengalis were termed as non-masculine but the revolution started in Bengal first. A revolution full of assassinations, killings and violence. Gujaratis were called non-masculine and look at the riots which took place there. This is all 'masculine'. This is a reaction to the search for masculinity. [...] Our masculinity was always of the androgynous kind. Some were more androgynous, some were less. (Bilal 2014: 730)

Nandy's comments on pre-colonial androgyny are revealing for two reasons. First, the concept of androgyny refers to the heroic masculine subject, which also embodies feminine qualities. The heroic embodiment of feminine passivity prevents the subject's

⁴⁵ In 1988, the Théâtre du Soleil Company completed seven performance in Tel Aviv during the Festival de Jérusalem to 89,000 spectators (Mémoires de Célestins 2001). They also published a letter in English, Hebrew, and Arabic in the Israeli press explaining that their decision to come to Israel was also informed by a desire to condemn colonialism and the occupation of Palestine (Théâtre du Soleil 1988).

masculine virility and political activity spilling out into violence. In other words, this androgyny re-affirms traditionally assigned masculine and feminine qualities, defined according to dichotomous categories of activity and passivity. Second, it is an imperial British concept of masculinity that has led to the aberration of a pre-colonial, androgynous masculinity. Instead, for Nandy, western concepts of masculinity have been normalised in the subcontinent. In this sense, Gandhi's androgyny, as the father imbued with feminine qualities, appears to respect Nandy's concept of pre-colonial gender fluidity which resists the oppressive, gendered 'product' of British colonialism.

Cixous's theoretical writings also investigate conceptions of gender fluidity. For Miller, Gandhi's embodiment of gender fluidity makes him the champion of the Medusan metaphor as 'an empowerer, a nurturer, a person who laughs freely and whose laughter sets free' (1999: 136). However, this formulation of masculine violence being 'cancelled out' by femininity is exactly the kind of 'bisexualité' that Cixous condemns in her seminal 'Le Rire de la Méduse':

« bisexuelle donc neutre », par référence à la conception *classique* de la bisexualité, qui, ployée sous le signe de la peur de la castration, à l'aide du fantasme d'un être "total" (mais fait de deux moitiés) veut escamoter la différence éprouvée comme opération à perte, comme marque de sécabilité redoutable. (2010a: 52).

In other words, 'bisexualité' in Cixous's terms is not a question of cancelling out sexual difference, in a negative movement of loss, but an expounding of difference which 'n'annule pas les différences, mais les anime, les poursuit, les ajoute' (Ibid), suggesting a mode of productive relationality with the Other. Sarah Cooper has described Cixous's notion of 'bisexualité as relating generously to the Other, whether that is a sexual Other or not, and destabilising the heterosexual matrix with its emphasis on the shifting

categories of sexual difference (2000: 191). This desire to transgress the restricted gender signifiers and binary systems of thought can be aligned with Butler and Eve Sedgwick's 'aim to re-establish connections between different identities that are lost when categories are placed in oppositional relationships' (190). For Cooper, Cixous's novel *Dedans* deconstructs the heterosexual matrix by exposing the formative processes by which her 'je' is expressed as a melancholic slippage between herself and the incorporated lost-love object; the father (194). This slippage between gendered subjectivities and the idea of 'bisexualité' (as a mode of relationality) is quite different from Nandy's perspective on the legacy of pre-colonial Indian androgyny, in which masculinity is cancelled out by femininity. The idealised, plural androgyny described in 'Le Rire de la Méduse' does not correspond with the 'degendered', universal Gandhi of *L'Indiade*.

Although we can now say that Cixous's *L'Indiade* is not simply a direct vehicle for Cixous's feminist theory, this departure from her thinking on sexual difference has brought its own criticism. For example, Bennett argues that this has aggravated the perceived a-historicity of Cixous's characterisation of Gandhi and dismisses 'the ideological formation of the production' (2010: 60). Bradby and Delgado have argued that Cixous's feminine Gandhi 'could only account for the political process through which they [the Indians of *L'Indiade*] lived in terms of simplified binary oppositions' (2002: 256). Marsh notes that rather than investing feminine power into the history of Indian decolonisation (laudably combining postcolonial thinking with feminist theory), the play risks inscribing Gandhi as the figurehead of a feminist struggle (2007: 179). For example, in the play, Gandhian principles of non-violent *Satyagraha* (insistence on truth), which formed the basis of the non-violent resistance movement, are associated with a feminine opposition to physical, violent resistance. To criticise this reductive correlation of femininity and passivity is nothing new. In 1989, Ketu H. Katrak warned against

valuing Gandhian nonviolence as progressive feminist politics, since it reduces Indian woman to stereotypes of silent suffering and ‘female subordination. Gandhi certainly did not confront sexism and male dominance within the family’ (163). In *L’Indiade*, Gandhi’s speeches often avoid a political tone in favour of a ‘messianic prose’ (Conley 1992: 101), evoking a universalist concept of humanity: ‘les étoiles tombent, le ciel est toujours aussi étincelant, nous tombons dans les mains du même Dieu’ (Cixous 1987: 83). In this respect, a feminist critique of colonialism that we see in *Dedans* and *Les Rêveries* is replaced with a utopian universalist stance. Mary Noonan notes that Cixous’s later theatrical works, including *L’Indiade*, signal an evolution in Cixous’s writing for the theatre that develops a politically ‘directive or didactic note’ limiting the plays’ ‘potential to take their full, metaphorical flight’ (2014: 112).

In *Dedans* and *Les Rêveries*, gendered memories of the colonial family are painstakingly mediated and re-mediated as a melancholic acknowledgement of non-belonging and impossible origins. In *L’Indiade*, the gendered metaphors of the mother- and father-country reappear in the service of an idealist humanism. Even if Cixous does not change the historical trajectory of Indian decolonisation (Partition still takes place, Gandhi’s project still fails), her re-imagining of Gandhi as the androgynous saint of a postcolonial and feminist utopia suppresses the non-appropriative, empathetic potential of the ‘prosthetic memory’ in *L’Indiade*.

2.6 Conclusion

Dedans and *Les Rêveries* deconstruct the ways in which gendered symbols of the mother- and father-country organise nationalist and colonial systems of belonging and identity. In her recollections of the colonial family, Cixous rejects singular categories of paternal vs.

maternal, masculine vs. feminine, French vs. Arab. Her autofictional novels offer a reading encounter with a world that helped to form Cixous's theoretical writings on the deconstruction of sexual difference and other binaries found in colonial discourse. In *L'Indiade*, this gendered imaginary of the ambiguously gendered mother-, father-country plays out in her depiction of Indian decolonisation. However, I have suggested that Cixous this transnational memory appears to be more appropriative than 'multidirectional'.

Jane Hiddleston's analysis of Cixous's *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en Jeune Saint Juif* may shed some more light on this appropriative memory in Cixous's play. Hiddleston suggests that Cixous's portrait of Derrida is transformative but also 'runs the risk of appropriating the other in order to celebrate the evocative potentiality of rewriting' (2010: 75). In this way, Hiddleston focuses on the anxiety of Cixous's encounter with the Other in reading and writing:

Ethical reading requires a form of violence, *in that it must be attentive to the text's potentiality rather than to its ostensible or overt meaning*. This new space, this transformation, would appear to run counter to the demands of an ethical portrait, but it is perhaps both a necessary effect of the representation process and, ever more, the paradoxical result of the very opening out that ethics demands. [...] Cixous's own reading is uncanny, it turns against itself and takes the risk of contradicting itself in the hope of creating new meanings. (Ibid, added emphasis)

Hiddleston refers to the anxiety of Cixous's project of writing the Other (including herself as Other) as a form of violence and contradiction which, potentially, can create new meaning. This perspective can help us to understand the appropriation of Indian history in *L'Indiade*. I have not attempted to rehabilitate the play, as the criticisms of racial and political naivety continue to ring true 30 years later. However, by being attentive to the

play's 'potentiality' rather than its 'overt meaning', we can trace the transnational movement of memory between India and Algeria via the ambiguous gendering of the father in Algeria and Gandhi in India. Writing the memory of others always runs the risk of appropriation, of 'violence'. But within this transformation there is the potential for a politics of empathy to be fostered by its movement of memory across and despite borders of language, nation, religion and gender.

In the next chapter on Ahmed Kalouaz's own transnational family memory, I will explore how 'connective' memory narratives *can* produce a gendered form of transnational solidarity and empathy. I will describe 'connective' memory narratives in Kalouaz's works in terms of a 'fraternity' which explicitly draws on transcolonial paradigms.

Chapter Three: Ahmed Kalouaz and the Fraternity of Connective Memory

‘Si longtemps après, il ne s’agit pas pour moi de raconter une histoire qui a existé, mais simplement de m’accrocher aux bribes de la mémoire des uns et des autres. Le temps, comme on dit, a fait son œuvre.’

A l’ombre du jasmin (Kalouaz 2012 : 49)

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the way in which Hélène Cixous’s autofictional depiction of the colonial family produces a gendered memory of colonialism in Algeria, which is reiterated in her theatrical depiction of Indian decolonisation in *L’Indiade ou l’Inde de leurs rêves*. I critiqued how this gendered memory of the colonial family resulted in the appropriation of Indian history and subjectivity in the performance of Gandhi as a ‘bisexual’ saint. Nonetheless, I suggested that we can glimpse the *potential* of an empathetic politics of memory in this movement of memory from Algeria to India, one in which gendered memory encourages solidarity and empathy across borders of race, nationality, and colonial contexts.

In this chapter, I will explore ‘fraternity’ as a gendered structure for connective memory in the works of French writer of Algerian origin, Ahmed Kalouaz. Across his 50 publications (from poetry to short novels and *écriture jeunesse*), his writing is marked by an impetus to bear witness to suffering and resistance across different generations, religions, nations, and ethnicities. This is partly engendered by his own experience of growing up as the child of Algerian migrants in France. A few months after his birth in Arzew, Algeria in 1952, his mother moved the family to France to join their father who was working in dam construction and mining in the mountainous Isère region. Settling in

the rural mountain-side hamlet called Simane, Kalouaz recalls his childhood with nostalgia, although inflected by the intensity of anti-Algerian racism during the 1950s and 1960s. However, his works rarely focus solely on the conditions of Algerian migrants in France, nor the wider legacies of colonialism in Algeria. Rather, he frequently connects this history to the memory of traumatic violence elsewhere, such as slavery in the Caribbean and the Holocaust.

According to Kathryn Lay-Chenchabi, Kalouaz's texts aim to 'resurrect stifled voices to allow them to echo through' his writing (2006: 2012). I want to add to this point that Kalouaz's writing is also attuned to the multifaceted and interconnected stories of the past, and seems to uphold many of the features of 'connective memory'. Commenting on the POLIN Museum to the History of Polish Jews, Marianne Hirsch states that '[b]earing witness to mass violence, whether in our own time or retrospectively, means understanding its history in all its complexity. It is both an act of solidarity with victims across lines of difference and a demand for justice and accountability' (Hirsch 2017). She argues that bearing witness to traumatic events, past and present, is a means to go beyond the 'bankruptcy of slogans such as "Never again"', and understand the ways in which various violent histories are actually connected rather than exceptional, isolated incidents, so that we can 'see ourselves as part of a web of remembrance and of action for an interconnected future' (Hirsch 2017). In other words, the act of connecting diverse moments of history forges networks of solidarity in memory that address both the present as well as the past, in the hope for an empathetic politics for the future.

In this way, a connective memory of traumatic pasts is based on a non-hierarchical structure in favour of a network of remembrances that does not relativise victimisation. How, then, does this pertain to the gendered hierarchies that organise collective memory (Hirsch and Smith 2002)? If connective memory promotes a non-hierarchical structure,

then it must also involve an interrogation of the gendered differentiation of power implicated in the construction and transmission of memory, both individual and collective. In this chapter, I am turning to the works of Kalouaz to think about the non-hierarchical structure of connective memory in terms of ‘fraternity’. Here, fraternity does not mean a club or society of men, as in the English definition. Instead, I am purposefully using the Gallicism ‘fraternity’ to refer to an order of communal life most commonly associated with the French national *devise* of a universal republican brotherhood: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. I will interrogate how Kalouaz’s writing structures connective memory as an engagement with fraternity as a gendered value. This examination of Kalouaz’s memory solidarity from the perspective of gendered memory recognises how fraternity has historically developed as a form of collective, performative masculinity. This chapter will also, therefore, question how Kalouaz’s texts performatively reiterate masculinity in his connective memory narratives.

The first two chapters of this thesis have demonstrated the way in which Djébar and Cixous explicitly highlight memories of colonialism from a feminist perspective. In contrast, in an interview from August 2016, Kalouaz did not agree that gender relations were a major theme in his works (Ivey 2016). In the four texts studied in this chapter, Kalouaz does not actively theorise gender identity, as in the case of Cixous, nor does he consider how memory differentiates between gendered subjects, as in the case of Djébar. At first glance, privileging gender in Kalouaz’s memory work may appear to be an over-zealous focus as his works have not received a great deal of critical attention, and very little from a feminist perspective.⁴⁶ However, in reference to some of Kalouaz’s earlier

⁴⁶ The majority of Kalouaz’s works have not received scholarly attention. A handful of his publications have been considered in terms of migrant literature and ‘*beur*’ literature in particular (Lay-Chenchabi 2006; Atallah 2012; Duvall 2012; Hargreaves 1997, 2009). A better-known French-Algerian contemporary to Kalouaz, Leïla Sebbar, has been studied widely in relation to memory in *beur* literature (and contemporary literature more broadly), while explicitly approaching the question of gender by privileging the voices of women. In studies of ‘*beur*’ literature, women’s and men’s writing is clearly differentiated. Jane Hiddleston

texts, *L'Encre d'un fait divers* (1984) and *Point kilométrique 190* (1986), Alec Hargreaves has pointed out that 'granted that the author is a man, one of the most striking features of Kalouaz's narratives is their frequent use of female narrators' (1997: 72). While the significance of these female narrators has only recently been explored in more detail, I will add to Hargreaves's observation that looking at Kalouaz's texts with an attention to gender can address the ostensibly 'oblique' gendering of men's memory, in contrast to the 'explicit' gendering of women's memory.⁴⁷

Historians of gender relations have long argued that the task of telling the history of gender is to denaturalise historic gender roles that have hierarchically reinforced the masculinity of power (Timm and Sanborn 2007: 16). For Kalouaz, writing about the past requires an empathetic form of humanism: 'Quand j'écris, il faut qu'il y ait de l'humanité ou de la fraternité pour que les choses fonctionnent' (Ivey 2016). The notion of writing as a humanist act, one that bears witness to the way individuals and groups support each other in times of duress, is also associated with the gendered concept of 'fraternité'. This chapter will explore the various forms of fraternity in relation to Kalouaz's memory narratives. On the one hand, this requires an analysis of how masculinity is reiterated by individuals in the wake of traumatic histories.⁴⁸ On the other hand, in Kalouaz's writing, this also refers to fraternity as a form of collective memory, which reveals the overlapping

has suggested that while male writers 'dream of new strategies for self-affirmation' (2005: 198) women 'beur' writers 'experiment with different sorts of performance and at times fall disconcertingly between French and Arabic models' (199-200). In selecting a lesser-known, male writer such as Kalouaz, rather than a widely-discussed author such as Sebbar, I am exploring the way masculinity and memory are often an 'invisible' form of gendered memory, which can shed light on the ways feminine and queer experiences of trauma are marginalised from connective memory narratives.

⁴⁷ See my article based on research conducted for my MA by Research (2014, The University of Leeds): Ivey, B. (2015) 'Franco-Algerian memory and questions of gender in Ahmed Kalouaz's *Point Kilométrique 190* (1986)' *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts*, 4, pp. 1-12.

⁴⁸ There are numerous studies on crises of French masculinity in relation to the various historical traumas of the 20th century (see Christopher Forth and Bertrand Taithe's edited volume *French Masculinities: History, Culture, and Politics* 2007). In recent works, Christine Quinan (2017) suggests that the traumas of the Algerian War produced a crisis in French masculine identity expressed in Resnais's film *Muriel*, while Mary Louise Roberts (2016) challenges the concept of 'gender crisis' in post-war French masculinity in favour of the less totalising concept of 'gender damage'.

and interconnecting memories of diverse traumas. This will suggest a shift in the concept of fraternity away from Republican universalism toward a structure based on connective memory as a politics of empathy.

The first section of this chapter expands upon the shared empathetic impulse in fraternity and connective memory. I will examine fraternity in relation to several memory contexts that are important for Kalouaz's work: the French republic and empire, anti-colonialism, the concentrationary, and 'beur' writing. In doing so, I will tease out some of the ways that fraternity has been reiterated and reinvented since the French revolution. Astrid Erll's concept of 'travelling memory' is a useful framework for thinking about how fraternity moves among different historical contexts. Erll argues that discursive concepts like 'East' and 'West' are 'mnemonic form[s]' (2011: 13) which travel transgenerationally so that 'old' forms can make sense of 'new' experience (14). I want to suggest that fraternity is a gendered 'mnemonic form' that acquires new political significance as it is repeated across different historical contexts. Importantly, however, I am making a distinction between *remembering or forgetting* fraternity and *fraternity as a figure of memory*. I am not suggesting that Kalouaz remembers or forgets fraternity but that, in his works, we can see fraternity as a figure of memory that offers a structure through which diverse traumatic histories are connected.

The second section will consider fraternity and connective memory in relation to Kalouaz's family biography; *Avec tes mains* (2009), *A l'ombre du jasmin* (2011), and *Une étoile aux cheveux noir* (2012). This trilogy of texts recounts Kalouaz's 'postmemory' (Hirsch 1997; 2012) of his family's migration from Algeria to France. Kalouaz must imaginatively and creatively fill in the gaps of his family history in a 'postmemorial' process which is gendered by his own negotiated status as a son and brother, on the one hand, and as a Frenchman, on the other. For example, he examines his father's war-time

masculinity as a soldier in the Second World War in order to reflect on his own negotiated relationship with Frenchness and fraternity as a French man of Algerian descent. In these contexts, fraternity in France is not a clear-cut acceptance of French ideals, such as the republican ‘fraternité’, but an ongoing negotiation with France’s colonial past and its manifestations in the present.

The third section will turn to the earlier text *Geronimo dans ma poitrine un nuage s’endort* (2005), which is an explicit example of connective memory on a transnational scale. In this monologue for the theatre, the Apache warrior, Geronimo, is reimagined as a globe-trotting ‘brother’ to a network of oppressed peoples. Through Geronimo, Kalouaz presents a model of masculine kinship that promotes remembering as an act of solidarity for past victims to inspire empathy in the present. However, this model is also based on an almost exclusively masculine experience of suffering. Thus, while fraternity is shown as a structure for connective forms of memory work that go beyond the hierarchy of victimisation, this is an implicitly *masculine* form of solidarity.

3.2 Fraternity as a ‘mnemonic form’

This section will expand my point that fraternity can be thought of in terms of ‘connective’ memory. Erll suggests that ‘memory in culture’ is not necessarily about the recollection or forgetting of specific events, objects, persons that belong to specific cultures, nations, or groups. Rather, the task of memory studies is to address the ‘trajectories of media, contents, and carriers, the paths, and paths-dependencies, of remembering and forgetting’ (2011: 14). Particular ‘mnemonic forms’ (13) can facilitate the way in which memory ‘travels’ along these paths of remembering and forgetting. The concept and trope of ‘fraternity’ can be considered as one such ‘mnemonic form’ (Erll

2011: 13). Since the 1789 French Revolution, fraternity has appeared and re-appeared in diverse historical contexts and has functioned as a ‘mnemonic form’ which enables knowledge of the past to be transmitted in the present. In this section, I will discuss fraternity in historical contexts which are important to Kalouaz’s work – tracing its trajectory from the French revolution, to colonialism, and its contested place vis-à-vis the French cultural phenomenon of ‘littérature beure’.

First, and perhaps most obviously, fraternity refers to brothers and, as such, the wider metaphoric role of the family as a model for society. Lynn Hunt (1992) described the French Revolution of 1789 as a ‘family romance’, wherein the family structure which upheld the political unconscious of the 18th century was revolutionised by the ‘parricide’ of Louis XVI. Timm and Sanborn (2007) suggest that the post-revolutionary period dramatically reshaped systems of European patriarchy, where fraternity can be understood as a ‘being-in-society’. However, this dramatic shift in patriarchy came about due to a new relationship (literal and symbolic) between fathers and sons, rather than between men and women. In other words, a new generation of post-revolutionary men valued community as a brotherhood, rather than the power of a single monarch, a transformation which was legitimised by ‘controlled masculine violence’ (Timm and Sanborn 2007: 49).

In contrast, sisters in the new republic created profound unease. Women were denied political agency and yet frequently represented in allegorical capacities since ‘there was an obvious virtue in representing the republic by a female allegory; she could not be confused with the father/king’ (Timm and Sanborn 2007: 83). In other words, while brothers are the actors of the French republic, sisters are convenient apolitical symbols of the abstract values of fraternity (*la fraternité*). Furthermore, in the Halbwachsian sense of collective memory (1950), fraternity is also about forging a collective identity through

shared knowledge of certain memory narratives. The post-revolutionary hierarchy of gendered power may have challenged the power of the monarch and allegorical father but, as we shall see, the continued resonance of fraternity relies on the transfer and dissemination of a particular kind of fraternal memory as a relationship between symbolic brothers.

In the French colonies, colonial subjects, as well as colonists from the metropole, were exposed to the notion of fraternity as a social bond that irrevocably connected all agents within the French empire to the centralised power of the metropole – *La Mère-Patrie*. Drawing on Hunt's concept of the family romance, Françoise Vergès argues that in La Réunion the legacy of fraternity is a means to perpetuate the 'colonial family romance' in which the French metropole plays the role of symbolic parent to infantilised colonised subjects. Even after the abolition of slavery in 1848, '[t]he republican dream of universal fraternity was enmeshed with French imperial hegemony and ethnocentrism. Fraternity was neither a given nor an effect of reciprocity but the sign of inequality between a dominating and a dominated nation' (Vergès 1999: 71). In other words, fraternity is not universal, but in the colonial economy it is the sign of imperial domination. Consequently, anti-colonial movements responded uneasily to calls for 'fraternité' between former colonised and colonisers. For example, in her reading of C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938), Michelle Anne Stephens argues that, while *liberté* and *égalité* figure frequently in the historical memory of the Haitian Revolution, the significance of *fraternité* is never clearly realised:

James ascribed to Toussaint the vision of scattered black male communities, outposts of freed and slave communities, connected through the transnational movement for black freedom. This vision looks elsewhere for fraternity, to the

other colonies of fugitive Negroes scattered throughout the colonial world.
(Stephens 2005: 219)

Thus, if fraternity allows the citizen to integrate into the nation-state, this universality is in fact 'bounded by race and gender' (221), where the 'dream of fraternity was doomed to be a reality for only one half of the race' (240). Once again, the legacy of colonial fraternity has significant consequences for black women, doubly marginalised by racism and patriarchy. However, Vergès claims that feminist interpretations of colonial fraternity 'tend to ignore the radical dimension of the republican rhetoric in the colony, where people lived under slavery and imperial tutelage' (1999: 27). In other words, anti-colonial relations with metropolitan fraternity were ambivalent, in which (re)affirming colonial masculinity occurred at the expense of colonised women but nonetheless provided a framework for resistance to colonialism at the time.

The ambivalent role of fraternity in the post-emancipation Caribbean and La Réunion demonstrates how anti-colonial movements struggled to reconcile fraternity with the legacy of the French empire. This is particularly tense in the case of Algeria since the three French *départements* of Oran, Algiers, and Constantine fell directly under the Republican *devise* of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. However, the universal logic of Republican 'fraternité' is once again limited by the imperial impulse to isolate and disenfranchise *français musulmans* on the conditions of religion and race. This is perhaps most clearly realised in the adoption of the Crémieux decree, which, as Benjamin Stora (2006) and Judith Butler (2002) have both noted, exiled Jewish Algerians from Algerianness in the adoption of a French identity, but also vivisected the possibilities of Jewish and Arab-Berber fraternity found in the shared term of 'Semite'. Conversely, as Kamal Salhi has highlighted, strands of Algerian political thought found inspiration in the French

republican slogan to make the case for liberation, having ‘recourse to the language and arguments of their oppressor to vindicate their right to freedom’ (1999: 44).

For Frantz Fanon, his own experience as a French citizen from Martinique only highlighted the difference between the revolutionary brotherhood of Algerian independence and the fraternity offered by the French republic. In his lecture entitled ‘Racisme et culture’ for the 1956 *Congrès des écrivains et artistes noirs* in Paris, Fanon argued that liberation from colonialism could only take place with a renewed form of fraternity between the cultures of the occupier and the colonised:

La culture spasmée et rigide de l’occupant, libérée, s’ouvre enfin à la culture du peuple devenu réellement frère. Les deux cultures peuvent alors s’affronter, s’enrichir. En conclusion, l’universalité réside dans cette décision de prise en charge du relativisme réciproque de cultures différentes une fois exclu irrévocablement le statut colonial. (Fanon: no date)

Like others before him, Fanon privileges the fraternal metaphor of a cultural brotherhood to describe liberation from a colonial structure of power. However, he insists that this decolonised ‘fraternité’ must be based on ‘relativisme réciproque’ rather than a hierarchy of cultural superiority. On the one hand, in the era of Algerian decolonisation, fraternity evokes not only the democratic ideals of equality and freedom, but the legacy of imperial exclusions in the establishment of colonial citizenship in French-Algeria. On the other hand, fraternity is also a source of revolutionary inspiration that challenges the racist hierarchies at the heart of France’s claim to Algerian territory.

I have highlighted that fraternity holds an ambivalent status as both a value for radical anti-colonial and transnational resistance and a symbol of French imperial oppression in colonial contexts. In texts such as the novella *Leçons d’absences* (1991)

(later re-edited into *Absentes* 1999) and *Geronimo*, Kalouaz demonstrates how histories of French colonial oppression overlap and interact with memories of the Holocaust and the concentration camp system of Nazi Europe. For David Rousset, a French concentration-camp survivor and political activist, fraternity must be fostered between the survivors of Nazi concentration camps and the dispossessed of other totalitarian regimes. In his post-war political activism, he most famously evoked the concept to call on Nazi camp survivors to denounce the treatment of Soviet prisoners:

Accordons-leur *la fraternité ancienne de nos ruines*. Que n'aurions-nous pas donné alors pour qu'une main se tende vers nous sans qu'elle ait exigé au préalable la confession de nos péchés ? (2016 : 127, added emphasis)

Rousset draws on the discourse of fraternity in order to call on the memory of the concentration camps and argue for transnational solidarity against totalitarian regimes. He coined the concept of 'l'univers concentrationnaire' in his 1946 work of the same title to account for the existence of the concentrationary system in the Soviet Union. Emma Kuby translates the 'univers concentrationnaire' as the 'concentration camp universe' (2014: 153) and has criticised Rousset's 'distinctive thesis of totalitarian equivalence between Nazism and Soviet communism' (148). She suggests that this is an apolitical approach as it collapses the historical difference of these two totalitarian regimes, in Rousset's 'absolute identification with victims' experience of dehumanizing trauma' (150). In contrast, Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman use the less historically-specific translation of 'concentrationary' to describe 'both a historical and a conceptual tool' for thinking about forms, images, and figures of totalitarian terror (2014: 8). In this case, the 'concentrationary' designates the way in which a memory and knowledge of such an 'univers' can travel and move to describe *other* sites, outside of the specificity of European Nazi camps, in ways that are not necessarily politically naïve but based on an

empathetic drive to recognise the political possibility of totalitarianism in modern life. In this sense, fraternity in the ‘concentrationary’ pertains to forms of political responsibility under, and in the wake of, totalitarian terror. Nonetheless, in my analysis of *Geronimo* in particular, I will consider whether such signs of fraternity in the ‘concentrationary’ aesthetic reduce the political and historical specificities of various historical moments.

Elsewhere in Rousset’s writings, fraternity carries a different meaning. In his longer novel, *Les Jours de notre mort* (1947) Rousset described the material and ethical conditions of the concentration camp in great detail. In the following extract near the end of the text, he highlights the impossibility of ever comprehending the experience of camp survivors:

Jamais les gens normaux ne pourraient comprendre. Ils vivent en surface. Pas seulement de conventions sociales. Mais d’autres biens plus profondes. Insoupçonnées. Les conventions où la vie la plus intime se tolère. Leur dire: la vérité, c’est que la victime comme le bourreau étaient ignobles; que la leçon des camps, *c’est la fraternité dans l’abjection*; que si toi tu ne t’es pas conduit avec le même degré d’ignominie, c’est que seulement le temps a manqué et que les conditions n’ont pas été tout à fait au point; qu’il n’existe qu’une différence de rythme dans la décomposition des êtres: que la lenteur du rythme est l’apanage des grands caractères, mais que le terreau, ce qu’il y a dessous et qui monte, monte, monte, c’est absolument, affreusement, la même chose. Qui le croira?
(1993: 742, added emphasis)

In this passage, survival and escape from the ignominy of the camps is only due to certain ‘conditions’ and timing. Strangely, Rousset hints that the ignominy of the camps produces a ‘fraternité dans l’abjection’ between ‘victime’ and ‘bourreau’. Here, this ‘fraternité’ does not refer to a referentiality that conflates the victim with executioner, but pertains to

the ethical decay of life in the concentration camp itself in which moral frames of reference between victim and perpetrator are degraded beyond recognition. ‘Fraternité’ highlights the collapse of an ethical framework in the strange and horrifying conditions of the concentration camp. Therefore, if Rousset’s ‘fraternité ancienne de nos ruines’ (2016: 127) calls on the necessity of political responsibility in the wake of totalitarianism, ‘fraternité dans l’abjection’ (1993: 742) highlights the impossibility of political responsibility in the camp itself. Rousset’s differential usage of the term ‘fraternité’ demonstrates the slippage of the term as a framework for different political and ethical arguments. However, in both forms of ‘fraternité’, Rousset does not consider fraternity as a form of gendered relationality.⁴⁹

How do these various structures of fraternity pertain to Kalouaz’s writing? In the examples discussed so far, fraternity has been mobilised as a way to forge a collective identity and political responsibility in the wake of traumatic experience; revolution, colonisation, genocide. This question of identity and responsibility is also a recurring feature in Kalouaz’s works and has been the main focus of his critical placing within a tradition of ‘beur’ literature. Growing out of anti-racist movements in the early 1980s, *littérature beure* refers to a trend of publications in the late 20th century by French writers of Maghrebi origin. As Michel Laronde notes, ‘la mouvance beure’ was highly mediated through the creation of the station ‘Radio-Beur’ in 1981, and sensationalising newspaper headlines surrounding the movement (1988: 684). In 1983, the ‘beur’ movement gained national media coverage with *La Marche pour l’égalité et contre le racisme* in which a relatively small group of activists marched from Marseille to the north, culminating in a

⁴⁹ I will explore the former notion of concentrationary and fraternity as multidirectional solidarity between positions of victimhood in my analysis of *Geronimo*. In chapter five on Nina Bouraoui I will consider the latter notion of ‘fraternité dans l’abjection’ and the concentrationary as an interrogation of ethical differentiation, see pp.265-6.

crowd of 100,000 in Paris.⁵⁰ As Hiddleston puts it, the march was significant as it ‘created a strong sense of fraternity and sharing, as vast numbers of North Africans realized they were not isolated in their experience and could derive strength from the support of similar people’ (2005: 184). The march is the principal *lieu de mémoire* in the narrative arc of the political and cultural genealogy of a ‘beur’ identity, further crystallised in the 2013 film directed by Nabil Ben Yadir *La Marche*. In contrast, the progressive politics of a unified ‘beur’ youth struggled to define itself beyond this media-image and the movement was ultimately short lived. The term itself, as Hiddleston goes on to note, was contested as soon as it came into being, having been easily re-appropriated and folded into a negative stereotype of a violence and delinquent *banlieue* youth by the media and right-wing commentators (Hiddleston 2005: 184-6, also Kleppinger 2015: 45). Sylvie Durmelat posits that the term appears in ‘othering’ discourses, in which ‘beur’ both gave a voice to, but also ‘orientalised’, this anti-racist movement with ‘une sorte de néo-orientalisme qui prend place non pas dans un lointain ailleurs, mais dans les banlieues des grands centres urbains et industriels français, à portée de main’ (1998 : 198). Therefore, the category of ‘beur’ may have initially suggested a form of North African fraternity in France, but this was also conditioned by media appropriation of the term.

As a young writer with Algerian parents in the 1980s, critical attention firmly placed Kalouaz within this newly emerging generation of *beur* writers, featuring Azouz Begag, Farida Belghoul, Mehdi Charef, Nacer Kettane, Mehdi Lallaoui among others. When Kalouaz’s works are discussed, it is predominantly in reference to his two earliest novels *L’Encre d’un fait divers* (1985) and *Point kilométrique 190* (1987) which dealt

⁵⁰ According to Kathryn A. Kleppinger, the march is most commonly remembered as *La Marche des Beurs* rather than the wordy *La Marche pour l’égalité et contre le racisme* due to branding by the left-wing newspaper *Libération*. As a consequence, the ethnically-framed label of ‘beur’ came to supersede the anti-racist politics that motivated the March organisers (2015: 44).

with the violent murder and victimisation of North African protagonists in France. Following the success of these novels, he was invited to comment on ‘*beur*’ writing by the magazine *Actualité de l’émigration* in 1987. In his response, Kalouaz firmly rejects the label of ‘*écrivain beur*’: ‘j’aurai aimé que le terme de « littérature beure » n’existe pas’ (25). This is a sentiment that he has since reiterated some 30 years later, adding that, with hindsight, a *littérature beure* never did develop as a fully-fledged genre and that he is happy to have not ‘rentré dans le moule’ of an ‘*écrivain beur*’ (Ivey 2016). Echoing Michel Laronde’s affirmation that ‘*beur*’ writing ‘se situe le plus souvent dans la sphère politique et sociale’ (1988: 691), Hiddleston has suggested that Kalouaz’s rejection of the term is because ‘he does not perceive his writing as part of any such socio-political movement but expresses instead a subjective view while questioning the power of language itself’ (2005: 186). In other words, for Hiddleston, Kalouaz does not recognise the term *beur* as a collective French-Maghrebi movement in literature. If, at best, *beur* identity underlines a fraternal bond among Franco-Maghrebi writers, for Kalouaz it is a collective identity which only limits his scope as a writer (Ivey 2016).

Mireille Rosello argues that ‘*beur*’ identity can be understood in terms of ‘*départenance*’ – a portmanteau of *départ* and *appartenance* (1993) – referring to the impossibility of choosing ‘between universalism and culturalism without succumbing to disaffection or indifference’ (1993: 23). For Kalouaz, adopting the term ‘*écrivain beur*’ would not offer a solution to this impossible choice between his dual origins. Others have read Kalouaz’s rejection of the ‘*beur*’ label as a means to strengthen the legitimacy of his claim to Frenchness (Hargreaves 2005: 11) or a rejection of identification through differentiation (Hiddleston 2005: 178). I posit that Kalouaz’s refusal of the label ‘*écrivain beur*’ underlines his anxiety concerning his exclusion from a literary citizenship that is not solely defined by his French-Algerian background. Indeed, Kalouaz’s works offer

important insights into the histories and trajectories of violence, memory, and identity beyond the France-North Africa bind. Kfir Cohen has argued that ‘beur’ scholarship has frequently overlooked the role of violence and globalisation in the politics of ‘beur’ literature and historical development (2013: 124). Looking at the connectivity of transcultural memory in Kalouaz’s works can give us insights into these overlooked areas as well as shed light on the gendering of connective memory with its privileging of fraternity in relation to memory in both local and global contexts.

In listing these various contexts from the French revolution to ‘beur’ literature, I am not laying out a fixed trajectory for thinking through fraternity in Kalouaz’s literary works. Instead, I am drawing attention to the way in which fraternity is reiterated as a ‘mnemonic form’ (Erl 2011: 13). Erl suggests that ‘travelling memory’ is enabled ‘through the condensation of complex and confusing traces of the past into succinct mnemonic forms’ (2011: 13). As a mnemonic form, ‘fraternity’ traces the structures of a longed-for solidarity in the wake of traumatic violence following revolution, decolonisation, and totalitarianism. However, as we can see in Kalouaz’s troubled reception of the ‘beur’ label, there is no immediate equivalence between collective identities such as ‘beur’ and new forms of postcolonial fraternity. As we will see in the rest of this chapter, Kalouaz’s writings seek out forms of ‘fraternity’ in memory which is related to his family history of Algerian migration but not limited to it.

Having worked through the ‘mnemonic forms’ of fraternity’ *vis-à-vis* the politics of the family, anti-colonialism, and Kalouaz’s positioning in ‘beur’ literature, the next section of this chapter will examine the role of fraternity in Kalouaz’s postmemorial trilogy of texts based on the lives of his father, mother, and late sister. As Kalouaz imaginatively and creatively recalls his family biography, he also renegotiates their roles in the ‘fraternité’ of a French collectivity as Algerians migrants. As he fills in the gaps of

his family story, his own identity as a French man will play an important performative role in his postmemorial reconstruction of the past.

3.3 Postmemorial Family Narratives

Kalouaz's trilogy – *Avec tes mains* (2009), *À l'ombre du jasmin* (2012), and *Une étoile aux cheveux noirs* (2013) – is a series of short 'récits', each one a love-letter to a particular family-member: his late father, his late sister (who died tragically in Algeria aged three), and his elderly mother. Rather than a family biography, they can be more accurately described as 'postmemorial' narratives. Their biographies are incomplete, marked by the silences and absences of memories that were not transmitted and stories that were not told. The silences of memory are mediated by Kalouaz's own postmemory as an 'imaginative investment, projection and creation' (Hirsch 2012: 5). However, this 'imaginative investment and creation' inspires a certain amount of anxiety as he wonders about the authenticity of his crafted memory of his father's life:

Aujourd'hui, je t'invente peut-être des lambeaux de vie pour peupler ces blancs, combler cette carence affective mutuelle. Pourront-ils dire combien tu as souffert et ce que nous avons enduré ? (2009: 61)

Nonetheless, in lieu of an archive of textual evidence (none of these family members could read or write in French or Arabic) or a repertoire of family memories, Kalouaz reconstructs the lives of his late father, his late sister, and his elderly mother through his own voice. Addressing each protagonist as 'tu', in a lyrical, poetic, and introspective narrative, he fills in the gaps of memory with his own subjectivity and imagination. I suggest that fraternity – as a gendered form of brotherly belonging in a French cultural milieu – also plays a role in Kalouaz's family narrative.

Gendered memory is important for these family narratives because, in this ‘postmemorial’ creation, questions of brotherhood and masculine filiation come to the forefront. These are also intimately linked with other questions of national belonging. In recreating his family memory of poverty, war, migration, and labour, Kalouaz’s narratives also confront a crisis of identity derived from an inability to situate oneself in some of the grand narratives of the late 20th century pertaining to France and Algeria; on the one hand, the brotherhood of Algerian anti-colonialism and, on the other, the ‘fraternity’ of French society. I suggest that, as well as producing identity crises in relation to race and class – a common focus of readings of ‘beur’ literature – these narratives develop the role of masculinity in the postmemorial construction of migrant narratives. As Christine Quinan highlights in her study of post-war masculinity in Alain Resnais’s *Muriel* (1963), ‘[t]actics of memory evasion like forgetting and denial and, conversely, attempts to remember [...] also play out in particular ways that intersect with gender’ (2017: 19-20). If Kalouaz’s tactics of memory rely on alternative archives to bear witness and record his family history, I suggest that performative gendered identity can be one of these alternative archives which have helped Kalouaz to remember and to forget.

Kalouaz’s desire to write emerged during his childhood as a way to make sense of his family’s isolation in the Isère and his experience of racist bullying (Ivey 2016). While his earlier writings were only partly inspired by his personal experience, this later trilogy is much closer to biographical fiction.⁵¹ Furthermore, it is also a way of placing the lives of his family members into a historical context. The first *récit* of the biographical trilogy, *Avec tes mains*, traces the life of his father, Abd el-Kader, and each chapter marks

⁵¹ Elsewhere, I have used the term ‘autofiction’ to describe women’s life writing in relation to Hélène Cixous. Kalouaz’s trilogy refers to the lives of his parents and as such differs from ‘autofiction’, with this focus on the first person. Here I use the term biographical fiction in the same vein as Dervila Cooke in her analysis of Patrick Modiano’s (auto)biographical fiction, in which ‘the narrativization of experience is always ‘fictional’, in the etymological sense of ‘constructed’, and often even fictional in the sense of ‘invented’” (2005: 13).

a decade from 1932, passing through the historically decisive years of 1942 and 1962, and ending in 2002 the year of his father's death in France. We learn details about his father's life, but these are never definitive and largely reconstructed by Kalouaz; Abd el-Kader was *probably* born in 1917, near Saint-Aimé, Algeria (now Djidiouia), to a father who himself had fought and maybe died during the First World War. Kalouaz's father never articulated his memories of his life in Algeria, nor recounted his experiences as a labourer in France and he is presented as a near-impenetrably silent figure for the son. Kalouaz has noted that a veil of silence hung over the Algerian War of Independence during his childhood (he was ten in 1962): 'La guerre d'Algérie, c'est un grand secret. C'est un grand secret, pas forcément volontairement, mais c'est un grand silence. Donc ce qu'on savait après, on l'a appris par nous-mêmes' (Ivey 2016). However, there are some years of his life which prove to be the exception – Abd el-Kader's role in the liberation of France as a colonial soldier and the years of the Second World War are vividly recalled by the father and offers a rare insight into his life. This selective transgenerational transmission of memory sheds light on the ways in which collective imaginaries provide narrative frameworks for individual memory. What is it about the years of the father's role as a colonial soldier in the Second World War that provide a framework for the transfer of his memory?

Historical perspectives on the way Europeans viewed colonial soldiers throughout the 20th and 21st century have shown how representations of colonial soldiers have oscillated between suspicion, victimisation, infantilisation and heroisation. Alison Fell and Nina Wardleworth have studied representations of Senegalese *tirailleurs*, and have noted that 21st century representations continue to 're-invoke heroized images of soldiers as defenders of Empire rather than the postcolonial images of Africans as victims of colonialism and capitalism' (2016: 329). Fell and Wardleworth demonstrate that the

tirailleur is a ‘palimpsestic’ figure (Silverman 2013), dialogically placed in relation to the *present* as well as the *past*, and is thus primed for instrumentalisation in contemporary issues of nationalism and racism in France. Regarding the politicisation of colonial soldiers from the Maghreb, debates over veteran pensions came to notoriety with the film *Indigènes* (dir. Bouchareb 2006). According to Benjamin Stora, this public debate ‘s’est fait autour du drapeau français : on intègre les indigènes dans le récit national, mais des indigènes qui acceptent la présence française dans leurs pays, à l’époque colonisée’ (2007: 54-5). In other words, the film framed the memory of the Maghrebi soldier as a fable of a benevolent form of postcolonial French nationalism, rather than a critique of colonialism. However, Karen Adler has shown that the mediatisation of colonial soldiers during the Second World War was actually more widespread than originally thought. She argues that the claim that *Indigènes* shattered a silence over the presence of colonial soldiers in the liberation of France is part of a ‘sentimental demand for recognition [which] paralyses examination of the historical processes whereby the colonial soldier was in fact permitted a strong media presence’ (2013: 473). In other words, while it is presumed that colonial soldiers were forgotten by history and had to be rehabilitated into national consciousness, it is more accurate to say that the colonial soldier is a highly malleable figure in memory discourses of the World Wars.

The political instrumentalisation of colonial soldiers permeates the ways historical events are recalled in autobiographical and cultural memory. In *Avec tes mains*, the years of service in the French army are the most vividly transferred memories of Abd el-Kader’s life, and conform to wider narratives of the colonial soldier as heroic and self-sacrificing for the French values of *Liberté* and *Égalité*, but especially *Fraternité*. In the chapter entitled ‘1942’, Kalouaz describes the soldier’s uniform as a material marker of his

father's new identity, differentiating him from his previous life as an impoverished worker in colonial Algeria:

Sous cet uniforme, tu sais au moins pour quelles raisons on te donne des ordres. Ce n'est pas l'humiliation, mais plutôt une autre vie faite d'un semblant de fraternité, sentiment nouveau, pour toi le solitaire. (Kalouaz 2009: 22)

In the army, as in his earlier life as a labourer in Algeria, Abd el-Kader must follow orders. However, the humiliating context of colonialism has, ostensibly, been erased by the soldier's uniform. More than a uniform, it is a costume with which the father performs a new identity, a new kind of masculinity based on the 'semblant de fraternité' of the *confrères d'armes*, or what Daniel J. Sherman has called 'the homosocial camaraderie of combat' (1996: 85). The soldier's uniform performatively reiterates the 'fraternité' of soldiering. This is a feeling of solidarity that is disavowed by colonialism in Abd el-Kader's life as a *français musulman* in Algeria. From a solitary life of poverty, the fraternity of war affords Kalouaz's father 'une autre vie'.

For Abd el-Kader, whose life story is veiled by silence, the memory of the soldier's uniform and the 'semblant de fraternité' allows him a narrative framework through which to articulate the events from this period:

Tu te souvenais de ces noms avec précision, tu as aussi parlé du débarquement à Saint-Tropez en août en 1944 et de la remontée triomphale jusqu'au Jura, la traversée des Vosges, pour atteindre Strasbourg en vainqueur. C'est presque l'épisode, le souvenir le plus vivace de ta vie. Quand tu parles de cette époque, tu racontes avec détail et fierté, te souvenant particulièrement du défilé à Paris au moins d'avril 1945. (Kalouaz 2009: 31)

Abd el-Kader's memory of liberation and of victory supports the script which confirms the heroism of the colonial soldier, culminating in the victorious march through the metropolitan capital and reinforcing all the performative tokens of the soldier's uniform. In other words, the script of a soldierly fraternity is one path for remembering (Erll 2011: 14), that allows Abd el-Kader's memory to travel to his son.

In the course of Kalouaz's postmemorial reconstruction of his father's memory, the narrative complicates this discourse of soldierly fraternity. The chapter '1942' ends in a tone of bitter disappointment as Kalouaz supplements his father's memory with an imagined scene in which Abd el-Kader learns of the Sétif massacre, questioning the authenticity of soldierly fraternity:

Toi, en ces jours de mai 1945, tu as appris, malgré la désinformation, le sort réservé aux manifestants de Sétif, les milliers de morts de la répression. On disait que la paix est revenue, mais ce ne fut pas la même victoire pour tous. [...] dans ta tête subsisteront tant d'images dissimulées, de silences et de souvenirs non-partagés. (32)

Kalouaz imagines the double significance of 8 May 1945 as a traumatising memory for his father, one which complicates the commemorative script with which he recites his involvement in the liberation of France. By projecting the Sétif massacre into his father's story, Kalouaz's narrative complicates the memory of his father as the colonial soldier and benefactor of the 'fraternity' of the French army. This is significant because it has been widely acknowledged that it was difficult for colonial veterans to be integrated into the nationalist narrative of independence (Rogan 2014: 332). In her study on the role of Senegalese soldiers fighting the FLN in Algeria during the War of Independence, Ruth Ginio has pointed out that the monolithic perspective of African colonial soldiers as bravely fighting for France 'makes us forget that the original aim of recruiting Africans to the army was to conquer the empire and maintain order in it by utilizing the supposedly

violent nature of the Africans as a screen behind which colonial violence and brutality could hide' (2017: xx). Obviously, *Avec tes mains* does not concern the roles of soldiers from *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, but this political impasse between the legacy of colonial soldiers as agents of empire during the Second World War, and the post-war politics of decolonisation is relevant to the father's silence during the War of Independence. In *Avec tes mains*, the performative fraternity symbolised by the soldier's uniform seems to sit in opposition to the anti-colonial fraternity of decolonisation.

Abd el-Kader's memories from the period of decolonisation are not easily transferred to the son; there is no clear 'path' (Erll 2011) along which these memories can travel and there is no script of soldierly fraternity that one can perform. When Kalouaz deals with the memory of the Algerian War of Independence in chapters '1952' and '1962', the narrative is formed by postmemorial creation rather than the mediation of the father's voice. During this period, Abd el-Kader has returned to France, not as her liberator but as an 'ouvrier' working on the construction of dams and mines in the Isère. As a worker in metropolitan France his civil status is recrystallised as the colonial Other, where his Frenchness is legally conditioned by his religion. This is not to say that forms of fraternity, solidarity, and friendships do not grow among the workers in the 'chantier' but, conversely, these relationships are threatened by the murmurs of war rather than nurtured by them: 'Vous trouvez en ces hommes, rompus aux dures cadences des usines et aux luttes syndicales, des alliés. Pour un moment encore, puisque la guerre rôde' (38). For Abd el-Kader, the Algerian revolution offers no solution to the conditions of being a racialised manual labourer in France. As a construction worker in France during the War of Independence, the daily risk of police violence only increases: 'On racontait que des Algériens se rendant à leur travail étaient soudain entourés par des policiers en civil qui leur demandaient de poser leurs mains sur la tête' (55). Notably, this anecdote does not

derive from the 'tu' of the father which normally dominates the narrative but the generalised 'on' of collective memory, suggesting that such testimony did not come directly from the father.

To fill in the father's silence during this period, Kalouaz must seek out imaginative ways to yield a memory from this silence. Since there is very little textual evidence of his father's life, writing becomes a postmemorial act of creation for Kalouaz, in which he must create his own family archive. In Judith Butler's Foreword to the English translation of *Un Sémite* – Denis Guénoun's memoir about his father, René Guénoun, a Jewish Algerian communist and supporter of Independence – she suggests that biographical writing disturbs the divide between the personal work of memory and the historical work of archival research in which '[t]he father becomes a problem of the archive, and the son a researcher of documents and forms of linguistic exchange'. The son must look 'to fragments of writings to know his father, to bring his own memories forth within a tissue of words' (2014: xiii). In contrast, if Kalouaz's father is also a 'problem of the archive', this textual archive of documents and letters does not exist and Kalouaz must create this 'tissue of words' by recuperating them from *non-textual* or *non-verbal* archives. For example, the narrator turns to an embodied memory of his father to get a sense of his experiences of life as an Algerian labourer in France during the violent years of the Algerian War of Independence:

un goût du travail manuel me vient de toi, et je ne peux m'empêcher, en maniant la truelle, de penser aux dimanches où tu cimentais à tour de bras [...] Même si ce sont aujourd'hui les miens, tous ces gestes t'appartiennent. Ce que tu n'as pas su dire en paroles s'est imprimé dans mes yeux, et je reproduis ces gestes à mon tour. Ce sont comme des mots qui reviennent, ce langage des mains, celui que tu as pratiqué jusqu'à l'épuisement' (96-7).

The routine and physical rituals of masculinity, bound up in the gestures of manual labour, are re-enacted by Kalouaz through his own physical actions. While his body is his own, his actions represent a physical language of learned behaviour inherited from his father; ‘Même si ce sont aujourd’hui les miens, tous ces gestes t’appartiennent’. In the absence of a spoken language with which to recall his father’s memory, memory is embodied and transmitted via the masculine action of physical labour, handling the trowel until exhaustion.

This bodily language, ‘ce langage des mains’, allows Kalouaz to give a voice to the past and use embodiment and performative gender as an archive of postmemory. While the narrator laments that he never knew his father outside of the prescribed gender roles played out in his lifetime (colonial soldier, migrant labourer, silent father), he can only re-write and re-appropriate this gendered language in order to achieve an evocation of his father’s memory. In reproducing the ‘gestes’ of his father, Kalouaz is also engaging with the crisis of masculinity that his father faced in returning to France under very different circumstances – as a supposed enemy, rather than a heroic liberator. For Susan Ireland, a ‘crisis of masculinity’ (2011: 77) is a trope of Maghrebi migrant literature in French, where ‘the disruption of assumption regarding gender roles [...] occurs when an immigrant encounters cultural norms that are different from his own’ (76). In other words, within the context of migration, like any other, gender is a changeable and unstable practice of ‘temporal and situational’ construction (Ryan and Webster 2008: 5). Therefore, engaging with the father’s masculine performativity (even implicitly) is a way for Kalouaz to enact a postmemory of his father’s life – more than a simple repetition of gender-inflected action, it evokes the *time* of the father’s labouring as an Algerian in France during the 1950s and 1960s.

À l'ombre du jasmin (2012) is the second *récit* of the family trilogy. Fraternity appears in the narrator's subjectivity as a brother who imaginatively commemorates the life of a sister he never met. Three-year-old Mimouna died in Algeria shortly before Kalouaz's own birth. Complaining of a pain in her leg, Mimouna died the next day from what Kalouaz's mother assumed was a snake bite, but will never know for sure. The narrator remarks that poverty and colonial apathy for the lives of Algerians contributed to this tragedy and the death of another sibling a few years earlier:

Il [Son père] avait essuyé le refus d'un médecin deux ans auparavant. Celui-ci lui avait répondu qu'il n'allait pas traverser la ville pour une fièvre infantine. Au matin, l'enfant est mort. C'est une des injustices que les gens devaient subir en ce pays qui ne leur appartenait plus depuis un siècle. Ces souffrances supplémentaires ont accentué leur fragilité. (2012: 50)

In this way, bearing witness to his sister's short life is also a way to bear witness to the violent inequalities of the colonial system in Algeria – the personal loss of the sister is inseparable from the injustices of colonialism. This is significant because, as the narrator puts it, he owes his life in France to his sister's tragic death. Without this tragedy, his family may have never decided to leave Algeria for France, taking an infant Kalouaz with them:

C'est par ta mort brutale que je connais la France [...] j'aurais comme vous marché pieds-nus au lieu d'aller à l'école assez longtemps pour sortir du nombre, et guidé à l'âge de huit ou dix ans, un âne, un mulet pour les travaux des champs, sort réservé a beaucoup d'enfants de ce milieu de siècle (12)

Whereas she perished in Algeria, a victim of colonial apathy and poverty, Kalouaz escaped this poverty and the violent years of the Algerian War of Independence. Writing

about his sister's memory is a means to acknowledge a fraternal debt, that without the tragedy of his sister's death, the narrator would also have been subject to the enormous disparity of living standards between Algerians and *pieds-noirs*.

The narrator recognises the move to France as unquestionably positive since it was in France that he received an education and mastered the French language: 'Je m'y pavane, elle me fait vivre, respire, m'a permis en partie de refermer une cicatrice, un mal qui serait né dans ta disparition' (27-8). There is a tension in Kalouaz's memory of his late sister. It is both tragic but also the means by which he came to the French language. Writing in French thus allows him, at the very least, to acknowledge his sister's role in his dramatically different destiny, although nothing will repay this debt:

Ce livre qui vient, lorsqu'il arrivera à la dernière page, n'aura pas payé une dette d'oubli, ne refermera rien. Nous nous devons d'avoir parlé de ce moment inexplicable, moi sur la route, et toi, en train de la quitter. Je peux même te dire que tu existeras tant que je vivrai. C'est le sort guidé par nos destins enchevêtrés (71).

On the one hand, Kalouaz is compelled to bear witness to his sister's life as an act of brotherly love, as a means to acknowledge the entrenched inequalities that led to her death. On the other hand, writing is also a means to integrate his sister's story into a French national milieu; 'La France est belle, tu sais, je ne le dirai jamais assez [...] Il faut que tu partages ce sentiment de plénitude avec moi' (33). The fraternal gesture between the narrator and the postmemory of his sister is integral to how Kalouaz negotiates his gratitude for a childhood spent in France. In this way, his postmemory of the late sister also supports a vision of France as a site of 'plénitude' based on the shared values of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

The ‘destins enchevêtrés’ of the brother and sister also carry a gendered significance which comes to the forefront as the narrator describes his mother, who gave birth to Kalouaz three months after burying her daughter. As we saw in my evaluation of Cixous’s autofictional texts in chapter two, grieving and gendering are demonstrably interlinked in memory narratives about Algerian childhoods. In *À l’ombre du jasmin*, the intermingling of birth and death is also central to the gendering of the narrator. In one childhood memory, the mother comforts her son after having angrily chastised him by singing a song that was meant for her daughter:

« Dors ma fleur arc-en-ciel, ma petite mariée du ciel, dans ta robe en fleurs séchées, tu n’auras plus froid, c’est l’été. »

Elle te parlait, sans se rendre compte que c’est un garçon qu’elle berçait entre ses bras. (2012: 103)

Kalouaz links the mother’s grief with the boy’s gendering since in raising a son she is also grieving the daughter. In Butler’s theory of gender performativity, she notes that gender is in parts ‘received’: ‘If gender first comes to us as someone else’s norms, it resides within us as a fantasy that is at once formed by others and also part of my formation’ (2015: 30). In this narrative, the act of mourning the daughter is a gendered act, one that is received by the son which, although ‘formed by others’, comes to reside in him as a memory of Mimouna that is integral to his own identity as a Frenchman and a writer. The mother’s grief for the daughter does not necessarily feminise the boy since, as Butler goes on to argue, gender is not ‘inscribed on our bodies as if we were merely a passive slate’ (2015: 30). Nonetheless, this memory of mourning genders the narrator’s memories of a childhood spent in France but also of his sister’s death in Algeria. Even at the most intimate level, the fraternity between the narrator and the postmemory of the sister is gendered by the wider tragedy of French colonialism in Algeria.

As we have just seen, the mother plays an important role in the way Kalouaz recalls his sister's short life and produces a knowledge of colonial Algeria. In the final *récit* of his family trilogy, *Une étoile aux cheveux noirs* (2013), Kalouaz addresses the mother's memory directly. Like in the previous *récits*, the narrator's family postmemory is a process of reconstruction, in which he also questions his place in relation to a collective French culture of 'fraternité'. The mother's story unfolds as the narrator-son leaves Brittany to visit her in Grenoble and help her move out of her high-rise apartment which is due to be demolished. The memory of the mother's journey from colonial Algeria to metropolitan France is reconstructed at the same time as the narrator travels through the French countryside and negotiates his own identity as a French 'paysan' (Ivey 2016). The journey dominates the progression of the narrative as he decides to travel on his late father's *motobécane mobylette*, slowly crossing the country from Bretagne to Grenoble. On the one hand, the journey by *mobylette* is a commemorative gesture to his father and a means to frame the narrative of his mother's story. On the other hand, it is also a way to connect with the French landscape as he passes by at a relatively slow pace: 'Aujourd'hui il est impossible de suspendre le temps, mais je vais tenter de le ralentir, prenant la route à vitesse lente, pour mieux te retrouver, traverser tout un pays, pour rejoindre le tien' (2011: 10). The 'toi' of this narrative is both the mother but also the French landscape itself, a way of writing about his place in France as the son of migrants (Ivey 2016). In this respect, this narrative – a mixture of the mother's testimony and the narrator's reflections on the French countryside – makes a connection between his Algerian mother and the adoptive motherland, France.

As Nira Yuval-Davis has shown, the woman's biological role in the production and affirmation of nationhood as fecund mothers of future citizens has rendered women into symbols of citizenry and national belonging: 'gender relations are at the heart of

cultural constructions of social identities and collectivities as well as in most cultural conflicts and contestations' (1997: 39). In *Une étoile aux cheveux noirs*, Kalouaz narrates the mother's memory as well as reaffirming his connection to the French countryside as both a 'paysan' and an Algerian migrant. However, we must also take into account the fact that the mother's voice intersects with the narrator's reflections. The journey through the French countryside is regularly punctured by the voice of the mother reflecting on her own trajectory that brought her there:

Les garçons pouvaient aller à l'école, pas nous. Nous, les filles, on devait passer nos journées chez les colons pour faire les bonnes, manier la serpillière, briquer les cuisines. J'allais même faire le ménage chez un curé. À l'école aussi j'y allais, mais toujours lorsque les enfants étaient partis, pour ranger, balayer et essuyer la poussière du tableau. (Kalouaz 2013: 21, original emphasis)

As the narrator passes through the roads of France slowly on his *mobylette*, her voice accompanies his journey by recalling her youth and the injustices she faced in colonial Algeria. Whereas the father's memory constituted a failure of language and a lack of transmission in *Avec tes mains*, the mother's voice appears like a refrain in *Une étoile*, actively shaping the way in which he interacts with the landscape as he passes through on his *mobylette*. In this respect, the novel becomes a polyphonic testimony – the voice of the narrator mingles with those of the men and women he meets on his journey through the French countryside, and adds to the richness of his mother's voice in turn. Here, the mother-as-nation trope does not end at the symbolic mobilisation of motherhood, but allows for a connective, polyphonic memory narrative to take place.

If the space of memory has been frequently theorised in terms of the density of the urban palimpsest (Huyssen 2003) or the sedimentation of layers of time compressing into one place as a 'lieu de mémoire' (Nora 1984), Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter

Vermeulen note that memory is increasingly theorised in terms of its mobility and the ‘dynamics and technologies by and through which [memory] is articulated’ (2017: 5). In *Une étoile*, memory is literally vehicular in that Kalouaz privileges the *mobylette* as a mobile site of memory and an expression of his memory in movement. The *mobylette* itself is a typically French symbol. However, as the narrator travels through the countryside, it is not just a vehicle for *the* memory of *a* nation (Algerian or French), or *a* person (Kalouaz or his mother). Rather, the road-trip traces the itineraries of storytelling that bring a plurality of memories together. For example, the French countryside is a key element of Kalouaz’s creative imaginary. Unlike many other writers associated with the ‘beur’ generation, he has never lived in the larger French cities. For him, the tranquillity and beauty of the French countryside are the conditions that enable him to write (Ivey 2016). Hargreaves has also noted that it is the provinciality of Kalouaz’s narratives that set him apart from French-Maghrebi migration literature which focuses mostly on the experiences of those living in the *cités* and *banlieues*. It is this distance from the capital that confirms his attachment to the French landscape: ‘[il] véhicule à sa manière une forme de francité dont, paradoxalement, la profondeur se mesure par la distance qui la sépare de la capitale de la France’ (Hargreaves 2009: 157). By narrating this road-trip *à la française*, through the small towns and villages on the French-made *motobécane mobylette*, the narrator lays claim to his place in the French countryside and by extension French nationhood and cultural ‘fraternity’.

At the same time, this is memory in movement, and does not constitute a denial of his origins in Algeria. Just as his *mobylette* trails through quiet country roads and crawls up mountains from Bretagne to the Isère, he simultaneously recalls his mother’s return to Algeria, a quasi-annual pilgrimage:

Toutes les petites routes me parlent, un peu comme toi lorsque après avoir quitté le bateau et Oran, tu reviens vers Arzew, le bord de mer et l'ancien café du port où se retrouvaient les Européens, coiffés de leur canotier blanc à rubans noirs. Tu remontes une rue qui n'est plus dans mes souvenirs, pour arriver à la porte de ta maison de là-bas. En fin de journée, je vais sonner chez toi, le vrai, celui où tu as vu passer ta vie par ces fenêtres, avec les beaux levers de soleil, les couchants sur le plateau du Vercors. (Kalouaz 2009: 105)

The move towards the mother on the other side of France also entails the imagined *éloignement* of the mother back to Algeria, and the town of Arzew where Kalouaz was born. Here, the Algerian mother's exile is juxtaposed with Kalouaz's reconciliation with his adopted mother-country, France, in a process of negotiation. In this respect, we might expect the mother to represent a wistful longing for the fullness of both French and Algerian belonging, a plentiful hybridity constructed by a knowledge of both heritages that make up Kalouaz's identity. Rather, as Kalouaz forges new relationships across the French countryside on his *mobylette*, he also gestures to a sense of fraternity with his mother's Algerian homecomings.

While the narrator travels through the diverse landscape of central France, the mother finds solace in the nostalgia of the home, even if this recalls memories of a difficult past. This tension in the different trajectories of mother and son evokes the generational divide that characterises so-called 'first' and 'second' generation migrants and two differing perspectives on life in France: 'Tu me parles souvent des invectives, du racisme que nous avons subi. Ma mémoire a fait le tri. [...] Tu conserves ces moments durs en toi, pour ne plus croire en cette France que je chante à tue-tête' (Kalouaz 2009 : 26). While the son has laid claim to the French language and praises a certain kind of *francité*, the mother lives out her retirement with the memory of a France at war with

Algeria and before that, the Manichean world of colonialism. However, this does not mean that the mother has remained sequestered or resentful of the exterior world while the son criss-crosses the French landscape in celebration of his country. In fact, the mother displays a deep awareness of the ways in which various historical trajectories intersect in her neighbourhood:

Tu t'interroges sur ce que sont devenus tes voisins, les pieds-noirs, les ruraux descendus à la ville pour le travail à l'usine et le confort. Ceux que la guerre a marqués, ou l'exode, même à petite distance. Tu parles de Mme Dimard et de son mari, à la mauvaise réputation d'ancien gendarme ayant servi sous l'Occupation. Peut-être a-t-il aussi jeté à la Seine, *au bouillon*, comme disaient ses collègues, quelques-uns de tes compatriotes, des cousins, des inconnus, à l'automne 1961. Nul ne le sait vraiment. [...] Tu énumères les noms, parles souvent d'un homme dont je me souviens, un juif rapatrié d'Algérie qui te nommait, en arabe, l'étoile aux cheveux noirs, *Najam bi Chaârin assouad*. (61-2)

The title of this narrative, therefore, comes from an Arabic-speaking Jewish Algerian neighbour from Grenoble, in a poetic act of memory that draws in the memories of other 'rapatrié[s] d'Algérie', as well as his mother's. In contrast, there is also the sinister presence of Mme Dimard's husband whose own history recalls that of Maurice Papon – both for his involvement in Nazi collaboration and the murder of Algerian protesters on 17 October 1961. Whereas Kalouaz's road trip *à la française* could have dissolved into a sentimental celebration of rural French 'fraternity', his narrative is checked by the voice of the mother, whose memories of France and Algeria recall the diversity of trajectories and histories that brought Kalouaz there. Although Kalouaz falls out of the *immigré de banlieue* stereotype, this narrative nonetheless is firmly situated in the history of

colonialism at the same time as it weaves in and out of picturesque French villages, fields, and mountains.

We have seen how this trilogy of short *récits* places masculinity, fraternity, and *francité* at the heart of his postmemory of colonialism in Algeria and migration to France. In *Avec tes mains*, the concepts of masculinity and fraternity constitute a ‘path’ (Erll 2011) for memory transmission between father and son, where the narrator draws on his own masculinity to reimagine the blocked memories of his father’s life. In *À l’ombre du jasmin*, Kalouaz reconstructs a memory of his late sister, as an act of brotherly solidarity that acknowledges the disparity in their childhoods on either side of the Mediterranean while expressing gratitude for a childhood spent in France. However, *Une étoile aux cheveux noirs* nuances this ostensibly patriotic stance. The narrative presents a memory of the mother that simultaneously connects the trajectories of diverse peoples and origins and, thus, resists a mono-nationalistic perspective of the mother-country and a glorified French ‘fraternity’.

The following section will analyse Kalouaz’s monologue for the theatre entitled *Geronimo dans ma poitrine un nuage s’endort*. Kalouaz’s strategy of linking the individual with the collective continues to be important – but rather than the transcultural movements of memory within one family or one country, he depicts a global, transcolonial perspective of connective memory. I will examine how this ‘connective’ memory is underpinned by a transcolonial ‘fraternity’. Connecting the history of France and Algeria to other disparate histories, Kalouaz goes beyond the colonial bind of France-Maghreb suggested by the label ‘écrivain beur’. In examining fraternity as a *gendered* ‘mnemonic form’ (Erll 2011: 13), this analysis will shed light on how collective forms of cultural memory also have gendered structures.

3.4 'Il y a d'autres Geronimos'

Geronimo dans ma poitrine un nuage s'endort is a long monologue written for the theatre.⁵² The monologue is narrated by the brother of the eponymous protagonist, Geronimo, namesake of the famous warrior of the Bedonkohe Apache band:

On l'appelle aussi Geronimo, mon frère, roi de la peinture de guerre, passant son temps à faire le rebelle, plumes en bataille, assoiffé de déroutes. (2005: 7)

Throughout the narrative, Geronimo is presented as a model for masculine kinship and anti-colonial solidarity who travels the globe as a war painter and witness to a myriad historical injustices committed in the name of European imperialism. The narrative moves through a wandering chain of historical references; from the 'Indian Wars' and genocide in North America, to the interconnecting histories of slave rebellion in Guadeloupe and the Holocaust of European Jews, as well as the legacy of colonial and postcolonial conflict in France, North Africa, Ethiopia, New Zealand and beyond. As William Duvall aptly observes, the narrative 'weaves and bobs in staccato fashion' (2012: 104) through histories of injustice, violence, and oppression regardless of historical, geographical, or chronological unity to construct 'a catalogue of oppression' (106). The narrator searches for his lost brother among other histories of resistance and, in doing so, collects and re-circulates these stories. In this way, Geronimo (both the eponymous protagonist and the historical personage) is deferred from the main narrative, as it is through the voice of the *brother* that we encounter these histories. In this deferral, this monologue offers an interesting perspective on the role of brotherhood and fraternity in this multidirectional narrative of connective memories. It is their fraternal bond that

⁵² In performance, the monologue lasts around an hour. Before its publication, Kalouaz toured the monologue in several theatres around France and performed it under the title *Geronimo s'est fait lever* on France Culture on 7th December 2004.

provides the connective ‘path’ of memory that brings the disparate histories together in the same narrative.

The historical personage of Geronimo came to notoriety through his involvement in the Apache-American and Apache-Mexican conflicts and was famously held a prisoner of war at Fort Still, Oklahoma until his death in 1909. In this monologue, Kalouaz’s poetic and fluid style glosses over the historical specificities of Geronimo’s biography to discover how his story interconnects with other figures of anti-colonial resistance. Kalouaz has said that he expanded the focus from the history of Native Americans to others because, as he puts it, ‘il y a d’autres Geronimos’ (Ivey 2016). Kalouaz’s mobilisation of Geronimo as an allegorical figure is not unique and partakes in a long canonisation of Geronimo as a mobile symbol of Native American identity across the globe. This began in 1906 with the widely circulated publication of *Geronimo’s Story of His Life* in 1906 by S. M. Barrett. Since then, Geronimo’s cultural legacy has appeared in print and film and followed the binary characterisation of either the ‘good’ noble savage or the ‘wicked’ terrorist and resistance fighter (Clements 2013: 16).⁵³ In contrast, the recognition of Geronimo as a figure of resistance against the American military has transformed him into an enduring hero of anti-colonialism which has been transferred to other colonial contexts. In his study of *An Tiogar Daonna* (1966), an Irish-language fictional memoir of Geronimo’s life by Anraoi Ó Liatháin, Pádraig Ó Siadhail has suggested that the history of Native Americans was favoured by a handful of Irish-language writers as a way to ‘explore the similarities between Ireland’s experiences as a colony and those of the indigenous peoples in the New World’ (2016: 15). However, he

⁵³ Ironically, the US military used the codename ‘Operation Geronimo’ in the assassination of Osama Bin Laden provoking widespread condemnation from various Native American leaders and organisations (Kemper 2014: 39-41).

warns that promoting ‘empathy with another people did not preclude the propagation of other stereotypes’ concerning Native Americans (16).

On the one hand, as I suggested in chapter two, regarding Hélène Cixous’s ahistorical depiction of Gandhi, Kalouaz’s historical gloss in the depiction of figures of resistance risks appropriating and flattening out the specificities of these histories for the purpose of universalist ideals of common humanity. On the other hand, the comparative reading of Native American history with other histories of suffering from across the globe is already a common methodology in works that aim to decolonise indigenous law, history, and cultural production. In a provocatively titled study of American cultural property law, ‘If Geronimo was Jewish’, Sherry Hutt evaluates the American Association of Museums’ policy of returning stolen property to Holocaust survivors and how, in contrast, there is ‘no such voluntary effort to audit federal agency and museum collections to determine the ownership of Native American cultural items’ (2004: 548). Furthermore, she worries whether ‘the glory that was visited on Geronimo [posthumously] as an icon of a spirit of leadership and independence has somehow been disassociated with [sic] the fact that he was also a member of a family and community that is Apache’ (560). Hutt’s anxiety around the dehistoricisation of Native Americans and her comparative study with the USA’s recognition of Holocaust survivors recalls Michael Rothberg’s arguments in *Multidirectional Memory*. He suggests that many commentators at the end of the 20th century ‘understand the articulation of the past in collective memory as a struggle for recognition in which there can only be winners and losers, a struggle that is thus closely allied with the potential for deadly violence’ (2009: 3). Hutt and others are correct to identify the manipulations of representations of Geronimo and other Native Americans in the name of American domestic and overseas imperialism. However, unlike Ó Liatháin’s memoir or the plethora of Hollywood films, Kalouaz does not directly

represent the historical personage of Geronimo himself. The monologue only addresses his namesake and is further deferred by the voice of the brother. In this sense, the reference to the historical personage of Geronimo is allegorical. In mobilising the memory of Geronimo, Kalouaz's monologue aims to forge connective memory links with *other* sites of colonialism. If, as Ó Siadhail posits, 'the cult of Geronimo is a global one' (2016: 14) then it makes sense to acknowledge how this memory connects with others from around the world.

Furthermore, it is the relationship between this fictional Geronimo and his brother that lies at the heart of the allegory that galvanizes the movement of memory across various historically situated traumas. The network of multidirectional memory, which is sketched throughout the monologue, is underpinned by a sense of fraternity engendered by the brothers' relationship:

Tout est lié. Matouba, Arizona, Treblinka. Toujours la même méthode. Emprisonner, avilir, laisser mourir dans la faim, le froid, la maladie, ou en distribuant à volonté l'eau de feu qui rend le cerveau docile. Geronimo mon frère s'en sert beaucoup. Il lui arrive de me réveiller en pleine nuit pour me conter un dernier délire, une virée qui ne veut pas finir. Je suis devenu au fil du temps un phare accroché dans la nuit. Il appelle, et me dit : « *Frère, chante-moi la chanson de l'enfance et de l'espérance* », ayant fait siens quelques vers d'un poète breton. (Kalouaz 2005: 20-21)

As we can see in this extract, importantly, the possibility of the memory transmission is maintained by the brotherly relationship between Geronimo and the narrator. These counter-narratives are articulated by the brothers' conversations, weaving in and out from century to century and surviving from one generation to the next. The concept of brotherhood and masculinity is central to the way in which these memories intersect and

cross-pollinate in the narrative. Kevin R. Kemper argues that American representations of Geronimo aimed ‘to inflate and then emasculate the images of manhood about Geronimo and other Apache warriors’ in order to raise the superiority of the colonial masculinity of the American occupiers (2014: 55). While much of Kemper’s essay is very problematic, it nonetheless demonstrates the powerful discursive role of masculinity in the memory of Native Americans, both in America and elsewhere.⁵⁴ Rather than engaging in debates over the authenticity of representations of Apache masculinity, it is worth questioning how Kalouaz’s characterisation of Geronimo as a brother – both literally and figuratively – works to forge connections with other sites of memory as an act of fraternity.

The brother’s narrative follows Geronimo’s journeys as he moves between different histories of violence and oppression as witness *par excellence*. There is a double fraternity in the monologue. It tells the story of a literal kinship between sibling brothers and a figurative brotherhood forged by the experience of shared violence. The monologue’s connective memory narrative is evocative of Edouard Glissant’s notion of relationality. Glissant argued in *La Poétique de la relation* (1990) that writing the plantation in literature produces knowledge of the self and of the past in terms of *relation* rather than *racine*. If the state of being rooted or having roots is based on territory, then the conditions of slavery and diaspora cannot appeal to the fixed concept of belonging. Instead, for Glissant, the plantation is a site of relationality, where ‘l’identité-relation exulte la pensée de l’errance et de la totalité’ (1990 : 158). In this sense, the horrors of the plantation, built on the forced labour of a diaspora, undo the notion of a writing based

⁵⁴ Kemper’s essay creates a dichotomy between ‘the true masculinities of colonial people and powers’ (2014: 42) and the creation of ‘a false idea about the Apache and the real meanings and representations of masculinity’ (46), and ‘jokingly’ asserts that only ‘Someone low in testosterone’ can read the colonialist writings of Theodore Roosevelt. Unfortunately, there is little attention to previous studies on gender theory and colonialism which have long since nuanced this paradigm between ‘true’ and ‘false’ gender.

on rooted identity and highlights that '[l]a Relation n'est pas d'étrangetés, mais de connaissance partagée' (19). While Glissant's poetics of relation refers to the context of the Caribbean and the legacy of slave labour in the plantation, we can draw parallels in the fraternity of Kalouaz's narrative of connective memory in *Geronimo* as it is a 'connaissance partagée' of trauma that forges a relationality between the various moments of suffering.

The following extract is a good example of this 'connaissance partagée' and is typical of the meandering prose of *Geronimo*, in which the brother recalls how the various threads of history are woven into one moment – here, the single action of reading the paper spirals out into a nebulous history of connective traumas:

Mon frère est un rebelle depuis toujours. Demain, il va lire dans le journal qu'un commis d'assassin vient d'être libéré. Un de ceux qui écrivaient les lois, les faisaient appliquer. Question Juive ou Code Noir, ils paraphent en toute quiétude.
« Défendons aux esclaves de porter aucune arme offensive, ni de gros bâtons, à peine du fouet ... »

Ils rédigeaient sans que leurs mains ne tremblent :

« Celui-ci peut s'en aller dans les wagons plombés, celui-là peut faire l'esclave dans un camp de Treblinka. »

Un soir de griserie, Geronimo en avait croisé un, revenu de ce voyage le pas hésitant, l'intérieur du corps en lambeaux. A l'automne 1943, des types méticuleux l'avaient numéroté : 65173. Les gens qui l'aimaient l'appelaient papa, ou fils, ou frère. Les gens méticuleux en ont décidé autrement.

Comme au loin un siècle plus tôt, dans la ravine aux Ecrevisses, quand le héros Napoléon avait envoyé des généraux régler leur compte aux affranchis, achever aux fourches patibulaires la mulâtresse Solitude. (2005: 15-6)

The simple act of reading the newspaper triggers the memory of the unconscionable impunity of those who inscribed racial oppression into law, by which Jews or enslaved Caribbeans and Africans were biologically and legally categorised, a move that legitimised and legalised racist oppression for centuries to come. In this way, Kalouaz reframes the Code Noir of 1685, declared by Louis XIV, as an indirect ancestor of the early twentieth century's *Question Juive*. Furthermore, this memory gestures to the shared trajectories of black and Jewish peoples from around the globe in relation to the Western European pursuit of racial homogeneity and empire. Here, the brother's memory positions Geronimo, namesake of the Apache warrior, as a figure of relationality through which the memory of trauma, this 'connaissance partagée', can travel.

As I suggest in the first section of this chapter, the context of the Holocaust is also very important for the fraternal structure of connective memory in Kalouaz's works. As well as relationality, a concept born from the legacy of the plantation, we can read *Geronimo* in terms of the 'concentrationary' universe. Pollock and Silverman have argued that the concentrationary refers to an aesthetic (as well as political) concept that haunts our understanding of mass-murder and violence in the context of modernity as 'a new political possibility in modern political life of a form of terror that [...] will always be with us now that it has been unleashed on the world' (2012: 18-9). In the extract above, the brother-narrator pursues an unfurling thread of connective memory by recalling the memory of a tattooed prisoner from Treblinka which is then represented alongside atrocities committed by the French army during the reinstatement of slavery in

Guadeloupe.⁵⁵ In both cases, the perpetrators of atrocities are categorised as ‘les types méticuleux’ (Treblinka) and those who go on to ‘régler leur compte’ through slavery (Guadeloupe) (Kalouaz 2005: 15-6). By tracing parallels in the histories of perpetration in the concentration camps and the plantation, Kalouaz seems to echo Rousset’s argument for a ‘fraternité ancienne de nos ruines’ (2016: 127), and the call for political responsibility in the wake of totalising violence and dehumanisation. Kalouaz’s narrative espouses a ‘fraternité ancienne de nos ruines’ as a kind of solidarity which is born of a shared victimisation, but from the belated perspective of the witnessing brothers. Through Geronimo’s story and deferred testimony, Kalouaz shows how the concentrationary, the terror of totalitarianism and dehumanisation, is not a phenomenon which is unique to the horrors of the 20th century.

This extract is also the sole instance where the narrative refers to an act of resistance by a woman. The brother concludes this memory by referencing in passing ‘la mulâtresse Solitude’, a symbol of resistance to slavery and oppression in Guadeloupe. Solitude rallied against the law of 20 May 1802, which reinstated slavery, and was captured and condemned to death. As she was pregnant, she was not executed until a day after giving birth. Her pregnant body is a key part of the way she is remembered in the Caribbean, and on the Héros aux Abymes Boulevard in Guadeloupe Solitude is commemorated with a statue of a woman in a defiant stance, her clenched fists on her hips emphasising her pregnancy.⁵⁶ On the one hand, this rare mention of a woman in Geronimo’s testimony may help to disturb the association of fraternity and connective

⁵⁵ The description of the Treblinka survivor is based, nearly word for word, on the obituary of the father of a friend of Kalouaz, who was a child prisoner in Treblinka and branded with the number 65173 (Ivey 2016): ‘Les gens qui l’aimaient l’appelaient papa, ou fils, ou frère. Les gens méticuleux en ont décidé autrement’ (Kalouaz 2005: 15-6).

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the role of statues in the commemorative landscapes see Catherine Reinhardt’s 2014 article ‘Telling Stories of Slavery: Cultural Re-appropriation of Slave Memory in the French Caribbean Today’.

memory with performative masculinity. Whereas Solitude is sometimes referred to as ‘Mère Solitude’, Kalouaz’s use of the term ‘mulâtresse’, a common trope in the memory of resistance in the Caribbean, foregrounds her feminine identity as well as her act of resistance with her ‘fourches patibulaires’.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Solitude’s pregnancy at the time of her resistance action is elided, and the brother presents her story in relation to the dehumanisation of Jews in Treblinka, transferring the memory of a tattooed Holocaust survivor to the rebellion against the return of slavery in 1802. Commenting on André Schwartz-Bart’s 1972 *La Mulâtresse Solitude* (a novel about the Holocaust and slavery in the Caribbean), Bella Brodzki argues that Solitude is presented with ‘an almost vacated subjectivity, rather than of agency’ (1993: 230). Therefore, Kalouaz seems to be participating in a pre-existing tradition where ‘la mulâtresse Solitude’ is valued for her symbolic capital, rather than political resonance. The brief mention of Solitude in *Geronimo* is in keeping with the shifting, travelling connective memory wherein fraternity is the ‘mnemonic form’ which enables the movement of memory across various contexts (Erl 2011: 13). Her symbolic femininity reinforces, rather than troubles, the implicit, performative *masculinity* of fraternity.

If *Geronimo* only has a limited engagement with histories of resistance involving women, does this text support the conflation of fraternity with a form of humanist universalism? For Hargreaves, the values that underlie Kalouaz’s texts are based on the outrage of historical injustices that continue to be felt today and that these values:

ne sont nullement ancrées dans un parti-pris ethnique ou national. Elles sont dans le vrai sens du mot des valeurs humaines, basées sur l’idée de droits appartenant

⁵⁷ See Émilie Ollivier’s 1983 *Mère-Solitude* a novel about survival across the generations of a single Haitian family.

à tous les êtres humains, quelles que soient leurs origines ou leurs citoyennetés.
(2009: 162)

Hargreaves clarifies, however, that this is not to suggest that Kalouaz is evoking a human universalism nor ‘un vague cosmopolitisme’ (162). In their study of the concentrationary, Pollock and Silverman recognise the political unease surrounding the term ‘human’ in intellectual study, which threatens to conceal within it ‘an oppressive politics of disowned power relations around race, class and gender’ (2014: 12).⁵⁸ Nonetheless, they suggest that part of the work of concentrationary memory must re-engage with the human in order to remain vigilant to the ‘concentrationary assault upon it’ in totalitarian politics (12). We can think of Kalouaz’s fraternity as falling into a similar framework. In *Geronimo*, the act of telling stories is based on a counter-discourse to the histories of slavery, Holocaust, colonialism etc. that diligently re-valorises the humanity of those caught up in systems of dehumanisation. While we cannot simply say that *Geronimo* promotes a universalising concept of humanity, it is clear that this text is an act of memory that simultaneously *re-affirms* gendered conflation of fraternity with masculinity. This is *not* the fraternity based on the citizenry of the French republic, nor the militaristic masculine camaraderie of the army expressed by the father in *Avec tes mains* – but it is, nonetheless, a network of specifically *brotherly* solidarity built around a transnational historical knowledge of resistance. In this sense, what is *human* in the humanist approaches to connective memory is frequently implicitly gendered as masculine.

⁵⁸ There has been a rise in studies of the post-human in relation to technologies and movements of memory. See Susanne C. Knittel and Kári Driscoll’s 2017 special issue in *Parallax* in which they suggest that ‘[a] central task of memory studies has always been to remember victims of [...] forms of violence and exclusion, also in order to prevent them from happening again. But this goal may be at odds with the humanist foundation of the field, which has, until now, gone almost unquestioned’ (2017: 381)

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have evaluated the ways in which Ahmed Kalouaz's writings promote a connective memory by bearing witness to multiple historical contexts simultaneously. I have suggested that the non-hierarchical structure of 'connective' memory is based on the concept of 'fraternity' as a 'mnemonic form' and 'path' along which memory can travel (Erll 2011). It is not a question of remembering, mis-remembering or forgetting fraternity, but how fraternity is a structure that reveals the *relationality* of historical trajectories. In Kalouaz's writings the memories of the Algerian War of Independence, the Second World War, migration to France, slavery in the Caribbean, and the Holocaust are not singular, unique moments in history. Of course, one must not lose sight of their historical specificities but, in using the structure of fraternity as a form of solidarity with the past, Kalouaz's narrators explore forms of inequality and oppression as points of connection between each history. In using fraternity as a category of analysis through which to read the works by Kalouaz, I have shown how humanist approaches to connective memory are often implicitly gendered as masculine. Connectivity is based on a structure of fraternity which seeks out connections beyond nations, ethnicities, and religion. However, there is little evidence in these texts of Kalouaz's writing transgressing borders of gender in this connective configuration. Although connective memory forges a non-hierarchical network of memory, it seems to overlook the hierarchies of gendered power.

If this chapter has developed how connective memory can overlook non-masculine inflections of transnational solidarity, in the next chapter, I will examine how Malika Mokeddem's Mediterranean novels examine the gendered tropes of French and Algerian memory in the Mediterranean. The next chapter will also develop how a feminist approach to Mokeddem's 'connective' memory stresses the political implication of

remembering subjects in ongoing traumas of the present, namely the Mediterranean migrant crisis.

Chapter Four: Malika Mokeddem's Memory in the Postcolonial Sea

‘Sur l’immense passé de la Méditerranée, le plus beau des témoignages est celui de la mer elle-même. Il faut le dire, le redire. Il faut la voir, la revoir [...] elle resitue patiemment les expériences du passé, leur redonne les prémices de la vie, les place sous un ciel, dans un paysage que nous pouvons voir de nos propres yeux, analogues à ceux de jadis. Un moment d’attention ou d’illusion : tout semble revivre.’

Fernand Braudel, *Les Mémoires de la Méditerranée* (1998 : 21)

‘Il est temps de lever l’ancre.’

Maïssa Bey, ‘Pourquoi la Méditerranée ?’ (2009: 10)

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I examined the concept of ‘fraternity’ in the works of Ahmed Kalouaz as a ‘mnemonic form’ (Ertl 2011: 13) that circulates at global and local levels. On the one hand, ‘fraternity’ circulates within his postmemorial family narratives, renegotiating the narrator’s place in relation to Frenchness and Algerianness. On the other hand, figures of ‘fraternity’, such as Geronimo, espouse transcolonial solidarity through a ‘connective’ approach to disparate histories of colonial suffering. I suggested that studying ‘connective’ memory in terms of fraternity reveals the implicit gendering of Kalouaz’s transnational memory narratives.

In this chapter, the focus remains on the ‘connective’ nature of transnational memory. However, the framework for this ‘connective’ memory shifts from a gendered concept of solidarity, such as ‘fraternity’, to the gendered space of the Mediterranean in

two novels by Malika Mokeddem, *N'zid* (2001) and *La Désirante* (2011). In these two novels, the protagonists are solo-yachtswomen who sail across the Mediterranean at the same time as they attempt to come to terms with the past, the memory of which has been lost through trauma and repression. In undertaking these imaginative sea-journeys, Mokeddem's narrators confront, reiterate, and, at times, subvert the gendered tropes associated with the sea, memory, and femininity. I will also examine the trans-Mediterranean *cabotage* of these women-narrators in terms of a performative transcultural 'travelling' (Erl1 2011) of memory. While the protagonists of these novels recall violence in Algeria, they are also implicated as bystanders in the ongoing disasters of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean. I will suggest that this form of 'connective' memory, which forms connections with suffering in the present, is part of a feminist politics of memory. In terms of my wider thesis, this chapter develops a feminist approach to understanding the performativity of French-Algerian memory encounter in the Mediterranean.

Mokeddem was born in the Saharan oasis town of Kénadsa in 1949. Her family originate from the Doui Menia nomads, of both Sub-Saharan-African and North-African-Arab heritage (Mehta 2003: 1). One of the few Algerian girls to attend her school, Mokeddem grew frustrated with familial, social, and political restrictions in Algeria and left for France in 1977 to complete her studies in medicine. She settled in Montpellier in 1979 where she practised as a nephrologist until committing herself to writing (Helm 2000a: 48). She published her first semi-autobiographical text *Les Hommes qui marchent* in 1990 and, since then, has known considerable critical success, to date having completed eight novels, and two formally autobiographical texts. As a resident on its coast, her profound attachment to the Mediterranean Sea is reflected in *N'zid* and her most recent publication to date, *La Désirante*.

The sea in *N'Zid*, in both a literal and a conceptual sense, is the site of the protagonist's quest to find herself. Waking up alone, injured and amnesic in the cockpit of a sailing boat in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, Nora has no recollection of who she is, how she got there, her destination nor her point of departure. A painfully bruised head and face indicates that she had been knocked out by the boat's swinging boom. Otherwise, the only clues to her identity lie in the contents of the boat (a cryptic letter signed 'J', a large sum of cash, various identity documents, and one revolver). Her thoughts and dreams are haunted by the ghostly melody of a 'luth solitaire' (2001: 131) accompanied by a man's voice asking 'N'zid?'. Mokeddem explains in the narrative that this is a multivalent phrase in Algerian Arabic, meaning 'to continue' and 'to be born'. However, as I will explore in more detail later, 'n'zid' also derives from the root verb 'zada' (زاد) which means 'to add'. Therefore, 'n'zid' also carries with it the connotation of 'adding' and 'contribution'.⁵⁹ After reconnecting with family in Paris and recovering her true identity (an Irish-Algerian illustrator of *bandes dessinées*), Nora takes to the sea to find Jamil, her lost lover whose 'luth' and voice haunts her dreams, only to discover that he has been assassinated by *intégristes* in Algeria along with her close friend, a French man called Jean Rolland.

In *La Désirante*, the protagonist Shamsa also criss-crosses the Mediterranean in a sailing boat searching for her French companion, Léo, who disappeared from the same boat some months earlier. As in *N'zid*, the narrative of *La Désirante* is a mixture of an investigation and *quête d'amour* that leads Shamsa to interrogate her own past as an orphan from the Algerian Sahara, as much as the mystery of what happened to her lover. Abandoned at birth, the infant Shamsa was discovered in the back of a truck driving from the south to the north:

⁵⁹ I thank Dr Kamal Salhi for this valuable explanation of the significance of 'N'zid' in Algerian Arabic.

Complètement recouvert de sable, le couffin ressemblait au tumulus
d'une petite tombe de laquelle seul émergeait mon visage. (2011:57)

The ambivalence of the child being born from the 'petite tombe' of desert sand compounds Shamsa's conflicted relationship with the desert-scape; she calls herself 'une fille des grandes espaces' (61), but associates her Saharan heritage with her abandonment at birth which is linked, she presumes, to the trauma of the Algerian War of Independence. In keeping with this colonial legacy, she is raised in a nunnery of French-speaking *sœurs blanches* who are eventually forced from the country by the onset of violence during the Black Decade. Likewise, as a journalist, Shamsa flees Algeria during the Black Decade as her life is at risk for documenting and investigating the numerous and traumatising massacres committed during the national tragedy. Thus, *La Désirante* plays upon the interaction of the Saharan desert as one vast, ostensibly amorphous space, with another, the Mediterranean Sea. In having fled the desert, Shamsa seems to adopt the Mediterranean as her new home, underlined by her happy reunion with Léo at the end of the novel.

Although published 10 years apart, these novels share startling similarities in terms of plot and theme; both feature protagonists who take to the Mediterranean Sea in sailing boats to retrieve a lost love-object; both protagonists are orphaned French speakers with Algerian heritage, whose personal histories are embedded in colonialism and migration; both novels take place in periods contemporary to their early 21st century publications, but look back and speak to the traumas of the late 20th century (in particular, the violence of decolonisation, the Black Decade in Algeria and the burgeoning migrant crisis in the Mediterranean); and both texts detail the nebulous criss-crossing of borders, people, and cultures in the Mediterranean. However, as much as these novels are similar in plot, in my comparative analysis I will pay close attention to their differences; *N'zid*

ends in tragedy and Nora sails away from the Mediterranean, a pessimistic ending which is in keeping with many of Mokeddem's novels. However, *La Désirante* ends with an uncharacteristically conventional reunion between the separated lovers. I will examine these differing outcomes in terms of two different approaches to the sea-journey as a performative interrogation of nomadic identity in the novels. Does the Mediterranean offer the characters a straight-forward refuge from memories of colonial and postcolonial violence on its shores?

This chapter is situated within previous studies of Mokeddem's writings which have tended to focus on her literary depictions of the socio-political restraints placed on Algerian women. For Yolande Aline Helm, Mokeddem 'est une "femme qui marche" "envers et contre tout"' suggesting a concern for movement and a refusal of 'la sédentarité du corps et l'immobilisme des esprits' (2000: 19). Jane E. Evans has examined Mokeddem's works alongside other women writers as 'tacticians' of silence (2010: 30), who use silence as an articulation of a source of artistic, spiritual, and mediated inspiration, rather than a consequence of fear and suffering (39-40). As Michèle Bacholle (2000), Mildred Mortimer (2000), Brinda Mehta (2003), and Zoubida Belaghoueg (2010) have all shown, the desert, as both a geographic and imaginary space, has featured heavily in Mokeddem's literary imagination, being the setting for her novels *Les Hommes qui marchent* (1990), *Le Siècle des sauterelles* (1992), *L'Interdite* (1993). Her more recent works have increasingly turned to the sea-scape of the Mediterranean. For Dalila Belkacem (2000), the sea is the twin landscape to her earlier desert writings, swapping a terrestrial nomadism for a liquid one.

Such approaches can overlook Mokeddem's interest in the Mediterranean as a fluid transnational space, rather than an extension of her nomadic origins in the desert. Claudia Esposito has highlighted how critical and theoretical enquiries into the legacy of

colonialism, decolonisation, and postcolonialism in Algeria have failed to take wider, horizontal Mediterranean subjectivities into account (2014: xiv).⁶⁰ Increasingly, studies of the Mediterranean have made use of transnational and transcontinental frameworks to ‘uncouple the Maghreb from conventional North-South binary readings of the Mediterranean region’ (Talbayev 2017: 5). Edwige Talbayev (2017) has examined Mokeddem’s novel *N’zid* in terms of a Mediterranean ‘transcontinentalism’ which refers to the ‘contiguous, connective space of the Mediterranean Maghreb through the consideration of centuries of common history’ (2017: 24). She also suggests that the sea-crossing in *N’zid* articulates the performativity of identity which ‘becomes a choice, a performance, not an essence that one has no choice but to embrace and express’ (2017: 126). However, Talbayev does not include *La Désirante* in this analysis of Mokeddem’s approach to the ‘transcontinental’ Mediterranean. In fact, to date, there has not been a direct comparative study of these two remarkably similar novels, despite the broad critical attention that has been paid to Mokeddem as a Francophone Algerian woman writer and the Mediterranean turn. Claudia Mansueto’s 2017 study reads *N’Zid* against Nina Bouraoui’s *Garçon manqué* (2000), and *La Désirante* against *Poing mort* (1992) but does not compare Mokeddem’s Mediterranean novels directly. She suggests that the Mediterranean Sea is a privileged space for these women writers to express themselves away from the patriarchal and nationalist countries that border its shores; ‘la mer Méditerranée, accueille les victimes du principe draconien de l’«ethnidentité», berce les apatrides and les nomades’ (2017: 4). Therefore, for Mansueto the Mediterranean is a utopian third-space of refuge.

⁶⁰ This is even more important when we consider the continued ‘North-south asymmetry’ in supranational government structures such as the EU and the Union for the Mediterranean (Crowley, Humble, Ross 2011: 2-3).

However, Esposito warns against the popularity of configuring the Mediterranean as a ‘third-space’ or ‘entre-deux’ beyond the binary. The Mediterranean is not a neutral zone, nor is it ‘a haven of uncompromised universalism’ (2014: xiv). In this chapter, my argument endorses Esposito’s nuancing of this ‘third-space’ principle regarding the Mediterranean. I will develop her work on the Mediterranean as a space of transnational literary expression to suggest that Mokeddem’s memory narratives complicate the idealistic construction of an *imagined* Mediterranean space as a maternal and benevolent ‘third-space’. I suggest these two novels go some way to portray the Mediterranean as an intensely policed space, both by the literal presence of government representatives such as customs officers and other law officials, but also in terms of a postcolonial landscape where the uneven development of North and South is most clearly illustrated in the devastating human disaster of the migration crisis.

The first section will elaborate on the intersecting resonance of gender in theories pertaining to the Mediterranean as a postcolonial sea. Drawing on a growing field of Francophone Mediterranean Studies, and the works of Mireille Rosello (2005; 2006; 2010) and Claudia Esposito (2014) in particular, I will suggest that these gendered configurations pertain to a cultural memory of French colonialism and explore how these memories move when ‘at sea’ in ways that trouble gendered norms. The second section will examine the ways in which the protagonists of *N’zid* and *La Désirante* are ‘lost at sea’, uprooted, and unanchored in a way that reflects their own experiences of migration. These experiences of travelling across the Mediterranean, come into stark contrast with the forced migration of thousands of people from the Mediterranean south towards the northern coast and the rest of Europe. Indeed, by the 2011 publication of *La Désirante* the question of forced migration in the Mediterranean was highly topical due to the

dramatic increase in drownings and disappearances in the Mediterranean.⁶¹ I will suggest that the novels shed light on some feminist forms of connective memory that are at work in the act of bearing witness to suffering in the present as well as the past. The third section will consider how the protagonists undertake sea-journeys as a way of articulating their desire for memory. Like many before her, Mokeddem draws on Homer's *Odyssey* to illustrate the impossibility of ever fulfilling the desire to return to a lost homeland and an inaccessible past. Significantly, in drawing on the Homeric epic, Mokeddem reimagines some of the gendered tropes of this most famous of sea-voyages. The last section will analyse Mokeddem's approach to the gendered tropes of the Mediterranean as 'la mère-mer' to shed light on her approach to memory in terms of alliances between women and her protagonists' conflicted mother-daughter relationships.

4.2 Gendering the Postcolonial Sea

The imaginative conceptualisation of the Mediterranean Sea in Mokeddem's novels is paramount for understanding how her memory narratives are both gendered and gendering. Patrick Crowley, Noreen Humble, and Silvia Ross have identified a 'Mediterranean Turn' in fields of study from the ancient world to francophone literature, to demonstrate a renewed intellectual interest in the Mediterranean as a compelling site to 'counter prevailing ideologies' of nationalist and identitarian trends in the surrounding region (2011: 3). Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard's *French Mediterraneans* collects some of the transnational historical trajectories of French colonialism and frames

⁶¹ I am using the term 'forced migration' here, and do not include refugees as this is a distinction made in Mokeddem's own work. Although the war in Syria and subsequent rise in deaths of Syrian refugees crossing the Mediterranean from the Levant is relevant to many of the themes discussed in Mokeddem's novels, she focuses specifically on the conditions of people fleeing the North African coastline. For more on the debated difference between forced migration and refugees, see Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long and Nando Sigona (2014).

the Mediterranean as an ‘imperial sea’ (2016: 1).⁶² Yet, the ‘Mediterranean’ has long been a subject of study because of, and in spite of, the notorious difficulty in delimiting Mediterranean geography and history. Fernand Braudel’s seminal 1946 study, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* (from which this chapter’s epigraph is taken) suggests that the apparently amorphous liquid expanse of the Mediterranean can give an insight into *l’histoire de la longue durée*. To take in the view of the sea is to bear witness to an ancient, unchanging landscape of the past (1998: 21).

In this sense, Braudel suggests that the memory of the various Mediterranean regions and societies can be traced to the bones of the Mediterranean’s geological foundations. Geology, topography, and landscape have influenced the establishment of what he sees as self-contained civilisations; of the West and of the East. Recalling the Mediterranean landscape viewed on a flight from Sicily to Tunisia, he claims:

C’est sur cette carte aérienne fantastique, faite des souvenirs remis bout à bout, que m’apparaît toujours la charnière des deux Méditerranées. La grande histoire s’y est inscrite avec prédilection. Mais pouvait-elle procéder autrement ? Nord contre Sud, c’est Rome contre Carthage ; Est contre Ouest ; c’est l’Orient contre l’Occident, l’Islam à l’assaut de la Chrétienté. (1998: 33)⁶³

⁶² They trace these trajectories from the Ottoman Empire (Marc Ayes 2016) to the limits of the anti-concentration camp movement in post-war French-Algeria (Emma Kuby 2016). The pluralisation of ‘Mediterranean’ demonstrates the heterogeneity of French legacy throughout the region. The linguistic legacy of French colonialism in the wider Mediterranean region (i.e. beyond the Maghreb) has been explored in the collected book *La langue française vue de la Méditerranée* (2009), from which the second epigraph by Maïssa Bey is cited.

⁶³ Esposito suggests that Braudel’s vision of Mediterranean history as a long history of clashing civilisations North-South, East-West, Islamic and Christian, is deeply influenced by his time spent teaching in French colonial Constantine and Algiers which would have supported a paradoxical understanding of the Mediterranean as a single, but ultimately divided, geopolitical space. (2014: xviii)

Braudel presents the landscape of the Mediterranean basin as a cartography of memories of ‘la grande histoire’ compartmentalised and ‘bout à bout’ according to national or religious allegiance. Braudel’s aerial interpretation of the Mediterranean as a mnemonic landscape seems to be one in which memories occupy and defend territories, much in the same way as the ancient armies of Rome and Carthage. However, in their revision of Pierre Nora’s ‘lieux de mémoire’ into ‘nœuds de mémoire’, Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal and Max Silverman suggest that memories do not respect these territorialised spaces. Instead, memories are knotted into ‘rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialization (whether at the local or national level)’ (Rothberg 2010: 7). In the violent upheavals of peoples across the Mediterranean in the 20th century, Braudel’s fixed territorial perspective of memories laid end to end does not account for the messy interactions of knots of memory. Braudel’s comparative framing of Mediterranean memory weighs the North against its other the South and fails to take into account a perspective in which a memory of one part of the Mediterranean cannot be disentangled from another.

In postcolonial studies, there has been a growing interest in thinking about the Mediterranean in terms of the rise of empires and nation states, but also as a framework for thinking about anti-colonialism and resistance to borders. Iain Chambers describes the Mediterranean as the ‘postcolonial sea’ (2008: 23) and proposes that the ‘liquid materiality’ (2008: 5) of the sea can function as a historiographic methodology for the retrieval of marginalised narratives. His thesis of the ‘postcolonial sea’ approaches the history of the Mediterranean in terms of transnational crossings, which rethinks some of the geographical and conceptual formations that have been employed to imagine competing Mediterranean nationalisms and empires. Above all, the ‘liquid materiality’ of the Mediterranean highlights ‘the tributary histories that flow into the “modern” framing

of the world' allowing a historical methodology which challenges linear history and traditional narratives about the past (2008: 2). Chambers reframes the Mediterranean by critiquing homogenous and singular narratives of colonial exploits. This liquid historiography is better situated to consider the upheaval of recent centuries through colonisation, decolonisation, and globalisation – where the cartographic blurring of East and West are harder to define and differentiate. Elsewhere, Chambers and Lidia Curti have posited that the 'undisciplined space, heterogeneous tempos and mixed temporalities' of the Mediterranean are the ideal framework for thinking about the diversity of modernities (Chambers and Curti 2008: 388). According to this perspective, the Mediterranean Sea, like other oceanic systems, islands and archipelago, is less a geographical space than a conceptual frame for doing history.⁶⁴ My comparative analysis of Mokeddem's narratives will develop this concept to suggest that the sea is a privileged space for performing gendered memory.

Importantly for this chapter, a liquid historiography leaves us out 'at sea', and encourages the critical evaluation of the abundant silences and absences of the past:

To be at sea is to be lost, and to be in such a state is to be vulnerable to encounters we do not necessarily control. Writing a history conceived in this manner is not to propose the linguistic mirror of empirical facts or an idealist teleology but, rather, to promote an open and incomplete composition where dimly perceived traces register the interval between sound and silence and where the pulsation of writing and the restrictive politics of interpretation can slide into the unexpected opening of a poetics. (Chambers 2008: 27)

⁶⁴ See studies such as Edouard Glissant *Poétique de la relation* (1990), Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1995), and Annick Fouquier's edited book *The French and the Pacific World* (2005) which document colonial and postcolonial perspectives of the sea.

Such a perspective offers an uncertain, incomplete, suspended insight into the ways traces of the past linger in the present. The ‘liquid materiality’ of the sea itself is important for Chambers, since ‘[s]edimented in the sea are histories and cultures that are held in an inconclusive suspension’ (24). Bearing in mind this destabilising relationship between the Mediterranean Sea and ‘the historical archive’, we can understand the Mediterranean Sea as an alternative repository to the terrestrial ‘lieux de mémoire’ (Nora 1984). If ‘lieux de mémoire’ are repositories of memory, crystallised and monumentalised in space, the fluid cartography of the Mediterranean promotes a way of conceiving of the past as a shifting and unrooted experience.

However, it is important to offer the caveat that the liquid materiality of the Mediterranean is not entirely untouched by territorial concerns. Since Braudel, cultural historians and thinkers of the Mediterranean have increasingly stressed the Mediterranean Sea as a transnational space which challenges the idea of the modern state as ultimately culturally or historically homogenous. In this vein, the Mediterranean could be envisaged as a ‘third-space’ or ‘entre-deux’ of a divided global North and South. Indeed, the ‘third-space’ is a seminal concept in postcolonial studies, thanks especially to the work of Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. For Bhabha, the ‘third space’ exceeds the binary by making ‘the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process’ (2004: 54) so that ‘we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or purity of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity’ (55). In a similar frame, Alison Rice’s work on women writers from the Maghreb region has also highlighted the importance of ‘entre-deux’ as a state of being between two or more subjectivities that enable francophone writers of Algeria to create their ‘novelistic worlds’ (2012: 110). Feminist theorist and philosopher Luce Irigaray uses the term ‘entre-deux’ in her writings, especially *Éthique de la*

différence sexuelle (1984), to play on the notions of ‘between-ness’ in sexual difference. As Shannon Wong Lerner suggests, the ‘entre-deux’ designates the ‘fluid properties’ of the movement or ‘gesture between the two’ (2013: 156). However, does imagining the Mediterranean as a fluid third-space and refuge for feminine memory sufficiently reflect the ‘connective’ and gendered nature of cultural memory?

There has been recent critical interest in the cultural gendering of seas and water-scapes in general. The 2017 special issue of *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, entitled ‘At Sea’, focused on the manifestations of contemporary crises at sea and their gendered dimensions, from the legacies of feminine aquatic myths (mermaids, feminised ships) and the masculinity of sailors and pirates (Gordon-Zolov and Sodaro 2017: 15), to the various gendered implications for people making perilous sea-crossings to flee war and exploitation (16). As they put it, the sea is:

a perilous space beyond the reach of the laws and protections of nation-states. But, precisely because of its limitless or “borderless” aspects, the sea can also be conceptualised as a space for coexistence and possibilities, where binaries and assumptions can be reframed and challenged. (17)

In my analysis of Mokeddem’s Mediterranean narratives, I will not attempt to define the Mediterranean as a unified space or concept. Rather, I will examine how Mokeddem employs a literary perspective on the Mediterranean which fosters an engagement with the sea as a *gendered* space for bearing witness to history. In *N’zid* and *La Désirante* the Mediterranean is an already gendered space but, in moving across the sea, the protagonists’ memories re-iterate, and perhaps subvert, this gendering in relation to other subjectivities, both human (Mediterranean women, family members, other sea-travellers) and nonhuman (the waves, marine animals). In other words, the Mediterranean is not

only a framework for thinking through overlooked histories of colonialism, but also lifts the anchor of gendered performativity from certain norms.

Brinda Mehta argues that literature is a particularly powerful tool for the recovery of women's memories, otherwise denied by androcentric perspectives on the past. Writing is a feminist act 'of cultural authority that locate[s] gender within the problematic of political expediency and social transformation' (2007: 7). The 'postcolonial' configuration of the Mediterranean Sea as a fluid cartography and historiography is an ideal framework for this feminist 'recovery and contestation' in memory, in which women can reappropriate the marginalised narratives of the past. In a similar vein to Chambers's argument, writing women's memories of the Mediterranean does not guarantee the retrieval of the objective truth; 'it becomes a method to reevaluate existing patriarchal values that have traditionally located women outside representation in a space of cultural dystopia, as a negation of identity' (2007: 4). Mehta seems to be opposing memory and history here, and gendering these two seemingly separate historiographic methodologies – history being the empirical, imperial and masculine narrative of the past, whereas memory is feminine, subjective, and fluid. Although in her study she warns against the essentialisation of memory as inherently feminine, this perspective risks reinforcing the gendered binarisation of History and memory narratives. Narratives of memory are also subject to the patriarchal hierarchy of power within which feminine perspectives are under-represented. In this landscape, women writers must carve out new ways of expressing such narratives of the past. Therefore, in this examination of the Mediterranean Sea as an alternative conceptual space for a new historiography, it is important to avoid reproducing familiar binaries in which historical discourse is deemed masculinist and memory is something Other and feminine.

This reframing of the Mediterranean in terms of a liquid historiographic concept has major ramifications for the way in which the French-Algerian colonial and postcolonial bind is imagined and reimagined in cultural memory. Stretching out from Algiers to Marseilles, the Mediterranean Sea both separates and unites France and Algeria, and is the space across which armies, refugees, colonisers, tourists, and migrants have travelled in a constant current of colonial and postcolonial human circulation. Viewed as a watery frontier or border, the Mediterranean is ostensibly the symbol *par excellence* of a troubled Algerian-French relationship, extremely divisive and yet intimately and irrevocably interconnected. As suggested by the name of the Algerian diaspora group *L'Association Algériens des Deux Rives et leurs Amis* (Adra), the notion of these two coastlines sharing the same sea is an important image that, paradoxically, highlights the geographic distance and proximity of these two *rives*.

Rosello proposes the notion of ‘performative encounters’ (2005) or ‘*rencontres méditerranéennes*’ (2006) to suggest that the literary and/or cultural ‘encounter’ between France and the Maghreb creates space to performatively reiterate, and *depart from*, pre-determined subject positions established by the binary coupling which imagines France and Algeria opposing one another on either side of the Mediterranean:

A performative encounter would be this exceptional moment when, in spite of an international or national conflict, in spite of the violence that reigns and imposes its rules, an unknown protocol replaces the script (2005: 1-2).

Rosello seeks to understand the ways in which literatures and cultures in the Mediterranean resist the binary oppositions of geographical and historical reference, and the ways in which the normative performance of historically-situated identity subject-positions (French, Algerian, *pied-noir*, *harki*, *indigène*) can be undermined in performative encounters. In the English version of Rosello’s book, ‘performative

encounter' derives from the genealogy of the 'performative' turn, from J. L. Austin to Derrida to Butler and onwards. In the French version, Rosello argues that a 'France-Maghreb' can be an imaginative, transnational paradigm in literary cultures, whose cartography is a space of 'encontres'. The use of 'encontre', as differentiated from 'rencontre', is deliberate. Despite the negative connotations of 'encontre' as confrontational and oppositional, Rosello suggests that re-thinking a 'France-Maghreb' 'encontre' would, in fact, give way to a new productive cultural-national subjectivity 'abritée par la fiction qui se refuse à reproduire les deux camps que représentaient deux pays déchirés par une guerre de décolonisation' (2006 : 12). In this sense, the French word 'encontre' enacts the performative interaction between France and the Maghreb in these cultural instances. Rosello's concept of performative encounter/encontre adds weight to the perspective of the Mediterranean as a performative conceptual space (the Mediterranean does not just exist, it is made and remade). Within this cartography of performative encounters, French-Algerian memory cultures may go beyond the geographical-historical binary of two *rives* and two oppositional subjectivities.

Rosello also plays on the meaning of 'rives' in her description of France and the Maghreb as a marriage: 'ils sont rivés, pour le meilleur mais souvent pour le pire' (2006: 15). Rosello's use of the performative language of marriage vows draws on the trope of the French occupation of Algeria as a marriage and independence as a bitter divorce. As Esposito suggests, gender difference is a common analogy of the oppositional subjectivities of the Mediterranean, where 'France is dominant, male, active, and endowed with reason, whereas Algeria is submissive, female, passive, and devoid of it' (2014: 81). Reading the French-Algerian performative encounter from a Mediterranean perspective is one way to break with this gendered opposition. This is especially urgent because sociological and historical accounts of the societies of the Mediterranean are

normally written by men and represented as ‘bustling and powerful “affaire d’hommes”’, with the ‘traditional family typically characterised as being composed of a *mater* and *pater familias*’ (Esposito 2014: 68). Re-thinking this binary also opens up feminist and queer readings of the Mediterranean: ‘often read through the metaphor of a dysfunctional marriage (France the husband, Algeria the wife), the relationship between the two nations is characterized as heterosexual’ (81).⁶⁵ Viewed in this way, the Mediterranean Sea is not just a geographical boundary but a historical and cultural signifier, one that recalls and replays the many divisive and conflicted gendered memories of colonialism in Algeria. However, as taut as these notions of a French-Algerian marriage are, the Mediterranean is also an elastic space which opposes the notion of France and Algeria in terms of a clash of gendered civilisations divided by a colonial past.

When approaching memory in the Mediterranean from the perspective of a ‘liquid materiality’, it is also necessary to reconsider some of the unhelpful stereotypes of memory, migration, and femininity that have defined the ‘pre-established scripts’ of Mediterranean encounters (Rosello 2005: 1). For example, Hakim Abderrezak warns that the language of water (waves, human tide, flood, spilling over) ‘can carry negative connotations’ and has been used negatively to undermine the legitimacy of border-crossing and demonise migrants crossing the Mediterranean (2016: 13). Likewise, the watery content of the sea opens up this landscape as a gendered space. In her foundational text of feminist philosophy, *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un* (1977), Irigaray describes how fluidity has historically been conceived as a property of the feminine, closely associating women’s bodies to bodies of water. She later philosophises the sea as Nietzsche’s

⁶⁵Azzedine Haddour suggests that for writers of the colonial period such as Mouloud Feraoun, Albert Camus, and Jean Amrouche, the downfall of *l’Algérie-française* is an example of a failure to consummate a marriage between ‘colonized and colonizer’: ‘During the Algerian war, Algeria and France together seemed to realize the necessity to regulate their illicit relationship, to draw a contract, to contract a marriage’ (Haddour 2000: 147-8).

feminine Other in *Amante Marine* (1980). Here the mother *becomes* the sea, but there is no maternal lack because there is no totality to the sea.⁶⁶ For Stefan Helmreich, the sea as feminine appears persistently throughout the ‘crosscurrents of Judeo-Christian thought, Enlightenment philosophy, and natural scientific epistemology’ (2017: 29). In addition, for thinkers of Algerian nationalism, the Mediterranean Sea is also an important maternal metaphor for a new, postcolonial Algerian subjectivity - as I will explore in more detail with my analysis of Mohammed Dib’s *Qui se souvient de la mer* in section four on ‘la mère-mer’. However, Helmreich suggests that, although the language of water can be gendered for feminists in the ‘waves of feminisms’, the feminisation of these watery concepts is highly unstable: ‘today’s gender-bent and –rent waves might be signs of how the analytic of gender may itself be *viscous, undulating, and phasing: at sea*’ (2017: 31).

On the one hand, decolonising the Mediterranean Sea unanchors the historical archive from notions of national borders and the fixity of a territorial cartography. On the other hand, it remains to be seen how the ‘postcolonial sea’ is imagined in relation to gendered tropes. In the following analysis of Mokeddem’s novels, I will examine how she employs some of these watery tropes to both valorise women’s memories and challenge these gendered tropes of the Mediterranean Sea. When ‘at sea’, memories of French and Algerian conflict are opened up to new performative possibilities. However, as we shall see in the next section, this is not to suggest that Mokeddem’s Mediterranean memories enact a perspective of the sea as a universally deterritorialised third-space in which all postcolonial subjects are able to move freely and equally.

⁶⁶ For more on the importance of fluidity for Irigaray’s philosophy of sexual difference, see Hanneke Canters and Grace M. Jantzen’s book *Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray’s Elemental Passions* (2005). For a discussion of animality in relation to Irigaray’s maternal genealogy in *Amante Marine*, see Penelope Deutscher (2011).

4.3 Bodies at Sea

The protagonists of *N'zid* and *La Désirante* are both drifting subjects who are literally and metaphorically lost at sea. The sea's currents and ostensible lack of borders enable the protagonists the freedom of movement across its waters in their sailing boats. As they recover their memories, they also bear witness to the material restrictions placed on thousands of *other* migrating bodies; namely those fleeing the Southern coast of the Mediterranean in poorly equipped sailing vessels. This section will suggest that exploring the differing material conditions of these bodies at sea (Nora/Shamsa's and those of other migrating peoples) will shed light on how Mokeddem portrays political responsibility in the articulation and performance of memory.

In *N'zid*, Mokeddem stresses the bodily memory of her amnesic protagonist in the absence of an organising framework of her own back story. Despite forgetting her personal history, her body expresses a muscle-memory with which her body responds with ease and deftness to deal with the physical demands of the sailing boat. Although she cannot remember, her hands can: 'ses mains les reconnaissent. Ses mains savent' (12). Following her hands, Nora picks up a sketchbook and compulsively sketches to while away the hours at sea; seascapes, whales, jellyfish, and the nameless face of her father emerge from her frenzied drawings (significantly, the mother is absent as I will explore in section four). In the absence of her memory, sketching allows Nora to find her voice but it is above all a bodily act. In her writings on *N'zid*, Jane Evans stresses how the novel 'raises questions not only about identity, but ultimately about the mind-body continuum' (2001: 114), which is intrinsically linked to the narrator's emergence out of a state of silence (Evans 2010: 95). These visual images perform a pictorial and allegorical function in Nora's search for identity. Sketching allows the kind of anamnesis in which Nora seeks out her identity beyond language. As Talbayev puts it, 'each drawing proposes to

encapsulate and illuminate the many layers of one circumscribed episode in a single image meant to be taken in and deciphered at one take' (2017: 127). Rather than acting in speech, and therefore drawing on previous speech acts, Nora's sketches articulate and perform an *allegory* that refers to a past which, at this time, is unavailable to her in language.

However, the more she sketches the more she is able to develop a language to accompany the images. Nora's sketch of the *méduse* is a formative leitmotif in the novel, for which she crafts an accompanying narrative; 'l'histoire d'une méduse amoureuse d'oursin' (34). In this fable, the jellyfish's dance of seduction fails to entice the urchin and she laments to a passing whale: « Tu comprends, je suis trop transparente! Il ne pouvait pas me voir. Je n'existe pas pour lui », conclut la pauvre » (Ibid). This simple fable has two rich connotations in terms of Nora's absent memory and performative identity. The jellyfish's allegorical image in the early pages of the novel performs and disturbs some of the gendered assumptions of Nora's identity. Although feminised as '*la méduse*' and '*la pauvre*', presumably to encourage identification between Nora and her sketches, the jellyfish is utterly non-human, even alien in its corporeality. According to Helmreich's study on the gender of waves, to 'unsex' (Weston 2002) the waves of the sea means to detach the gender of waves from the human and 'to describe nonhumans (such as waves) as well as suprahuman collectives (such as waves of social change)' (2017: 44). Here, the leitmotif of the jellyfish does not performatively 'unsex' Nora, but suggests that her identity is *open* to non-normative, or even non-human, ways of performing her gender in the absence of memory.

The failed seduction and the transparent fluidity of the jellyfish's corporeality also allegorically represents Nora's own incomplete memory – one that expresses an embodied memory through automated actions, but lacks an interiority. This is what

Robert Elbaz has called ‘la mémoire cutanée’ of Mokeddem’s novel, ‘c’est une mémoire de la peau et non pas des profondeurs, ou plutôt, la profondeur, c’est la peau.’ (2003: 269).⁶⁷ Nora’s embodied memory lies within the skin. This is not to say that this memory is shallow but, like the ephemeral, stinging outline of the jellyfish, is a porous and fluid gateway. Skin, here, is not imagined as a barrier or boundary between the internalised trauma and its external articulation in creative memory (her sketches). Cutaneous memory questions the notion of the body as a full, self-contained subject – there is always part of the body which remains disposed to the Other and vulnerable. As Judith Butler puts it in her discussion of bodily vulnerability and coalition politics ‘[v]ulnerability implicates us in what is beyond us yet part of us, constituting one central dimension of what might tentatively be called our embodiment’ (2015: 149). Taking Butler’s point that vulnerability exposes oneself to that which is beyond ourselves, in Mokeddem presentation, the jellyfish’s corporeality is an expression of the vulnerability of Nora’s amnesia, where the boundaries between her body and her external environment begin to blur.

As well as the jellyfish’s cutaneous transparency, Nora’s fable celebrates the jellyfish’s mobility and the fact that she is counted among ‘ceux qui baladent leur mémoire’ (Mokeddem 2001: 35). Likewise, Nora’s body drifts through the sea and porously absorbs stories and identities that she encounters on the way. To fill in the gaps of her memory, Nora must create and fabricate stories as temporary and shifting identities that she employs to defer suspicion during encounters with curious bystanders. These identities include ‘Myriam Dors’ whose identity she takes from identity papers found on the boat, a Lebanese artist named ‘Ghoula’ (a name for ogress taken from Maghrebian

⁶⁷ This image reoccurs in *La Désirante* where Shamsa describes herself as ‘une méduse sortie de l’eau: une peau et rien dedans’ (Mokeddem 2011: 173).

folk tales), and ‘Une Franco-gréco-judéo-chrétiéno-arabo-athée pur jus. Eva Poulos’ (64). When Loïc Lemoine, an inquisitive fellow sea-farer and eventual companion, asks for her name, she does more than invent an alias. She embodies and memorialises her character’s history. As ‘Ghoula’, Nora weaves a tale in which Ghoula was once asked to paint the portrait of a military commander after being stopped at a checkpoint; ‘C’était ça ma guerre ... Une vie de nomade avec mon attirail contre le corps, comme excroissance protectrice, à dessiner du rococo à la lueur d’une bougie, au milieu des ruines et du bruit des bombes’ (48). This is more than an act of imagination. Nora actively takes on and experiences Ghoula’s memories in a way that shocks her:

D’où a-t-elle sorti ce « je » et tout ce qu’elle vient de débiter avec assurance et spontanéité ? Elle a même pris un accent libanais et roulé les *r* pour les répliques du militaire. L’homme la croit submergée par ce passé. (49)

In Nora’s fluid, amnesic state she can easily shift subject positions to appropriate and perform the memories of Others. She, a French woman with Algerian-Irish roots, convinces Loïc that she is a French-speaking Lebanese artist. She easily exchanges her amnesia with the memories of fictional Others. However, as we can see from Ghoula’s story, there are elements of Nora’s own back story that appear through her performance: like Ghoula, Nora is an artist; Nora’s parents originate from Ireland and Algeria, two countries that, like Lebanon, have their histories of war and anticolonial struggle; moreover, Ghoula is an unusual choice for a Lebanese name, coming directly from Maghrebi folklore. Nora’s adopted story seems to perform another fable, another allegory that forges a memorial link between various histories of violence in Lebanon while evoking memories from her own past. As *N’zid* takes place in the years of the Algerian national tragedy, we can assume that the long civil war in Lebanon also gestures to Nora’s knowledge of this conflict. Nora’s story of Ghoula is a mnemonic link that does not

respect the national or geographic borders created by national or supranational governments, but engages with a connective and transnational current of memory.

What are the political consequences of such mnemonic links? Nora's cutaneous and mobile memory establishes links between her own (as yet unknown) escape from extremist violence in Algeria and the violence of the Lebanese civil wars. This connective gesture demonstrates how forms of violence from the past resonate in the present elsewhere in the Mediterranean. In this way, Mokeddem is asking a similar question to Gabriele Schwab in her book *Haunting Legacies*: '[h]ow do we deal with a haunting past while simultaneously acting in the present, with its ongoing violence?' (2010: 2). Mokeddem's Mediterranean novels begin to offer a strategy for dealing with haunting pasts while actively witnessing and assisting in present day violence. As shown in *N'Zid*, the process of coming to terms with traumatic memories from the past is a creative act, and involves the construction of multiple identities from disparate national groups.

However, whereas *N'zid* is narrated in the third-person, stressing the intersectional performance between Nora's amnesic personas and her recuperated identity, *La Désirante*'s narrative is in the first-person and stresses the protagonist's position as a witness to the ongoing man-made disaster of people drowning while fleeing the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Initially, *La Désirante* appears to fall generically between *roman noir* and travel writing. The protagonist takes to the sea in the wake of her French partner's disappearance from their sailing boat, *Le Vent des Sables*. Shamsa takes the boat back out on the Mediterranean in an attempt to retrace Léo's last steps and to solve the mystery of his disappearance, eventually learning that he had been kidnapped by Islamist militia. More than a detective story, the narrative of *La Désirante* is preoccupied with Shamsa's coming to terms with her own escape from persecution and violence in Algeria during the Black Decade when she was targeted in her work as a

journalist. Léo's disappearance triggers traumatic memories from this period: '[s]oudain j'ai le sentiment d'être de nouveau là-bas sous les bombes. Ma tête explose. [...] « Je n'en peux plus des tragédies. Je n'en veux plus »' (2011 : 17). Her movement across the Mediterranean is not only an effort to retrace Léo's steps, but also to retrace her own memories of trauma triggered by his loss. Instead of a place of memory and discovery, the Mediterranean is presented as 'cette mer de naufrage' (2011: 154). Shamsa is compelled to confront her own extreme privilege in contrast to the suffering and mass-drowning of migrants in the Mediterranean. Since the novel presents her memory narrative in conjunction with the ongoing human disaster of the Mediterranean migration crisis, it is, therefore, not sufficient to read the novel solely in terms of a movement towards the lost love-object, or as a longing for something resembling Rosello's (2006) performative 'encontre' between the two sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

The figure of the migrant precariously crossing the Mediterranean in badly equipped, and often deadly, vessels haunts the movements of the, by all accounts, wealthy, independent, and technically privileged solo sailor-protagonist, Shamsa. The migration crisis casts the Mediterranean as 'cette mer de naufrage' (2011: 134) and complicates Shamsa's melancholic journey in terms of an individualist return to memory and well-being. As many have theorised, the figure of the migrant powerfully interrupts and disturbs normative discourses regarding the fixity of national borders, functioning as 'expressions, *par excellence*, of *atopos*, hybrids without a place, out-of-place, in the double sense of incongruous and awkward beings' (Beneduce 2008: 510). In this way, the crossings and transgressions of European-Mediterranean frontiers exemplifies the porosity and fictionality of borders. Importantly, it is the *bodily* presence of the migrants, their corporeal visibility that exposes the fiction of national borders, in what Timothy Raeymaekers refers to as the bio-politics of the border (2014: 167). Transgressing and

crossing these bio-political and national borders transform the Mediterranean space into a relational one. Bodies are in constant exchange in ways that highlight the connectivity of Mediterranean currents, on the one hand, (i.e. in Nora and Shamsa's example) and, on the other, the extreme policing and blockages of bodies at border control, migrant camps, and in the over-filled boats of people smugglers. It is this tension that Mokeddem brings to the fore when Shamsa asks:

Comment sourire à la chance qui avait fait de moi une navigatrice traversant tous les possibles quand d'autres, tellement plus nombreux, restent entravés, parqués dans des camps lorsqu'ils échappent au naufrage ? (2011 : 151).

In this description of her memory of Lampedusa Island, southernmost point of Europe and infamous destination for those fleeing North African shores, Shamsa's choice of language performs this Mediterranean paradox, where an Algerian with residency in France 'traversant tous les possibles' is confronted with the images of groups 'entravés, parqués dans des camps'. The juxtaposition of these two different kinds of migrating bodies demonstrates the necessity of reading Mokeddem's memory narratives alongside an understanding of the differing material conditions of migrating bodies.

Talbayev has argued that *N'zid* is a novel that risks overlooking the material privilege of Nora's subjectivity as a sailing nomad, since:

the novel's aestheticization of the Mediterranean figures a romanticized perspective on mobility. In this respect it is oblivious to the material realities of other modes of maritime displacement – most notably *hrig* or *hijra*,⁶⁸ the

⁶⁸ Moroccan Arabic for 'illegal immigration' derived from the root in Arabic for 'burning'. According to Hakim Abderrezak *hrig* has a triple meaning: '(1) [the] burning desire to leave, (2) burning of kilometres to the final destination, and (3) burning identification papers in hopes to make repatriation more difficult for authorities' (Abderrezak 2016: 7-9). In contrast, *hijra* is a term which suggests the historic trends in migration from North Africa. In Arabic, *hijra* originally refers to any Muslim who lives away from Mecca and is defined as an emigrant (46).

Mediterranean passage of clandestine migration from North Africa to Europe' (2017: 151-2).

In contrast, I suggest that Shamsa does bear witness to the material precarity of *harragas* (those who burn) crossing the Mediterranean. However, she does so in the same breath as she interrogates Léo's disappearance and her own victimisation during the Black Decade. For example, the connection between Shamsa's personal trauma of Léo's disappearance and the ongoing migrant crisis is reinforced when she is interviewed by journalists:

Nous nous entretenons longuement de la disparition de Léo. Puis les journalistes me questionnent sur les raisons de mon départ d'Algérie. Immanquablement, nous en venons à évoquer les *harragas*. L'Italie et L'Espagne sont aux avant-propos de la migration de ces brûleurs de papiers et de frontières. Les chiffres croissants ne concernent que ceux qui ont été arrêtés en mer ou sur les plages alors qu'ils s'apprêtaient à quitter les rivages. Si l'on ne compte plus les corps repêchés, on ignore le nombre réel des naufragés. Une terrifiante comptabilité sur laquelle on ergote d'une rive à l'autre. (2011: 109-10)

This contrasts strongly with Shamsa's own privilege and luck at having escaped oppression and possible death as a journalist in Algeria during the Black Decade. Shamsa's guilt for escaping persecution is then read into her interpretation of the crisis in the Mediterranean: 'Comment admettre que Léo disparaisse dans cette zone sans y voir une sorte de vengeance du destin contre le fait que je m'en sois tirée ?' (110). Mokeddem is presenting us with a narrative where the past traumas of the protagonists come into stark relief with the violence of the contemporaneous moment, forcing reader and protagonist to confront their own privilege. To use Michael Rothberg's terms, Shamsa and Nora are 'implicated subjects', where implication describes the 'various modes of

historical relation that do not necessarily fall under the more direct forms of participation associated with traumatic event [... to] encompass bystanders, beneficiaries, latecomers of the postmemory generation and others connected ‘prosthetically’ to pasts they did not directly experience’ (2013: 40). In the inter-connecting and knotted narratives of memory in these two novels, Mokeddem’s protagonists are ‘implicated’ in ways that move beyond labelling them as victim or perpetrator of trauma. As exiles from their own pasts, they also bear witness to other traumas such as the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea.

I have suggested that Mokeddem refers to these contemporary tragedies to highlight how the protagonists’ search for a memory of the traumatic past is inextricably linked to political responsibility in the present. In contrast, Talbayev suggests that Mokeddem’s representation of the *harragas* in *N’zid* is politically naïve and conflates ‘*hrig* with the voluntary, elitist *cabotage* of Nora’s boat’ (152). To put it differently, Talbayev’s critique of Mokeddem’s description of the migration crisis corresponds to Derek Duncan’s criticism of Chambers’s optimism in envisaging the Mediterranean as a multicultural space, exemplified by migrants as ‘the most tangible proof of this cultural heterogeneity’ (2011: 213). Duncan recalls that the material difference in North and South is, of course, rooted in a *historical* inequality and, as a result, ‘the potential of this multicultural patrimony [Chambers] is fissured by the unequal histories that separate the people who cross it, and the means by which they make their crossing’ (213-4). Duncan’s caveat helpfully acknowledges the dangers of a naively optimistic conceptualisation of Mediterranean heterogeneity.

We can understand Mokeddem’s work as falling between these two perspectives of the irrevocable material difference in migratory experience and ‘the potential of this multicultural patrimony’ (Duncan 2011: 213). On the one hand, Mokeddem’s *La Désirante* does demonstrate the unequal and differential ways stories about different

migrations are told and made recognisable. As we can see from the extract above, Shamsa envisages no multicultural outcome to the migrant crisis. She recognises that she is materially removed from the means and reasons for the *harraga*'s undertaking of the perilous journey across the Mediterranean. On the other hand, by connecting her story (re-settled refugee from the Black Decade) with the story of migrants (characterised as 'illegal' and 'clandestin'), she does not claim equivalence but opens channels to explore notions of shared trauma and suggest that memory work can also be a resource in understanding sites of trauma taking place in the present as well as the past. The act of bearing witness entails a form of political responsibility in the face of the crimes of the past and their ongoing resonance in the present, while highlighting its roots in a history of colonial and postcolonial violence in the Mediterranean Sea. By knotting the historical legacies of civil war in Lebanon through the imaginary figure of Ghoula into Nora's family history in *N'Zid* and by tracing the horrors of the migration crisis in *La Désirante*, Mokeddem's writings underline inter-relational subjectivity in the Mediterranean in her protagonists' quest for memory. This horizontal connection between French, North-African, Lebanese, and migrating subjectivities challenges the way in which the movement of memory has been envisaged in terms of a centre-periphery, South-North dynamic.

I suggest that *N'zid* and *La Désirante* connect stories from the Mediterranean in a transnational frame to undertake *feminist* connective memory work which bears witness to trauma in the present as well as the past through the concept of shared vulnerability and empathy. Judith Butler theorises vulnerability as a feminist tool for coalition politics, where one's vulnerability implicates oneself in the vulnerability of the other (2015: 149). The protagonists' vulnerability in *N'zid* and *La Désirante* supports this mode of empathetic politics, in which vulnerability is not wielded as currency in a hierarchy of

suffering. Although Talbayev argues that Mokeddem's presentation of migration fails to fully recognise the material realities of the *harragas* as it works to depict the return of Nora's repressed memories of conflict in Algeria (2017: 152), I have posited that Mokeddem does not present the Mediterranean Sea as a neutral space for Nora and Shamsa to work through traumatic memory or retrieve their identity. When they undertake their sea-journeys they are also performing the obfuscated or traumatic memories, but this in turn is a way to bear witness to brutality elsewhere in the Mediterranean. This demonstrates the uneven distribution of mobility and agency in migrating peoples from different parts of the Mediterranean. In other words, the bodies at sea in *N'zid* and *La Désirante* attest to a memory that refers to more than the protagonists' individualist identity quest. Rather, their journeys and testimonies produce connective memories that connect the traumas of Algeria with that of Lebanon, and highlight the political impetus of mnemonic agents to also bear witness to atrocity in the present.

The following section will explore how these two novels attest to a desire to tell stories and to bear witness to the past and the present in the Mediterranean. However, by engaging with debates around the political value of nomadism, it will also highlight Mokeddem's shifting perspectives on feminist understandings of nomadism as political agency (Braidotti 2011).

4.4 Desiring Memory

In *N'zid* and *La Désirante*, 'desire' is presented as a crucial part of the gendered representation of the Mediterranean memory-scape. Both protagonists undertake their journeys through a desire to reappropriate or work through memories of the past. They

desire memory, but also, and perhaps more importantly, their *memory desires*: memory, like desire, seeks out an impossible object and is a process which is never completely fulfilled. Desire is closely related to the theme of the quest and sea-journey. Esposito is correct to suggest that in French-language Mediterranean narratives, '[t]he notion of quest indicates a degree of impossibility and the act of experiential investigation; the object of a quest is always absent or at an insurmountable distance' (2014: xxvi). Desire is not defined by the accomplishment of a quest (i.e. the total retrieval of a lost memory, or the reunion with a lost loved-one) but rests on the impossibility of the quest's completion. Desire, in this sense, is performative, as it lies in the acting out of a quest, not in the quest's completion or fulfilment. 'Desiring memory', therefore, is about the construction and performance of memory in the forum of the Mediterranean sea-scape. This section will also clarify how these novels both reiterate and subvert tropes about the feminine in the novels' reinvention of the Mediterranean quest *par excellence*, the Odyssey. Nora and Shamsa are both reinvented as Ulysses, *à l'Algérienne*. As the title of *La Désirante* illustrates, desire is also intertwined with identity and the struggle to find a home in one's desire. I suggest that the differential conclusions to *N'zid* and *La Désirante* demonstrate a development in Mokeddem's consideration of desire as a resource of nomadic agency.

Reading Mokeddem's expression of 'desiring memory' in *N'zid* and *La Désirante* reveals the tension between being 'lost at sea' as a nomadic virtue and the desire to find one's place, to return to a homeland at the end of a long odyssey. Moving across the Mediterranean here becomes a kind of ritual of memory. Anne-Marie Nahlovsky suggests that *N'zid* portrays an individual, personal desire that enables the novel to conclude with 'l'acceptation de la totalité de sa mémoire, c'est-à-dire l'acceptation de sa double origine et son inscription définitive dans cet entre-deux méditerranéen, symbole matériel des retrouvailles' (2010: 22). In contrast to Nahlovsky's affirmation that the sea-journey is a

movement from absent memory/fractured identity toward a fullness of memory/hybrid identity, I suggest that desiring memory presents the tension between a nomadic desire of being at home *anywhere* and something closer to nostalgia, which has a desire for a specific loss. This raises the territorial question of homeland, as well as sexuality. As Evelyn Accad points out in her influential *Sexuality and War*, desire is inseparable from ‘notions of territory attached to possession and jealousy’ (1990: 2). Desire, then, is about making one’s mark, on a page, on the Other, but also in space. Marta Segarra and Àngels Santa both understand desire in Mokeddem’s *œuvre* as a form of writerly expression. For Segarra desire is a form ‘d’expansion du « moi » vers l’Autre, telle que l’écriture elle-même’ (2008: 7), whereas Santa associates this with spatial concepts where ‘l’écriture en elle-même constitue une géographie du désir, une obéissance à cet appel fondamental’ (2008: 40). There appears to be a critical consensus that Mokeddem performs the Mediterranean sea-crossing in writing, in which the protagonists’ travelling is an expression of desire and feminine agency.

In addition to these commentaries, I posit that desire is the propelling motion that galvanises the protagonists in a double and paradoxical movement: forward across the Mediterranean Sea, as they criss-cross this fluid geography, and backwards as they retrieve or come to terms with violent or difficult pasts. However, I posit that the instability and fluctuations of the Mediterranean Sea demonstrate the always already incomplete nature of memory as an ongoing and unceasing process:

Ravie, elle se laisse aller aux vagues et au vent, met la mer entre elle et le monde, entre elle et elle. Ce continent liquide est le sien. La mer est son incantation. Elle est sa sensualité quand elle lèche les recoins les plus intimes de rivages, son sortilège quand elle hante les yeux des guetteurs [...] sa colère quand elle explose et s’éclate contre les mémoires fossiles

des terres, remplissant d'épouvante les rochers reculés et les cris des cormorans. [...] Sa Méditerranée est une déesse scabreuse et rebelle que ni les marchands de haine ni les sectaires n'ont réussi à fermer. (2001: 68-9)

This passage is full of familiar tropes of the Mediterranean as 'ce continent liquide', and the feminised space of 'une déesse scabreuse et rebelle' who resists the masculinist concepts of sectarianism and division. Mokeddem also reimagines the sea as a bridge 'entre elle et le monde, entre elle et elle' and, thus, it is presented as the ideal space in which her slowly reforming memory can emerge. The rhythmic alliteration and repetition of the passage announces the movement of the sea and stresses her sensual intimacy with the Mediterranean landscape, where she 'lèche les recoins les plus intimes de rivages', allowing a *jouissif* rejection of static, territorial memories, and where she 's'éclate contre les mémoires fossiles des terres'. Here, feminine sexuality provides the language to imagine memory as unending and ongoing process. The process of remembering the self through the seascape is also intricately tied to the realisation of the self as a desiring subject. As in her quest for memory, the ambiguous, fluid symbolism of the sea suspends any possibility of Nora's entirely filling in the gaps in her memory.

Few commentators have discussed *N'zid's* representation of homosexual desire in the character, Jean Rolland. Nora's close friend from Paris, Jean is a French gallery owner who grew up in Algeria and has an intense fascination with Algerian art. However, he is presented as being politically naïve in his support for Islamist nationalism and is accused of neo-colonialism by Nora's lover, Jamil. Nora has a flashback to a melodramatic argument between the two men, in which Jamil and Jean enact the performative memory camps common in the binary positions of France vs. Algeria that Rosello has critiqued in *Performative Encounters* (2005):

Jamil fulminait : « Tu veux que je te dise ? Tu es un pauvre mec. Une fin de race. Une graine de colon qui n'a plus rien à vampiriser. Pauvre mec, tu es né trop tard. Sinon, tu te serais fait un nom dans l'OAS. » Et Jean de crier plus fort encore : « Non ! À ce-moment-là, j'aurais été FLN et certainement plus algérien que toi ! » (168).

In recalling the uncomfortable and highly performative exchange of blows (FLN vs. OAS), Nora comes to the realisation that, behind the exaggerated accusations about speculative political allegiances, Jean's affiliation with Algeria is due, in part, to his unfulfilled desire for Jamil :

«C'est de Jamil que Jean est amoureux. Nous avons refusé de le voir. Cette histoire qui lui a fait quitter l'Algérie, c'était ... Jamil et moi, nous avons décidé qu'il s'agissait d'une fausse rumeur. Une banalité en Algérie ... » (2001 : 169, original emphasis)

In the end, both Jamil and Jean end up being killed by extremists; Jamil is murdered for performing his music in public, and Jean gets out of his depth with the Islamist nationalists. Nora pities Jean's naïve over-affection for 'les truands et les artistes [...] Mais depuis quand a-t-il dérivé des truands aux tueurs?' (2001: 198). For Talbayev, Jean Rolland's character is an example of the novel's 'romanticized perspective on mobility' (2017: 152), where '[h]is vision of fluid identities is utopian and reveals a casual engagement with borders and fault lines, which the harsh realities of other forms of trans-Mediterranean crossings belie' (151). Nonetheless, Nora *does* critique his over-fondness of Algerian culture as misguided orientalism. Furthermore, although arguably a secondary character to the main plot of the novel, Jean's desire for Jamil highlights the lingering taboo of queer performances in the Mediterranean. As Denis Provencher claims, investigating sexual norms in French-Maghrebi identities can uncover 'many other forms

of policing of “borders,” belonging and citizenship, as well as national identity at large’ (2017: 25). When repressed homosexual desire is expressed as an adoptive Algerian nationalism, Jean’s characterisation is not a straightforward celebration of nomadic desire and the freedom of movement across the Mediterranean. In *N’zid*, few of the characters we meet have their desires fulfilled.

Another way in which Mokeddem’s desiring memory undertakes a performative construction of a gendered memory in the Mediterranean is through her references to Homer’s *Odyssey*. This is also clearly part of the marketing strategy for *N’zid* since the ‘texte de présentation’ for the 2001 Seuil edition opens with ‘[s]upposons qu’Ulysse soit une femme. Une femme d’aujourd’hui. Algérienne’.⁶⁹ Brought into the 21st century, feminised and given a troubling, trans-continental family history, Mokeddem’s Ulysses parallels the trajectory of the Homeric Odyssey. Her protagonists also navigate the Mediterranean in a long quest to symbolically ‘return’ to a homeland, a quest which, they realise, can never truly be completed. Whereas Ulysses fought against gods, monsters, and sea-trials to return to Ithaca, for Nora and Shamsa, sailing across the Mediterranean is a political tool of resistance against those hostile forces who would prevent them from achieving their goals; (universally masculine, these antagonists include custom officials, terrorists, petty thieves, sexual predators and would-be kidnappers). Ulysses seeks to return to Penelope, while Nora and Shamsa seek out their lost lovers Jamil and Léo. Like Ulysses’s men on the ‘île de lotophages’, they too struggle to resist the temptations of amnesia and obfuscation. Like Ulysses, they are storytellers and use this gift to their

⁶⁹ This paratextual emphasis on the Odyssey is even more pronounced in translations of the novel’s title, in Portuguese *N’zid: A odisseia de Nora Carson* (‘N’zid: The Odyssey of Nora Carson’ 2002) and in Dutch *Een vrouwelijke Odysseus, N’zid* (‘A Female Odysseus, N’zid’ 2003).

advantage. In this way, the novels reappropriate and rewrite some of the tropes of the Homeric epic from a feminine perspective.⁷⁰

In doing so, Mokeddem also refers indirectly to other famous Odyssean intertexts, namely James Joyce's reiteration of the *Odyssey* in *Ulysses* (1922). For Nora, this is a key point of discovery as she relearns her own name and family history:

Nora, oui! Je me souviens ... C'était le prénom de la femme de James Joyce. Elle était originaire de Galway, comme mon père. Je suis sûre qu'il n'a jamais lu Joyce. Mais il était furieusement, douloureusement Irlandais. En arabe, Nora signifie « lumière », quelle fumisterie ! (2001 : 111)

Mokeddem's reference to Joyce is not explicitly intertextual (she does not mention *Ulysses*). Instead, this constitutes a gesture towards a collective memory of the myth of the *Odyssey* and its configurations in modern literary culture. Her father never read Joyce so it is Nora who makes the connection to Joyce herself. In turn, the Irish name finds roots in the Mediterranean via its Arabic homonym. Thus, the relatively banal task of searching for a child's name takes on epic proportions when it must satisfy both her Irish father and Algerian mother: 'Il paraît que la recherche a été très longue, cause de disputes homériques' (111). Therefore, we can agree with Anne-Marie Nahlovsky who suggests that *N'Zid* is an 'odyssée scripturaire [...] une quête démystifiée d'un langage mythifié' (140). In Nora's desiring memory, references to the *Odyssey* are removed from their

⁷⁰ In reference to Mokeddem's 1993 novel *L'Interdite*, Twyla Meding suggests that the protagonist is none other than 'Don Juan, qui renie le sédentarité pour lui préférer le déplacement, la fuite, voire la migration [...] Mokeddem crée un nouveau paradigme du salut de la "migrée" actuelle' (2008 : 94). The reinvention of Don Juan is completed by recasting the man as a woman, and swapping European cities for the Algerian desert. According to Meding, in *L'Interdite* Mokeddem inverts 'le rapport du mythe au statut de la femme maghrébine transplantée autrefois au sol français et à présenter de retour au pays natal' (95). Sultana, the protagonist, is don juanesque in that she resists the dogma of fundamental Islamists gaining power in Algeria, but also maintains a refusal to choose between her Algerian heritage and the degree of sexual, social freedom she experiences in France (102).

Homeric setting and banalised or even ironised ('Quelle fumisterie!'), but the power of language to evoke origin and memory remains just as powerful.

In *La Désirante*, the *Odyssey* is another way to frame contemporary Mediterranean geopolitics, namely the migration crisis. At the end of a chapter describing Shamsa's testimony of the Lampedusa island immigration camps, Shamsa laments the tragedy that is engulfing the Mediterranean, a tragedy that she herself managed to escape by leaving Algeria in the 1990s. Furthermore, she alludes to Léo's disappearance as a kind of estrangement from Ithaca:

Sur cette Méditerranée où la beauté est plus tragique encore que dans les temps anciens, j'apprends le sens de la disparition. Mes traversées sont celles d'un Ulysse sans Ithaque. Ulysse, quand les cris de milliers de naufragés remplacent le chant des sirènes.

Tu n'es nulle part. Vais-je aller de Charybde en Scylla? (2011: 155).

Mokeddem's evocation of the *Odyssey* here functions as an act of memory. This memory act constructs the contemporary Mediterranean crisis in Odyssean terms. Shamsa's impossible desire for a homeland, as she puts it dejectedly, is the story of Ulysses without Ithaca. However, this is not just an expression of individualistic melancholy. Mokeddem ends this chapter with a reference to the idiom 'tomber de Charybde en Scylla' which offers a triple interpretation; first, in the idiomatic sense that this refers to going from one danger to another ('aller de mal en pis'); second, like Joyce in episode 9 of *Ulysses* (1993), Mokeddem refers to the Charybdis and Scylla sea-trial from Book XII of the *Odyssey* (Homer 1994) where Ulysses must pass between the six-headed monster, Scylla, and the whirlpool Charybdis; third, the two deadly monsters find metaphoric value as the two coastlines of the Mediterranean, in which Charybdis 'étend son empire à toutes les côtes

du sud où le despotisme et la férocité de régimes [...] jettent à la mer des flots des fuyards' and Scylla represents the Northern governments who 'ponctionnent et rançonnent à leur gré ces vagues de migrants' (2011: 154).

In this way, Mokeddem firmly places her protagonists in the tradition of Ulysses, drawing on a collective memory of the textual source, but also in the foundational myth of the Mediterranean as a geographical and historical concept. In feminising her own Ulysses and by reframing the myth in terms of the migration crisis as a symptom of uneven North and South development, she reclaims the right to add to the Odyssean myth, to write her own 'desiring memory' as the impossible quest for a homeland. Astrid Erll's (2016) recent project on the collective memory of Homer's *Odyssey* suggests that the *Odyssey* is one of the foundational narrative templates which has travelled through what she calls the 'mnemohistory' of colonialism and European identity. The epic both reflects *and* helps to construct the various developments in European identity vis-à-vis its racial and gendered others. In other words, in Mokeddem's writing the myth of Ulysses is more than intertextuality; it is an act of cultural memory.

N'zid and *La Désirante* demonstrate two very different conclusions that reflect a nuanced development in the power of 'desiring memory' in Mokeddem's works. The most obvious difference between these two novels concerns their endings; whereas *La Désirante* concludes with the lovers Shamsa and Léo being reunited, *N'zid* closes with Nora learning of the death of Jamil and the narrative hesitates in celebrating too openly the virtues of the Mediterranean sea-quest as a supposed reparative 'solution' to traumatic memory (Rosello 2010). In the final lines of the novel, Nora is questioned by Loïc about her future and she seems resigned to keep on sailing in order to defer confronting the recent tragedies in Algeria:

- Qu'est-ce que tu veux faire ?

- N'zid.
- Tu ? ... Tu veux aller en Algérie ?
- Pas tout de suite. Les tombes peuvent attendre. J'ai une autre mer à traverser. Je veux emmener *Tramontane* dans le Gulf Stream, à Galway. J'irai chercher le luth de Jamil plus tard. Je me rendrai au désert lorsque le silence sera revenu là. (2001 : 214)

In a text which draws frequently on the idea of cycles, waves, and currents, the novel ends characteristically with reference to its title, *N'zid*. Most commentaries on the novel refer to the multivalency of this term which, the narrator herself explains, means both 'to be born' and 'to continue'. Using these translations, we can read the novel as a defiant act of survival for the solo-female sailor in the face of intolerance and violence in the aftermath of Algeria's Black Decade. However, *N'zid* also has a third meaning 'to add'. As we have seen already in the framing of Nora as a feminist reclamation of the Ulysses myth, 'n'zid' conveys a desire to add a voice to the canon, to speak to the foundational myths of Mediterranean identity and to reclaim that narrative. In other words, 'n'zid' is also a promise to continue, to create, and to perform the memory of the Mediterranean Sea and to participate in a mnemohistory of the Odyssey (Erl 2016).

In contrast, at the end of *La Désirante* Shamsa's quest for identity may not be satisfied but she is appeased and reconciled by her reunion with the lost lover, Léo. Shamsa evokes the theme of identity when she listens to Nina Simone's 'Who Am I?' (Simone 1969) on the radio:

« *Who am I?* » Ni plainte ni pleur, mais la clameur de tout un monde en devenir qui s'élève au-dessus des mers, des terres, des frontières. Qui ne renonce pas à fouiller les failles et les fragilités, à questionner les humains, à forcer l'oubli, à puiser aux sources vives des toujours. Elle est comme le ressac des vagues sur

toutes sortes de rivages : de roc, de sable ou de boue, dans des vents hurlants ou d'éphémères brises : « Again and again, and again. Oh, who am I ? » (Mokeddem 2011: 234)

This intertextual play between Simone's lyrics and the themes of identity, repetition ('again and again') and re-birth ('Have you ever heard of reincarnation?') also recalls *N'zid* and Nora's endless search for her memory, almost condemned 'à puiser aux sources vives des toujours'. Thus, rather than being a way to recall the power of desiring memory to propel the subject forward, the interjection of Simone's lyrics frames Shamsa's nomadism in terms of pain, isolation and overall fatigue felt in the perpetual nomadism of the narrator.

In *La Désirante*, it is Shamsa's ability to freely and openly desire Léo, the symbol of the masculine and foreign Other, that allows her to come to terms with her migration to France: 'Je suis née d'une tombe de sable. La mer est mon désert. Toi, mon port d'attache' (74). Having been born and abandoned in the Algerian Sahara, she does not simply adopt a French identity but identifies the Mediterranean as a space that parallels the desert to its south. The paradox of being born from a tomb is echoed in the contradictory image of the sea as a watery desert. Shamsa recognises that this is also a return to her origins, to another kind of desert. However, this time her 'port d'attache' is not a geographical location but her lover. Her desire for Léo gives her anchorage in the vast and constantly mobilising waves of the Mediterranean and dunes of the Sahara. Additionally, it is his very foreignness that allows her to love:

Tu étais l'Autre, différent et si proche. C'était cette différence qui m'accueillait, m'apaisait et me permettait de m'aimer un peu [...] j'ai pu m'abandonner et aborder cette *terra incognita*, l'amour. Un amour

décuplé par tous ceux que je n'ai jamais vécus. Ceux que j'ai négligés ou rejetés.

Avant toi, j'étais déserte. Notre rencontre m'a rendu désirante.

(Mokeddem 2011: 102-3).

In this short extract, Mokeddem labels Léo as Other, with the capitalisation of the A common to psychoanalytical and literary criticism. By openly loving this *Autre*, Shamsa reverses the colonial power dynamic of the virile European violating virgin oriental territory: it is she who takes on the *terra incognita*, not with violence but in the spirit of reconciliation, a love reinforced by loss, 'décuplé par [...] ceux que j'ai négligés ou rejetés'. In this way, Shamsa and Léo's transcultural relationship distinctly undermines the colonial one, since it is not based on the positivist notions of *la mission civilisatrice*. Instead, she conquers the *terra incognita* through a recognition of vulnerability and loss.

Mokeddem also plays on the noun 'le désert' by transforming it into the gerund 'la désirante', suggesting the acting out of agency through desire, and by extension the working through of her memories of her difficult past. If Léo becomes her adopted home – 'Toi Lou, ton corps est mon continent et ton amour son plus bel horizon' (178) – she neither defines her identity according to a national or even transnational framework, nor affirms her nomadic identity. Instead, it is this new 'bel horizon' of a loving relationship that enables her to find ways of living with the past. As Simona Emilia Pruteanu observes, if Mokeddem's earlier novels are preoccupied with heteronormative couplings that demonstrate 'le rapport de pouvoir inégalitaire *homme/argent – femme/soumission*', Shamsa seems to be allowed a dénouement 'digne de personnages plus complexes ayant expérimenté la vie des deux côtés de la Méditerranée' (2015: 136).

Thus, the resolution with the love-object and reconciliation with the past in *La Désirante* entails a perspective on desiring memory which contradicts readings of a suspended and continued nomadism in *N'Zid*. For example, Zoubida Belaghoueg understands Mokeddem's 'coming-to-writing' as a laudable form of cultural nomadism, a 'voyage en soi' in which the author leads the readers into unknown territories akin to the southern desert; 'c'est l'infini peuplé de dunes dans une écriture fluide, dégageant odeurs, culture et sensibilité nomades' (2010: 190). This approach to nomadism in Mokeddem's work echoes Rosi Braidotti's theory of nomadic consciousness, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's theorisation of the rhizome, by suggesting that nomadism can refer 'to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour. Not all nomads are world-travellers [...] Consciousness-raising and the subversion of set conventions define the nomadic state, not the literal act of travelling.' (2011: 26). In this respect, Nora's continued nomadism is a metaphorical rejection of borders, a subversive act that critiques the socially coded norms of life for an Algerian woman.

In contrast, Kate Averis has highlighted the limitations of Braidotti's concept of nomadic consciousness in her book *Exile and Nomadism* (2014), warning against the possible 'neo-colonialism of nomadology; and nomadism's emphasis on deterritorialization at the expense of attention to reterritorialization' (2014: 34). In other words, she reminds us that, in postcolonial theory, one risks celebrating rootlessness as the ideal postcolonial subjectivity, praising movement at the expense of the political and cultural value of staying in place, of being at home. Although both Braidotti and Belaghoueg lay emphasis on a romantic concept of travel, Mokeddem's conventional, and heteronormative conclusion to *La Désirante* seems to reflect on the politics of finding one's home. The novel's conclusion suggests that, in the light of the catastrophic

migration crisis due to North-South global inequality, there is a radical value in forms of reterritorialisation as well.

In this section, we have seen how ‘desiring memory’ in *N’zid* and *La Désirante* subverts certain gendered myths of the Mediterranean in the way they rewrite myths of the Odyssey, while nuancing the celebrated myth of nomadism as political agency. In the final section, I will examine how Mokeddem engages with the performative gendering of the sea as a maternal space.

4.5 ‘La mère-mer’

In the protagonists’ quest for memory, origin and history, the role of the mother plays an important part in the reimagining of the Mediterranean Sea in both a literal and conceptual sense. As Mertz-Baumgartner (2005) notes, Mokeddem has frequently tried to dissociate the mother from her writing. Nonetheless, mothers appear throughout Mokeddem’s works but frequently as figures of absence. Mokeddem herself has suggested that the memory of the Mother in *N’zid* is symptomatic of Algeria’s presence in her works, even against her will:

J’ai lutté pour qu’il n’y ait plus d’Algérien dans ce roman. Mais je n’ai pas pu m’empêcher. La mère est une Algérienne même si sa présence est furtive. C’est sorti malgré moi pratiquement. (Bénayoun-Szmidt et al. 2003: 281)

In other words, mothers often appear as a form of trauma for Mokeddem’s protagonists (Nora and Shamsa included) and are closely linked to a memory of Algeria. For Mertz-Baumgartner, the protagonists work through this trauma ‘par un acte de mémoire féminine, afin de compléter une filiation familiale lacunaire’ (2005: 43). It is this notion of an act of feminine memory that I will explore in this section to establish how

Mokeddem draws on feminised tropes of the Mediterranean Sea to reaffirm the memories of her protagonists.

On the one hand, in *N'zid*, the sea is maternal, cradling, and amniotic. With the absence of the biological mother, *la mer* is a substitute for *la mère* as the ubiquitous symbol of belonging in Nora's imaginary. The eternally shifting landscape of the Mediterranean sea-scape is ever present as she sketches, dreams, and slowly regains her memory:

Elle [la mer] est sa complice quand elle roule, court et embrasse, dans une même étreinte, Grèce et Turquie, Israël, Palestine et Liban, France et Algérie [...] Elle est le berceau où dorment, au chant des leurs sirènes, les naufragés esseulés, ceux des causes perdues, les fuyards de Gibraltar et bien des illusions de vivants.

« Désinhibition verbale, ton lyrisme déclame un amour sans te reconnaître. Même le brame du vent dit d'abord d'où il vient. » (2001: 69)

Initially, this extract frames the Mediterranean as an inclusive, maternal space which extends and unites the Mediterranean nations in a transnational gesture of embrace. The sea is characterised as the 'berceau' of a morbid, but romanticised, notion of 'les naufragés esseulés', 'causes perdues', and 'fuyards'. With the interruption of the direct speech, the tone of this extract shifts. As a result of her head trauma, Nora's internal voice regularly interrupts the narrative in the form of a third-person commentary which challenges and ironises her actions and thoughts. Here, the internal voice undermines her 'lyrisme' which celebrates the maternal 'mère-mer'. As I have already mentioned, a prevalent interpretation of Mokeddem's Mediterranean novels endorses the notion of the idealised 'mère-mer' (Mansueto 2017). For example, although Margot Miller criticises the 'orientalist' usage of nomadism to theorise contemporary French and Algeria

literatures, she nonetheless uses the trope of the maternal sea in her analysis of Mokeddem's novels:

The link to the Mother is not just homophonic. Death has perhaps always been metaphorized as abandonment by the mother, and both death and the mother are associated cognitively with the sea. [...] The sea is not containable; the sea does not permit itself to be the sign of rootedness although it does permit and encourage a wide variety of itineraries of discovery. (2004: 31)

Mokeddem's performative use of the Mediterranean reiterates some of these tropes of the maternal sea, as indefinable, uncontainable, and wilfully elusive. However, in her self-reflexive commentary, triggered by Nora's amnesic state, the narrative also undermines these tropes.

While critics like Miller and Mansueto celebrate some of these feminised tropes, elsewhere in Nora's narrative 'la mère-mer' is a traumatic figure for her two protagonists, being closely associated with the experiences of women during the Algerian War of Independence. In *N'zid*, still plagued by her amnesia, Nora blindly sketches from the cockpit of the boat in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. She realises that while the face of her father emerges from her sketches, her mother remains elusive; 'Pas dessiné la mère, pourquoi?' (Mokeddem 2001: 101). We later learn that the memory of the mother is repressed due to the trauma of her mother's fate. After finding a satellite phone on the boat, Nora calls the first number she finds and contacts Zana, whom she remembers to be an adoptive mother-figure from her childhood. The wife of a former *harki* living in France, Zana knew Nora's mother, Aïcha, who settled in Paris in the 1950s with Nora's father Samuel, an Irish migrant. Aïcha, militantly anti-colonial, returns to join the resistance in Algeria after witnessing the violence of the 17 October 1961 massacre; 'Les zoufris ne savaient pas nager. Évidemment. Les nerfs d'Aïcha craquent. Crise sur crise.

Fureur minée de toutes parts' (140).⁷¹ Once back in Algeria, Aïcha is bitterly disappointed by the Independence movement's treatment of women fighters and supporters who, like herself, do not get recognition for their involvement. Before she can return to France she is sequestered by her family and forced into marriage. Eventually driven mad, Aïcha retreats into herself, not speaking a word for 35 years, dying in silence a month before the action of the novel.

However, somewhat surprisingly considering her amnesic state, Nora reacts to Zana's story with frustration at this apparently all-too-familiar narrative of the failure of Algerian Independence to politically empower women:

Nora sursaute, bondit sur ses pieds d'exaspération, lève une main vers la mer pour arrêter l'incantation:

- Ça va, ça va! Les mélos à l'algérienne, j'en ai soupé!' (140).

It appears that she has been brought up on such stories, ones in which the Algerian woman is always victimised, silenced, and repressed. Mokeddem capitalises on this emotionally charged and pivotal point of the novel, the *dénouement* where Nora's origins are finally revealed, to acknowledge the history of Algerian women who have been stereotyped as eternal sufferers, or as Joséfina Bueno Alonso puts it, to 'effacer les stéréotypes littéraires qui ont fait des romans des femmes du Maghreb un *lamento* mythique de la condition féminine' (2004: 15). This outburst shifts the reader's perspective from Nora's personal memory to the wider history of Algerian Independence. In underlining the trope of the 'mélos' or 'lamento' that normally accompanies stories about Algerian women, Nora also critiques the repetitive cycle of postcolonial trauma as a personal melancholy. In this way, this passage echoes what Rosello has called the 'reparative' in narratives. The reparative

⁷¹ 'Zoufris' is a vernacular reference to Algerian migrant workers who came to France in the 1950s.

opposes a so-called breaking free ‘from’ the past. Rather, it constitutes ‘a recognition that living with the ever-present past is unavoidable, that, therefore, the present is this so-called past of violence and guilt, but also that a welcoming of that heritage does not mean that we must reproduce it’ (2010: 19). In re-discovering her family’s tragic history, entrenched in colonial and postcolonial trauma, Nora also resists the narrative that would have her define *herself* according to these categories. Alone in the sea, she can resist the mythologies of the eternally suffering Algerian woman without glorifying the notion of a mythical feminine Mediterranean.

In *N’zid*, ‘la mère-mer’ as a spatial category is associated with the return of the past, in particular the memory of women’s experiences under various imperialisms across Europe and Africa. Re-learning her family history in the middle of the sea through her satellite phone conversations with Zana, the sea is presented as a forum for intersecting memories of trauma, viewed from various different feminine subjectivities – Nora’s, Aïcha’s, and Zana’s. Rather than a totalising femininity and maternity, as suggested by Nahlovsky who argues that ‘La mer est la femme première’ (2010: 105), Mokeddem uses the fluidity of the sea to highlight a specific narrative of traumatic pasts. Although this episode might suggest a moment of matrilineal solidarity, cradled in the amniotic site of a maternal Mediterranean Sea (since it is through the voices of women that this story can go forward), Mokeddem insists that her depiction of the Mediterranean and the mother is not ‘une approche mythique’. Instead, she is concerned with the ways in which the sea ‘occupe l’espace et le temps, et les confond en une même essence’ (Mokeddem cited in Bénayoun-Szmidt et al. 2003: 298). Indeed, in *La Désirante*, Mokeddem evokes ‘la mère-mer’ to convey the terror of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea:

La Méditerranée, elle, est comme toutes les mères. Elle porte ceux qui ont ses faveurs dans la joie et la sérénité et noie, de mille manières, les indésirables. Ceux-là avaient pourtant traversé bien des frontières. (Mokeddem 2011: 154-5)

Mokeddem deliberately resists the easy transformation of the sea into a romanticised surrogate mother-figure for the orphaned protagonists. Rather than being consoled solely by the maternal sea, the wide horizon and alternative historiography provide a framework to work through the legacies of her family history. For Nora and Shamsa, being at sea is a way of performing their family memory beyond the euro-, androcentric historiography and yet resists the return to a mythic concept of the all-encompassing benevolent ‘mère-mer’.

It is also worth exploring the play on words of ‘la mère’ and ‘la mer’ in the wider context of literature of Algerian decolonisation. The title of Mohammed Dib’s dystopian myth of the Algerian War for Independence, *Qui se souvient de la mer* (1962), becomes particularly potent in the context of *N’zid*’s amnesic plot. In this seminal novel of Francophone Algerian writing, the voice of the mother mingles with the symbolic maternity of the Sea. By embracing the language of ‘la mère-mer’, the narrator can pursue a coherent sense of self in the wake of disaster. The novel concludes famously with the sentence ‘Quelquefois me parvient encore un brisement, un chant sourd, et je songe, je me souviens de la mer’ (1962: 187). According to Aouicha Hilliard, ‘la mère-mer’ metaphor refers to the Mother’s language as an alternative social structure to the rigidity of colonialism and patriarchy, that society ‘needs the sea (mer/mère) and its rhythms to restore men who have become mere pebbles, automatons’ (2000: 185). In Dib’s novel, there is a distinct movement from the sedentary ‘pebbles’ or the soulless ‘automatons’ to the mobile and flowing ebbs of the Sea. As Max Silverman has argued, the ghostly figure of the mother and the haunting imagery of the sea in *Qui se souvient de la mer* are ‘always

an absent presence, a memory or a dream which haunts the narrator and whose ghost-like existence signals a dim, distant but profound longing for a return and for unity' (2013: 79). We can see echoes of Dib's notion of the sea as a fluid space which brings with it an alternative, maternal language to the patriarchal and colonial discourse of oppression.

Nonetheless, in *N'Zid* this process of privileging the sea as a surrogate maternal symbol promotes a notion of rootlessness as opposed to the national anchoring that the maternal provides to the narrator of *Qui se souvient de la mer*. The haunting presence of the mother in Dib's myth of Algerian Independence supports the symbolic values of 'la mère-mer' as a deterritorialised alternative to the masculinist, territorial structures of domination that occupy the surrounding Mediterranean shores. In contrast, Mokeddem situates her 'mère-mer' in relation to the memories and experiences of the Algerian women who live on those shores; memories which simultaneously celebrate the sea's fluidity and currents of possibility, but also recognise the sea as a liquid archive for the memory of gendered trauma.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a comparative reading of two of Mokeddem's novels that, despite their similarities, have not yet been analysed together. The narratives of *N'zid* and *La Désirante* both demonstrate how the sea-narratives of the female solo-sailors engender concepts of feminine memory that, in turn, perform modes of transnational affiliation and solidarity. The perceived 'liquid materiality' (Chambers 2008) of the Mediterranean enables an interrogation of the movement and currents of memory from Algeria and France in ways that disturb the gendered imaginaries that have inflected cultural and collective memories in the Mediterranean. Mokeddem's writing develops a feminist

approach to the work of memory in relation to French-Algerian subjectivities by reappropriating and re-inventing the gendered tropes of the Mediterranean space, such as the heroic Ulysses and cradling 'mère-mer'.

In my comparative reading, these two novels also demonstrate differing perspectives on the value of nomadism. In *N'zid* the novel ends with Nora's continued journey, suggesting an endless sea-quest that leads to no clear conclusion. *La Désirante*, in contrast, concludes with Shamsa's reunion with Léo reminding us that the valorisation of nomadism is often at the expense of the material value of being at home. Likewise, her memory narratives call for political responsibility in light of vast North-South inequality and the human catastrophe of the Mediterranean crisis. They are 'implicated subjects' (Rothberg 2013) in the contemporary human disaster of the migration crisis which, since the publication of *La Désirante* in 2011, has accelerated and claimed the lives of 18,400 people with rising numbers of Syrian refugees also making Mediterranean crossings (Open Migration 2017). As such this chapter has developed a perspective on Mokeddem's feminist politics of memory that stresses the political responsibility of remembering subjects to also bear witness to injustice in the present.

In this chapter, I have shown how feminine tropes and subjectivities can be a point of connectedness for the protagonists' memories in *N'zid* and *La Désirante*. The next chapter will develop how transnational memory narratives can also disturb the boundaries of normative gender performance. The last chapter of this thesis focuses on Nina Bouraoui's postmemorial narratives about a childhood in Algeria in the late 1970s. It will develop the theme of political responsibility which, I will suggest, goes hand in hand with a feminist approach to 'connective' memory in Bouraoui's writings.

Chapter Five: Gender and Affective Engagement in Nina

Bouraoui's Memory Narratives

‘Algérie n’est pas dans ma langue. Elle est dans mon corps.’

Garçon manqué (2000: 67)

‘Le temps est aussi un corps. Un corps qui nous recouvre tous et nous emporte dans sa marche. Et parfois c’est ce que je me dis pour Sami, il est encore mais il n’existe plus.’

Sauvage (2009: 102)

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, I examined how Malika Mokeddem imagined the Mediterranean Sea in *N'zid* (2001) and *La Désirante* (2011) as a space to work through memories of French and Algerian encounters and violence. I suggested that these narratives re-stage the gendered tropes of the Mediterranean in order to subvert and appropriate them. Mokeddem's approach to gendered memory centralises the voices of women and their histories in her story telling. However, she also demonstrates that, in doing so, these women have a privileged role as witnesses to the ongoing suffering of the migrant crisis. I concluded that this can be thought of as a feminist politics of memory, in which bearing witness to the past also demands a recognition of ongoing suffering in the present.

In this chapter, I turn to the works of Nina Bouraoui to examine how the gendering of French and Algerian colonial memory takes place as an ‘affective engagement’ with the past in three memory narratives: *Le Jour du séisme* (1999), *Garçon manqué* (2000), and *Sauvage* (2009). This means looking at ways memories are transmitted to the protagonists of three novels who engage with the past through ‘affective’ objects, such as

artefacts (photographic, textual, and aural), the environment (conceptual and physical), and loss (of loved ones and childhood). Here, my argument expands on Alison Landsberg's concept of 'affective engagement' (2015) with the past via mass media, itself drawn from R. G. Collingwood's concept of history as re-enactment (1943). I will develop this concept to suggest that, in Bouraoui's writings, historical knowledge can be acquired through bodily and 'performative encounters' (Rosello 2005, 2006) which *also* entail a complex interaction with non-binary forms of gender performativity. By examining these novels in terms of how the protagonists imagine their embodied and affective knowledge of the colonial past, especially due to their family links to both France and Algeria, I will describe how Bouraoui complicates binary logic in the production of 'feminine' or 'masculine' memory.

Since the publication of *La Voyeuse interdite* in 1991 (an unsettling novella about cloistering, voyeurism, and the repression of adolescent sexuality), Bouraoui has been a major voice in literature concerning gender, sexuality and memory in a dual French and Algerian context. While her more recent work has focused on the fluid mediation of homosexual desire (*La vie heureuse* 2002, *Poupée bella* 2004), identification, and mental well-being (*Mes mauvaises pensées* 2005, *Avant les hommes* 2007, *Beaux rivages* 2016), much of her work concerns her memories of a childhood spent between Algerian and French homes and histories. Throughout her career, Bouraoui has consistently returned to an autofictional form of story-telling. As in the texts studied in this chapter, she frequently draws on elements from her own biography.⁷² Born in Rennes, France in 1967, Bouraoui spent most of her childhood in Algiers before spending the rest of her

⁷² As Pamela Pears has argued in her analysis of the publication history of Bouraoui's texts, the author's image is frequently included in the cover image of paratexts of Bouraoui's texts, and in *Garçon Manqué* her image on the cover 'strengthens the idea that she is, consistently, the subject of her own writing. Bouraoui has built her career with autofiction' (2015: 139).

adolescence between France, Switzerland, and Abu Dhabi. Like the author, many of her protagonists have an Algerian father and a French mother, grew up in Algeria but spent their summers with their French maternal grandparents in Brittany.

Homosexuality is a major theme in many of her novels, but Bouraoui has spoken out against being labelled a lesbian writer and the risk of being ‘cataloguée par sa sexualité [...] cela me dérange profondément. L’homosexualité n’est pas une identité’ (cited in Harrington 2013: 97). While Bouraoui is suspicious of the category ‘lesbian writer’, her writing nonetheless engages with questions pertaining to sexuality and, most importantly for my argument in this chapter, non-binary gender identities. Bouraoui is equally suspicious of such literary categories as ‘écrivain beur’, an ‘appellation’ which has been attributed to her (O’Dowd 2001: 93). Bouraoui herself denies being ‘beur’, seeing this as a politicised term which presents an erroneous reading of both her works and her biography (Redouane 2012: 2). This chapter will consider how her literary works reflect a preoccupation with these sensitive questions pertaining to the performativity of gendered, national, and racial identity, by examining how her narrators engage with history in ‘affective’ and imaginative ways. While much work on Bouraoui’s writing has been undertaken in terms of psychoanalysis and memory (Grasset 2015), the following analysis is situated in an approach to memory from the perspective of ‘affect’. Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed discusses affect theory in relation to ‘happy objects’ and ‘things’ and claims that ‘[t]o be affected is to evaluate that thing. Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn toward things’ (Ahmed 2010: 31). This chapter will explore how Bouraoui represents how bodies react to such ‘things’ in ways that trigger a reaction to, and ‘evaluation’ of, the past. When their bodies ‘turn toward’ the affective objects, both physical and conceptual, they also engage with a performative gendering of the past in new ways.

The earliest text analysed in this chapter is *Le Jour du séisme* (1999), an account of the 1980 El Asnam Earthquake which is reimagined as an allegory of the narrator's dual allegiance to France and Algeria but also the metaphorically seismic event of Algerian Independence. Striking the Algerian coast on 10 October 1980 with a 7.1 magnitude, this was one of the most destructive earthquakes recorded in the Western Mediterranean Basin, resulting in a small tsunami on the south eastern Spanish coast and taking the lives of more than 2500 people, injuring many thousands more (Roger et al. 2011). 13-year-old Bouraoui experienced the earthquake in her home in Algiers. However, in her literary account, the earthquake is not only a geological rupture of the land. It is a transformational event that triggers a temporal rupture that applies to both the time of colonisation (concerning a collective memory of French imperialism and anti-colonial resistance) and the time of childhood (concerning the private memory of the protagonist's life in-between Algerian and French homes and histories). I will explore how the memory of the earthquake's violence also triggers a kind of 'gender trouble' (Butler 1990) which oscillates between 'elle' and 'il' subject positions.

In *Garçon manqué* (2000), a central theme is the inheritance of colonial and postcolonial violence through the family. To negotiate this family memory, the protagonist, Nina, plays with several different identities during her childhood, notably those of Algerian boys and men (Brio, Ahmed) but also her imitation of her friend Amine and her late Uncle Amar (killed during the War of Independence). The novel concludes with her departure from both France and Algeria, away from the demands to choose a camp and a specific gendered performance, finding solace in her anonymity as a tourist in Rome. If, in *Garçon manqué*, Nina's relationship with Amine is a central plot to the narrative, in *Sauvage* the childhood bond between the narrator, Alya, and her friend Sami is even more profound. Alya's bond with Sami is intensified by his sudden and

unexplained disappearance. The novel takes the form of Alya's account of Sami's life, retracing the months before his disappearance leading up to New Year's Eve 1979.

The novels discussed in this chapter are not usually analysed together in comparative readings. I have selected them for three reasons. First, these three narratives coincide with the year 1980. The years of the late 1970s and early 1980s are significant as a transitional period in the history of Algeria and in terms of the narrators' transition from childhood to adulthood.⁷³ In these novels, the transition from one period to another stimulates a reflection on the past in order to imagine what the future might entail. Second, in all three texts, there is an intense engagement with the childhood acquisition of historical knowledge.⁷⁴ Here, historical knowledge refers less to intellectual understanding of the past than to the acquisition of an affective sense or feeling for the narratives, tropes, and constructions that formulate the past in everyday life. This form of historical knowledge undermines the idea that one must be a historian in order to be historically situated. Third, in all three, the first-person narrator is the child of an Algerian father and French mother, who is preoccupied with the working through of memories of colonialism while, at the same time, they negotiate non-binary gender identities, variously performing masculine and feminine subjectivities. In the words of Montserrat Serrano Mañes, the narrators embody the 'pôles antinomiques' (2011: 33) of French-Algerian colonial history and, thus, their gendered bodies become the battleground of this postcolonial legacy. In this chapter, I suggest that it is precisely this antagonism that Bouraoui's narrators seek to challenge or question through the course of their *embodied* recollections on a childhood spent between French and Algerian homes and histories. In

⁷³ After the death of President Houari Boumédiène in 1978, the country underwent a political shift from post-Independence socialism to economic crisis and the rise of violent sectarianism in the late 1980s.

⁷⁴ This is especially potent for Bouraoui's post-1962 generation in Algeria. Born in 1967, Bouraoui grew up with the legacy of the Algerian War of Independence without ever having directly experienced it, raising questions surrounding the acquisition of colonial memory by the post-Independence generation.

denying the singular and polarising categories of exclusive femininity or masculinity, the narrators expand this non-binary perspective to undermine unilateral allegiance to French/Algerian, perpetrator/victim subject-positions. In other words, the refusal of a singular gendered subjectivity goes hand in hand with the multidirectional encounter of French, Algerian, and other pasts.

The following analysis is divided into three sections. The first section will expand the relevance of Landsberg and Collingwood's notion of historical re-enactment and affective engagement to theories of gender performativity. Analysing two of the texts *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage* in more detail, I will demonstrate how the child-narrators acquire family memory by engaging with forms of performative masculinity. In other words, I will show that affective engagement in Bouraoui's narratives is a *dual process*: it sheds light on how the past becomes intelligible in the present *and* takes place as a form of gender performativity.

In the previous chapter, I examined how the Mediterranean Sea and its 'liquid materiality' facilitates the movements and interconnections of connective memory in Mokeddem's novels. The second section will develop the theme of space and memory by examining the role of earthquakes and beaches as 'affective environments' in the acquisition of historical knowledge. In *Le jour du séisme* the earthquake's destructive force provokes a sensual interaction between the body and the landscape, between past and present, as a means to remember and acquire historical knowledge. In *Garçon manqué*, beaches are represented as sites *par excellence* for the interrogations of masculine and feminine performativity. More than the liminal spaces between land and

sea, the narrator reflects on how the beaches of France and Algeria are also border spaces which have been intensely policed by both colonial and postcolonial forces.⁷⁵

Section three will examine how *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage* present the ways in which memory is transmitted and performed through the family, from those who have living memories of the past, to those who have none. I will suggest that, to date, these novels have not been examined in terms of ‘connective memory’. In other words, they have not been analysed in terms of how the characters draw connections between various historical moments in their memory narratives simultaneously. For example, *Garçon manqué* references the Occupation of France as well as the Algerian War of Independence to inform the narrator’s gendered and racialised subjectivity as a French-Algerian child. In all three texts, the narrators recall the past through these ‘affective engagements’ which, consequently, reiterate or subvert their gender subjectivity. I will suggest that the gendering of the remembering subject is simultaneously an affirmation of an identity that is rooted in the past, but also a resistance to binarised forms of thinking regarding postcolonial pasts and futures.

5.2 Gender Performativity and Affective Engagement

This section will explain the relationship between ‘affective engagement’ with the past and theories of gender performativity in *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage*. In *Garçon manqué*, Nina reflects on her obligation to choose a camp between her parents’

⁷⁵ The question of racial and sexual politics of the French and Algerian beach came to international attention over the course of summer 2017. On the one hand, the internationally reported so-called ‘burkini ban’ targeted Muslim women who wore body-suits on French beaches. On the other hand, reports of Algerian women wearing bikinis, ostensibly in protest of restrictive dress codes on Algerian beaches, were widely circulated in the French press (*Le Parisien* 2017). However, the extent and objectives of such ‘militantisme probikini’ were later revealed to be over-exaggerated and exploited by the international press (*Libération* 2017).

different national backgrounds and aligns this with the problem of navigating binary gender:

Tous les matins, je vérifie mon identité. J'ai quatre problèmes. Française ? Algérienne ? Fille ? Garçon ? (2000: 163)

In this extract, Nina reflects on the inflexibility of these banal terms that must be routinely questioned as part of her daily life. However, she struggles to make a choice between the various competing categories vying for her identity. Butler's theory of gender performativity shows how identitarian and social norms take shape through repetition as 'the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimisation' (2006: 191). Butler has also stressed that this is 'a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established' (1988: 526), which are re-produced and promoted by 'the stylization of the body' (519). In *Garçon manqué*, these categories are mundane but their repetition and re-enactment also gesture to the historical context from which they originate. In other words, Nina's self-reflexive interrogation of identity sets up the problem of how she is to accept these gendered terms when they are also related to the complexity of historical narratives concerning France and Algeria. The first two questions in the passage above seem to answer the second set, with the feminine endings 'Française? Algérienne?' seemingly foreclosing the child's option to claim affirmatively the label 'Garçon'. These simple details open up complex questions surrounding the child's position in relation to her mixed heritage and gender identity. While national identity is clearly demarcated as feminine, her performative gender does not easily fit into either category.

I posit that these four questions also shed light on the ways the narrator expresses a form of historical knowledge. The historian R. G. Collingwood famously argued that acquiring historical knowledge involves an experiential encounter with the past. This encounter can be understood as a kind of imaginative labour in which 'the historian must

re-enact the past in his own mind' (1993: 282). This encounter takes place within the imaginative space of the mind but, as Alison Landsberg has argued, such an experiential re-enactment also suggests an *embodied* encounter with the past (2015: 10). In other words, transgressing a Cartesian dualism, historical encounter can be *felt* through the body as well as understood cognitively through the mind. Collingwood's idea of history as re-enactment and Landsberg's elucidation of this as an experiential or embodied mode of historical knowledge, lend themselves to critical enquiry from the perspective of performativity. Butler's argument that gender performativity involves the 're-experiencing' (1988: 326) of established norms affirms gender as a historically situated action. Gender is a performative repetition, reiteration, and transformation which takes place with the passing of time and transgenerational transfer. In this sense, gender, too, is a form of historical knowledge. However, Butler has theorised that, more than a discursive performance, performativity works to 'constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex' (1993: 2). While I situate my argument in relation to Landsberg's development of historical knowledge as an embodied experience, I want to stress that this is also a performative action that produces gendered effects.

The importance of embodiment in Bouraoui's works has already been noted by Ching Sela (2005) in her article on the embodied legacy of the war, Helen Vassallo in her comparative study of Bouraoui and Leïla Sebbar in *The Body Besieged: The Embodiment of Historical Memory* (2012) and Amaleena Damlé's *The Becoming of the Body* (2014). Vassallo's thesis focuses on 'embodied memory' in order to understand how the body, corporeal and textual, is marked by the legacy of French-Algerian histories. Vassallo argues that the 'historical legacies of war, violence, separation and silencing are incarnated in both authors, and grappled with in the space of the text' (9). Vassallo

suggests that the works of Bouraoui and Sebbar present a visceral, rather than intellectual, engagement with the past. She suggests that it is the narrators' 'French and Algerian blood' that develops a 'visceral' understanding of their histories (2013:143). For Damlé, the notion of 'the becoming of the body' in Bouraoui's writing stresses 'a sense of formlessness with writing' which can then 'reach beyond the very notion of boundary' (2014: 157). In other words, the boundaries of bodies and nations are interrogated in Bouraoui's writings. Using Deleuze's philosophy of the nomad, Damlé posits that the space of writing is a 'place of deterritorialisation' within which 'Bourouian corporeality' is suspended (158). In terms of memory, this deterritorialised embodiment in the text promotes a constantly shifting form of memory, and a rhizomatic folding of past and present (166). Like Vassallo, Damlé highlights the importance of corporeal experience as a way to understand the relationship between text and body in Bouraoui's writing. However, it remains to be seen what agency the remembering subject has vis-à-vis their embodied memory? How do the narrators come to embody this knowledge of the past? In order to avoid the essentialist conflation of Bouraoui's 'French and Algerian blood' (Vassallo 2013:143) with an inherent bodily understanding of the legacies of her French and Algerian histories, it will be important to consider how the narrators acquire knowledge through affective engagements rather than self-conscious historical actions. In other words, are affective and performative engagements with history active or passive forms of re-enactment?

We can begin to answer these questions by returning to Nina's 'quatre problèmes'. In Nina's 'quatre problèmes', French and Algerian history converges with the performative practices that verify her gendered subjectivity. Nina brings these categories into confrontation and, by leaving them unanswered, opens their response to what Rosello calls a performative encounter. As we have seen, Rosello initially envisages the

performative encounter in terms of a meeting or ‘*encontre*’ (Rosello 2005) between different subject positions on either side of the Mediterranean:

[T]he performative encounter is characterized by the fact that the subjects who come into existence at the same time as the encounter have already reconfigured those identification markers that we perceive as predating the exchange and that we impose upon them. Performative encounters invent new protocols of cohabitation and coexistence rather than new identities. (2005: 6).

Although Nina’s ‘*quatre problèmes*’ (Bouraoui 2000: 163) do not produce a physical encounter with different subject positions, she affectively puts into question the ‘identification markers’ that she perceives to predicate her existence. Following a Foucauldian understanding of forms of knowledge as irrevocably linked to power as *le pouvoir-savoir* (2015: 288-9), these encounters not only repeat but also offer opportunities to challenge and transform former understandings of the past. By leaving the four questions unanswered (‘*Française ? Algérienne ? Fille ? Garçon ?*’) and suspended in the interrogative mode, there is also room for reimagining these categories anew as ‘new protocols of cohabitation and coexistence’ (Rosello 2005: 6).

In other words, Nina’s ‘*quatre problèmes*’ simultaneously announce her containment and subjectivation by these categories, but also the possibility of subverting the protocol. We can consider the room for resistance and agency in terms of a response to the Althusserian interpellation of the subject. In restaging her hailing as either French or Algerian, either girl or boy, Bouraoui also demonstrates the performativity of such interpellations. Butler engages with Althusserian interpellation in her study *Excitable Speech* in which she suggests that, while hailing makes the subject, the subject can resist the subjectivation in an act of ‘discursive agency’ (1997a: 127). Discursive agency is enacted when a subject can act with intent *within* a discourse by performatively engaging

with the terms of their hailing, and transform the ‘terms through radical acts of public misappropriation’. As a result, the meanings and interpretation of the terms become ‘tenuous and even broken over time’ (1997a: 100). I suggest that in leaving these terms in the interrogative mode, Bouraoui enacts this kind of ‘discursive agency’ in which there is the potential for the narrator to ‘misappropriate’ the terms of hailing. The interrogative mode reveals the failure of these terms to fully account for her subjectivity. As Butler says in *Bodies That Matter*, it is the ‘constitutive failure of the performative, this slippage between discursive command and its appropriate effect, which provides the linguistic occasion and index for a consequential disobedience’ (1993: 122).

Another example of overlapping gender performativity and affective engagement in *Garçon manqué* concerns the notion of carrying the legacy of the Algerian war within and on Nina’s body. As a child of mixed heritage, Nina must navigate between her French and Algerian families, and their affiliated and frequently antagonistic allegiances. Nina’s body, as the child of a French woman and Algerian man, functions as a constant reminder of the political rupture of decolonisation:

Longtemps je crois porter une faute. Je viens de la guerre. Je viens d’un mariage contesté. Je porte la souffrance de ma famille algérienne. Je porte le refus de ma famille française. Je porte ces transmissions-là. La violence ne me quitte plus.
(Bouraoui: 2000: 32)

Throughout the text, the child refers to the war as a burden that she carries with the insistent repetition of phrases beginning ‘Je porte [...]’. As Vassallo (2012, 2013), Damlé (2014) and Ching Selao (2005) have all noted, the child-narrator experiences the legacy of the Algerian war as an *embodied* ‘faute’, or even an illness (Vassallo 2007). Her body does not sit well with the antagonisms of her French and Algerian families, and designates an uncomfortable interaction between ‘[t]he “outside”, of the public story and historical

context' and 'the "inside", the private experience and the personal story' (Vassallo 2013: 143). Both the family's memory of the war and the public history of the Algerian War are *felt* corporeally by the child. Selao argues that the child's embodied legacy of Algerian and French conflict is, in itself, an act of physical and corporeal testimony (2005: 77). If her body represents the paradoxical unification (her parents' marriage) and rupture (following decolonisation), this paradox, for Selao, is also characteristic of testimony itself being, first, an expression of the past and, second, an expression of the impossibility to ever fully bear witness to, and account for, the past. We can add to these commentaries on the body in *Garçon manqué* that the repetition of the verb 'porter', draws our attention to the affective and performative nature of this embodied memory, rather than suggesting that the memory is an inherent result of her *métissage*. This does not mean that her memory is artificial. Indeed, the memory inflicts pain and wounds on the child-narrator as these critics have shown. However, I suggest that, although burdened by 'ces transmissions-là', *Garçon manqué* is also a story about how these transmissions can be radically and productively transformed by the one who carries them.

One way in which the painful memory of the Algerian war is transformed in *Garçon manqué* is through the 'gender trouble' of the memory-burdened narrator, Nina. As a young adolescent girl, she embodies and enacts the performative traits of masculinity:

Mon nouveau rôle. Je coupe mes cheveux. Je jette mes robes. Je cours vite. Je tombe souvent. Je me relève toujours. Ne pas être algérienne. Ne pas être française. (Bouraoui 2000: 33)

Commentators of gender in *Garçon manqué* frequently present the child's tomboyish performance primarily as a response to the conditions of Nina's situation as a French-Algerian girl in 1970s patriarchal Algeria (Agar-Mendousse 2006: 212). Nancy M.

Arenberg claims that the ‘gender-bending’ of the child’s masculine identity is due to her *métissage*, producing what she describes as ‘an alternative zone’ or ‘third space’ within which to explore masculinity as well as femininity (2015: 1). In contrast to the idea of an alternative space, and closer to my own position in this chapter, Fiona Barclay summarises the novel by concluding that Nina falls ‘in the interstices of a matrix of overlapping variables’ and thus helps us to challenge the ‘constricting drives’ of binary thought in identity formation (2006: 152). Katherine N. Harrington suggests that Nina ‘may never feel or be seen as a “whole”’ (2013: 95), and thus the failure of the novel’s title (‘manqué’) refers in particular to the child’s gender performativity as incomplete and melancholic.⁷⁶ This view is echoed by Arenberg, who suggests that the narrator in *Garçon manqué* sheds her femininity in favour of the protective guise of masculinity (2015: 2). Kristen Husung reads the child’s performative masculinity as a way to avoid victimisation as a woman by refusing ‘d’accepter l’équation selon laquelle le corps féminin serait égal au genre féminin’ (2014: 204). These readings convey two assumptions regarding Bouraoui’s texts on gender performativity; first, that the narrators’ refusal of the gender binary is an elected performance or choice; second, that this theatre is an act of survival in order to break free from the oppressive present of 1970s Algeria and the demands on her identity due to her sexed and *métis* body.

I want to suggest that these readings, although helpful, risk conflating *performance* (as a deliberate act) with *performativity* (as citational utterances through language and embodiment) and tend to overlook the role of the *past* in the formation of

⁷⁶ Other studies have noticed the troubled role of femininity in Bouraoui’s *La voyageuse interdite*. Harrington suggests that the erasure of femininity in this novel attests to a survival technique for the female characters in the ostensibly hostile patriarchal society of Algeria (2013: 88). In contrast, Susan Mooley suggests that Bouraoui explores feminine sexuality in *La voyageuse interdite* to investigate an erotic aesthetic which, while not escaping ‘la loi paternelle’, interrogates ‘nos alliances avec la loi et les maîtres’ (2013: 214).

gender performativity.⁷⁷ Vassallo's work deftly demonstrates how, regarding *Garçon manqué*, the embodiment of French-Algerian conflict in Bouraoui's writing is at 'the root of the first of her crises of identity, engendering a state of alienation from herself', a state that she has internalised and from which she cannot escape (2012: 26). However, this approach relies heavily on the child's innate knowledge of her *métissage* as being the source of her non-binary gender construction. We must also take account of how Nina's knowledge of her French-Algerian background and fluctuating gendering is a dual process of 'affective engagement' with the colonial past. If *Garçon manqué* is a novel about the child's coming to know herself as a historically situated subject, this knowledge is acquired affectively which *also* entails the performative reiteration of masculinity.

'Affective engagement' suggests an encounter with the past which is partly deliberate and partly subject to conditions. For Collingwood, historical knowledge can only be produced under certain conditions. In contrast to Butler's argument that gender performativity relates to the banal, daily production of gender, Collingwood insists that the re-enactment of the past must be an intentional and self-conscious *act* of historical thought:

The fact that someone performs an act of thought which another has performed before him does not make him an historian. It cannot, in such a case, be said that he is an historian without knowing it: unless he knows he is thinking historically, he is not thinking historically (1993: 289).

⁷⁷ For more on the difference between performance and performativity, see Butler's preface to *Bodies That Matter* (1993) in which she addresses some of the readings of *Gender Trouble* (1990) which misread performativity as *performance*, such as the following:

[...] if I were to argue that genders are performative, that could mean that I thought that one woke in the morning, perused the closet or some more open space for the gender of choice, donned that gender for the day, and then restored the garment to its place at night. Such a wilful and instrumental subject, one who decides *on* its gender, is clearly not its gender from the start and fails to realize that its existence is already decided *by* gender. (1993: x)

Simply put, if one is not explicitly thinking historically *as a historian*, this re-enactment of the past cannot be historical. However, as Landsberg argues in her reading of history as re-enactment, an experiential form of encounter with the past can convey historical knowledge *without* this self-reflexive knowledge of the self as a historian. In her study of historical fiction films, TV historical dramas, reality history TV and virtual history exhibits, she suggests that these modes of popular media accentuate the ‘affective engagements’ (2015: 10) that produce historical knowledge through the body. ‘Affective engagements’, she suggests, are moments where these visual media immerse the spectator in order to trigger a sensorial and corporeal response, so that ‘one’s body is touched, moved, provoked’ (3). In these cases, historical knowledge does not result from an intentional ‘act’ of thinking historically but is rather an outcome of mediated and affective engagements with the past. Landsberg agrees that an awareness of historical knowledge is important but, in stressing the *embodied* characteristic of this knowledge, she demonstrates how historical knowledge can be *transferred* via popular cultural artefacts, beyond the self-reflexive subjectivity of the historian.

In *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage*, child-narrators do not acquire historical knowledge as a self-conscious historical act. Knowledge is produced affectively through their engagements with their surroundings, the artefacts that they discover, and through a growing understanding of their own performative gendering. For example, in *Garçon manqué*, when Nina learns of her late uncle, Amar, and his death fighting in the Algerian War of Independence, the memory of the war and his death are transferred in an affective and bodily way. After disappearing from the *maquis* during the Algeria revolution, Amar’s body was never found. The lack of closure through burial continues to haunt Nina’s father, and this sense of loss is, in turn, imparted to Nina. The shadow of her uncle’s martyrdom for the revolution lingers over their family life and transports Nina

into the heart of a war of which she has no living memory: ‘Je suis dans la guerre d’Algérie. Je porte le conflit. Je porte la disparition de l’aîné de la famille, sa référence’ (2000 : 31). Again, we can note the repetitive use of the verb ‘porter’ that Selao (2005) identifies as Nina’s physically *bearing* witness. This idea of *bearing* the past in one’s body becomes particularly evident when Nina reflects on her uncle’s portrait in a photograph. Never having known her uncle, who died before she was born, she has no living memory through which to memorialise him or, by extension, the War of Independence. Instead, the child invents and performs his memory on his behalf, via the spectral medium of his portrait:

Longtemps je garde la photographie d’Amar. J’invente son histoire. Longtemps je force la réalité. Je deviens Amar. Je joue à être un homme. Je suis captivée [...] Je deviens violente. Avec moi. Avec les autres. Je cherche mon identité. (32)

The photograph mediates a form of postmemory that seizes Nina and compels her to act out her uncle’s subjectivity as a form of empathetic performativity.

Marianne Hirsch specifies that postmemory is a form of connection to a past experienced by those who were never there to live it in the present. Postmemorial subjects remember these experiences because they ‘were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right’ (2012: 5). Affect is an important factor in the transmission of memories to the ‘post’ generation of Algerians who were born after Independence. In *Garçon manqué*, Nina studies her uncle’s portrait and from it draws out her own image-text (Hirsch 1997: 10). In other words, she reads her own narrative into the image of her uncle, one in which she becomes the subject of the portrait. Within the image of the young man, the Barthesian punctum, the point of recognition and of shock, is herself. This affective engagement with the photograph compels her to play at being a man: ‘Je deviens Amar. Je joue à être un homme’.

However, during her performative reimagining of his masculinity, she is ‘captivée’, and nonetheless genders herself as feminine. Grief, memory, and affective commemoration are demonstrated here to be inherently gendered actions, a messy performative ritual in which the binaries of normative gender identification can become blurred.

We can also understand the embodiment of her uncle’s memory in terms of Landsberg’s ‘prosthetic memory’. The photograph mediates the memory of Amar as a prosthesis. Nina ‘wear[s] the body’ of another so that his memory is mediated as her own (2004: 61). In Nina’s encounter with the photograph, the imaginative effort of inventing his story is a bodily effort, as we can see from ‘Je force la réalité’, ‘Je suis captivée’, referring both to an imaginative and a physical effort of forcing and being held. This emphasis on Nina’s embodiment through *wearing* highlights the performative nature of Nina’s engagement with the memory of the late uncle. Rather than simply passively receiving the postmemory of her uncle’s tragic disappearance, she actively performs the memory of her uncle by mediating his memory through his photograph as a prosthesis to her own subjectivity.

In addition, while the negotiation of Nina’s feminine and masculine identities could be read as evidence of the novel’s preoccupation with individual identity formation, we can add that this is also an integral element of coming to terms with herself as a historically-situated subject in relation to the legacy of the Algerian War of Independence. In the same episode, Nina’s prosthetic memory is conditioned by violence:

La violence précède ma naissance. Elle reviendra, ici, en Algérie, entre ses habitants. Je deviens violente. Avec moi. Avec les autres. Je cherche mon identité. Mon regard est triste parfois. Je prends les yeux de mon père qui cherche le souvenir d’Amar. [...] C’est une guerre contre le monde. (Bouraoui 2000: 32-3).

On the one hand, in remembering her uncle, Nina plays with the extreme violence of the period, made present as she becomes increasingly violent with herself and others. On the other hand, she ‘takes’ prosthetically the eyes of her father, in a performance of the martyred masculinity of her father’s sadness as he seeks out memories of Amar, *shaheed* of the Revolution.

Published ten years after *Garçon manqué*, *Sauvage* returns to many of the themes found in its predecessor including the role of performative masculinity in the transfer of family and collective memory. 14 year-old Alya shares Nina’s double affiliation with France and Algeria and her family is also haunted by the memory of a martyred uncle. One dramatic difference in these two novels is the narrative framework of *Sauvage* which takes the form of a written testimonial, performed by Alya for her best friend, Sami. Sami has suddenly and inexplicably disappeared – no one can explain where he has gone and the authorities have found no answers to this mystery. This is a narrative defined by rupture, from Sami and from her childhood. In attempting to reconstitute Sami’s memory, Alya retraces her memories over his story creating a dialogic palimpsest of their childhood memories. Max Silverman (2013) argues that palimpsestic memories simultaneously contain overlapping traces of the present and the past. This involves an aesthetic process of layering, superimposition, and doubling, which are frequent motifs throughout the novel. For example, Alya describes her time with Sami as ‘une deuxième vie’ (74) and she becomes fascinated by the concept of parallel supernatural realms inhabited by ‘les esprits qui verraient dans un autre temps que le nôtre’ (2011: 24). She considers the metaphysics of ‘la superposition des deux mondes’ and is attracted to the idea of being ‘écrasée par un monde invisible’ (25). This image of two separate, but interconnected, worlds illustrates how she sees the present time of her family life and friendship with Sami as being irrevocably linked to the violence of the past.

As in *Garçon manqué*, photographs are an important medium for the production of this palimpsestic memory. Looking at a photograph of her own martyred uncle, Alya layers her memory of Sami's face over this sacred family artefact as a way to mediate and understand her loss:

Dans son sourire j'essaie de comprendre l'histoire de ma famille, l'histoire de ce pays. Ce n'est pas l'histoire de Sami, mais il y a toujours un lien entre eux. (2011: 91)

The history of the uncle, representing the violence of decolonisation and nationalism, is strangely anchored within Sami's disappearance – they are different and yet connected. Alya recognises that the violence of the War of Independence continues to haunt her and casts a shadow on instances of contemporary violence, and she grieves for Sami as she would grieve for an uncle who, according to the national discourse, has sacrificed himself for an independent Algeria. In this sense, Nina's memory of her uncle turns the photograph into a palimpsestic artefact that allows her to politicise the present-day tragedy of the unexplained disappearance of a little boy, at the same time as she evokes the past of her family's loss. The present-day trauma of her loss provides the affective framework through which she can engage with the memory of her uncle and the War of Independence.

In *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage*, the child-narrators' embodied engagements with the past inflect their gendered subjectivities. Importantly, performative masculinity here is an affective response to the *memories of the past* as well as the perceived threat of patriarchy *in the present*. The next section develops *how* transgenerational and transnational memory is acquired by the child-narrators. The Bouraouian narrators affectively engage with Algerian and French landscapes as a response to gender as a historically transmitted construct.

5.3 Affective Environments: Beaches and Earthquakes

This section will examine how Bouraoui's depiction of environments also stimulates the affective acquisition of historical knowledge. As we will see, these engagements with ruptured (in the case of the earthquake) and liminal landscapes (the beach) are connected with questions of historical and cultural rupture in the wake of the Algerian War of Independence and decolonisation.

Describing the antagonistic histories of France and Algeria as they are portrayed in *Garçon manqué*, Fiona Barclay argues that Bouraoui's novel portrays the 'violence of living on the fault line between these molar forces which collide with the force of tectonic plates' (2006: 146). Barclay borrows this geological metaphor from Bouraoui's 1999 novel, *Le Jour du séisme*, in which the metaphorical value of living on the fault line between France and Algeria is allegorised in Bouraoui's account of the El Asnam earthquake. *Garçon manqué* (2000) and *Sauvage* (2009) reflect on Bouraoui's childhood and early adolescence in the late 1970s and early 80s, coinciding with the transitional years of an independent Algeria and metropolitan France coming to terms with a new postcolonial reality. However, *Le Jour du séisme* focuses on the ramifications of just one day, 10 October 1980, for the narrator's individual, national, gendered, and historical identity. In *Le Jour du séisme*, the earthquake is not only a geological catastrophe but a transformational event that triggers a temporal rupture that applies to both the time of colonisation (concerning a collective memory of French imperialism and anti-colonial resistance) and the time of childhood (concerning the memory of the protagonist's life in-between Algerian and French homes and histories). I suggest that the (after)shock of the earthquake is the stimulation for an affective engagement with the past that the narrative explores.

In her study of the 1954 Orléansville earthquake, which occurred only a few months before the armed struggle for independence began, Yaël Simpson Fletcher (2006) demonstrates how this catastrophe was exacerbated by the discriminatory treatment of rural Algerians by the French colonial administration.⁷⁸ It is unsurprising, therefore, that the destructive force of the earthquake has profound symbolic potential for writers who engage with the memories of French colonialism in Algeria, and Bouraoui is not the first novelist to exploit this. In Azouz Begag's *Zenzela* (1997), the earthquake is represented as a feminine ogress who ravages the landscape in keeping with the Algerian feminisation of the Arabic masculine noun for earthquake: from 'Zilzal' to 'Zenzela'. In *Zenzela*, the narrative fluctuates between Sétif, Algiers, Lyon, and Vaulx-en-velin. In the recounting of the earthquake's destruction, Begag privileges a transnational perspective and demonstrates 'the performative dismantling of sedimented national and international barriers' (O'Riley 2003: 305). In other words, Begag's earthquake symbolises a movement beyond mono-national categories of identity. Maïssa Bey's *Surtout ne te retourne pas* (2005) explores the significance of earthquakes in terms of gender. In the period following the earthquake, the protagonist reconstructs her gendered identity through an empathetic relationship with the memory of the earthquake's victims. Laura Roth compares Bey's novel with Bouraoui's *Le Jour du séisme*, and understands their focus on the earthquake as an investigation of the psychological trauma of women, which ultimately reveals that there is never a single 'epicentre' to a catastrophic trauma (another geological reference). It is this decentring of traumatic causation which provides 'a complex source of strength and possibility' for the characters (Roth 2016: 36). However, if Begag and Bey depict the physical destruction of the quake and its human and geological consequences, in contrast, Bouraoui's engagement with the earthquake does

⁷⁸ Orléansville was the colonial name for El Asnam.

not follow the specific plot of the 1980 earthquake and its effects on the lives of an assembly of characters. Instead, the earthquake is remembered and recalled in terms of the narrator's personal interrogation of identity and the experience of time.

Although *Le Jour du séisme* opens with these lines on the specific moment of the 1980 El Asnam earthquake, this is the only description of the earthquake in the book as a specific historical event:

Ma terre tremble le 10 octobre 1980. Sa démission est de soixante secondes. Son onde longe en cercles croissants et détruit cent kilomètres de rayon, une distance de feu et de tranchées. L'épicentre des ruptures loge sous ma ville, Alger.
(Bouraoui 1999: 9)

Instead of dramatised detail, the reader is exposed to the earthquake's violence at the level of the narrative's style and form. The visceral violence of the earthquake is immediately conveyed in Bouraoui's writing via the truncated sentence structures used throughout the narrative:

Ma terre se transforme. Elle est en éclats. Elle s'ouvre et se referme sur les corps.
Elle prend, l'équilibre. Elle trahit. Sa violence achève les beaux jours. (1999: 9)

The anonymous narrator privileges the repetitive and anaphoric technique of using short sentences beginning with the pronoun 'elle'. On the one hand, the fractured sentences echo the physical rupture in order to evoke a sense of shock and anger at the earth's sudden destruction ('Elle trahit). As Adrienne Angelo puts it, this fragmented style and 'langage tronqué' (2011: 76) links Bouraoui's writing to 'l'énergie séismique' and 'le travail-mémoire à une énergie tectonique' (77). The repetitive use of the third person subject and the caesuric effect of placing the comma between verb and object occurs with more intensity as the narrative continues, reinforcing a conflation between the narrator's

experience and the destruction of the land; as the land fragments, so does she. On the other hand, the repetition of 'elle' personifies 'terre' as the agent of violence here. It is the land which rises up violently to betray those living on its surface. But the narrator nonetheless is the curator of this violence in the narrative, insisting on her possession of the land, 'ma terre'. Bouraoui's fractured narration results in the detachment of the violence of the earthquake from the specificity of the El Asnam disaster. Instead, the narrative focus is on the retrospective act of working through the violence done by the land, to the land, through memory.

As the constant repetition of 'elle' starts to detach the pronoun from 'Ma terre', the earthquake's destruction of land begins to conflate with the subject position of the narrator herself. Consequently, the violence done by 'ma terre' is folded into the violence done to the body. At times this is an explicit affirmation ('La terre est un vrai corps' (47)), and at other times, the narrator suggests that the land ravaged by disaster is her own body:

Ma terre tremble en réalité. Sa violence est permanente. Elle crépite, dévaste et pénètre ma chair. Elle atteint. Elle existe. Elle est vivante et dressée contre l'humain. Elle monte et s'éventre. Elle prend, et se referme. [...] Elle blesse. Elle est armée. Je sais son tracé, une topographie. Elle va de la mer aux montagnes, de la ville à Mitidja, des plaines à l'Assekrem, la limite précise du désert. (12)

Once again, the repetition of 'elle' dislocates the agent of this violence from the land itself and reimagines it as 'vivante' and 'dressée contre l'humain'. The violence done to the earth is experienced and lived through 'ma chair' with the visceral and violent language of 'crépite, dévaste et pénètre'. The land-body also traces the topography of the Algerian landscape defined by the limits of its borders of Mitidja in the north and Assekrem in the south. Here, the first-person intervenes in the midst of the repetition of 'elle' to stake a claim to this landscape; 'Je sais son tracé, une topographie'. Therefore, recalling the

destruction of the earthquake is also a means to affirm the narrator's connection to and knowledge of the Algerian landscape. This is, however, a bodily knowledge in which the violence of the earthquake is remembered as a corporeal wounding, in which the violence of the earthquake 'blesse. Elle est armée'. Throughout this narrative, knowledge is conditioned by bodily experience which itself cannot be detached from memory.

Knowledge of the narrator's Algerian origin is not produced by a work of historical study, but through a bodily engagement with the land itself. However, this corporeal engagement with Algerian land is only made possible by the earthquake's violent destruction. The tensions between body and violence, destruction and recollection allegorises the process of memory:

Ma terre n'existe que par ma mémoire. Le séisme est une disparition. Il détruit. Il défait. Il ensevelit. Il façonne par la violence. Il forme un autre lieu, renverse.
(Bouraoui 1999: 87)

The narrator finds herself in a liminal space of remembering *and* forgetting the trauma of the earthquake, one that can only be evoked by recalling the violence done by it to Algerian land. In order to remember Algeria, the narrator destroys the landscape in her memory. The earthquake is a means for the narrator to reconnect with her 'terre', but paradoxically it can only do so in the moment of its destruction. As the narrative continues, this destruction appears to be an ongoing, continuous force:

Je sais ma terre, initiale. Ma connaissance est sensuelle. Je sais sa première forme, ses tracés, sa topographie. Je sais désormais son rythme, un éclat. Elle se lie à l'enfance. Elle devient éternelle. Le séisme rompt sans anéantir. Il endommage. Il nuit. Il sinistre. Il ajoute. Il couvre mon enfance sans la prendre vraiment. Il fige sous les pierres. (87)

The narrator insists that this knowledge of her land, and her childhood by extension, is made possible through a ‘*connaissance ... sensuelle*’, and thus reinforces this bodily encounter with the earthquake’s violence. This recalls Landsberg’s notion of an affective engagement with the past which is triggered in corporeal ways; ‘in these moments one’s body is provoked or challenged into some kind of analysis’ (2015: 20-21). The stimulation is not necessarily unique to visual or spectral culture, which is the focus of Landsberg’s study, but conveyed through the repetitive, rhythmic and oscillating phrasing in *Le Jour du séisme*. As the narrative affirms, a sensual knowledge of the earth is also a knowledge of ‘*son rythme, son éclat*’. The repetitive and rhythmic staccato sentences of ‘*Il endommage. Il nuit. Il sinistre. Il ajoute*’ shape the memory of this destructive event from the past, conveyed through the rhythm of its aftershocks, the rhythm of memory. The rhythm triggers the bodily shock and engagement with memory. In this way, Bouraoui’s short, truncated sentences reinforce the ‘affective engagement’ by which the narrator comes to re-affirm her bodily connection to Algerian land as an act of memory.

The incessant anaphora which oscillates between ‘*elle*’ and ‘*il*’ evokes the episodic waves of the earthquake and its aftershocks. This oscillation also establishes a gendered opposition between the way in which the earthquake (*il*) is represented as a destructive phenomenon, and the narrator’s affective and sensual knowledge of the land (*elle*). While ‘*elle devient éternelle [...] Il fige sous les pierres*’. Damlé has analysed Bouraoui’s repetitive use of gender pronouns in *Le Jour du séisme* as a way to emphasise ‘the presence of postcolonial tensions in her evocation of the quake, in its appropriation of the feminisation of Algeria’ (2014: 161-2). The gendering of Algerian territory as feminine is a common trope of both colonial and anti-colonial narratives from the late colonial period, either as a means to promote Algeria as a fertile yet virgin landscape for the colonisers, or as the victimised body of colonial rape. Bouraoui’s gendered re-

imagining of Algerian territory through the earthquake reappropriates, but also disturbs, these tropes. The repetition of 'elle' instead of 'Ma terre' links her own body to that of Algerian territory, but the constant oscillation between repetitive feminine and masculine pronouns also works to disturb such a connection to this explicit gendering of a symbolic, feminine Algeria. The narrator frequently alludes to different modes of gendered becoming in the wake of this symbolic earthquake: 'Je deviens une femme, hantée par la vie' (13), 'Je deviens un homme.' (34), 'Je renverse la terre. Je deviens sa fille et son ennemie' (36), 'Je deviens la mère de mon enfance' (54), 'Je deviens incomplète' (81), 'J'apprends à être une femme' (83), 'Je deviens, abandonnée' (93). In this way, the destructive force of the earthquake is equally a way to disturb imaginaries in which one is fixed spatially and temporally in terms of a gendered identity.

However, the narrator does not arbitrarily exchange gendered subjectivities throughout the narrative. The resistance to singular gendering implies an ambiguity which is linked to how the earthquake triggers bodily memory. In a similar sense to the embodiment of the memory of the Algerian War in *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage*, in *Le Jour du séisme* the narrator carries and wears the legacy of colonialism and decolonisation, and she makes this mnemonic connection by stating that 'Le séisme est une guerre' (1999: 46), in which the experience of this quake adds to her understanding of the violence of war: 'Je gagne une mémoire, neuve' (Ibid). However, whereas Nina in *Garçon manqué* identifies this as an embodied and inescapable violence, in *Le Jour du séisme* the earthquake, as transformative experience, situates the narrator as a witness to history:

Le séisme devient un acte. Il m'oblige au passé. Il me condamne à l'enfance. Je reste, ici, à la Résidence, intacte. Je reste la fille qui tombe. Je porte ma famille. Je transmets les voix. Je rapporte les images. (1999: 80)

Here, the mnemonic aftershocks of the earthquake mark the narrator as an embodiment of this historical rupture ('Il me condamne' 'Je reste') and therefore elects her as the ideal witness whose belated testimony allows her to transfer voices and pass on images from the past ('Je porte' 'Je transmets' 'Je rapporte'). The repetition of 'devenir' and 'apprendre' in these extracts highlights gender and memory as processes over time. The earthquake, in triggering a ruptured temporality, disturbs the historically situated systems of knowledge necessary for the processes of gendering and memory.

The allegory of the earthquake in *Le Jour du séisme* provokes a sensual interaction between body and landscape, present and past, as a means to remember and acquire historical knowledge in gendered ways. The destruction of the earthquake troubles linear temporality and the narrator is in a liminal place between body and land, destruction and memory, 'elle' and 'il'. This liminality is also important in the novel *Garçon manqué* in which the beach is privileged as an affective environment. Similarly to Mokeddem's works discussed in chapter 4, in *Garçon manqué* the Mediterranean is also associated with the feminine and the maternal: '*Mare. Mare Nostrum. Notre mer. Ma mère, en Méditerranée*' (2000: 105). In Arabic *el bahr* (the sea) is a masculine noun, which Nina associates with magic: '*Je retiens un seul mot, el bahr, el bahr, el bahr, une magie répétée*' (2000: 8). However, as a border between the sea and the land, between French and Algerian Mediterraneans, the beach is also a stage for the enactment of ambiguous gendered embodiments and national allegiances. In *Garçon manqué*, the Mediterranean coast of northern Algeria is presented as a site of childhood liberation and inhibition. Nina explores the beaches of Chenoua with her best-friend Amine. Running on the beaches with Amine, Nina becomes aware of their differentially gendered bodies and longs for the traits of masculinity:

Son corps est mon envie. Je veux ses muscles longs. Je veux son visage déjà adulte. Je veux ses mains noueuses. Je veux ses épaules. Je veux ses cheveux noirs et bouclés. (2000: 27-8).

On the beach, Nina becomes aware of desire for her friend's body which is appropriative, rather than sexualised. The environment of the beach, a space of semi-nudity and physical activity, allow her the space to indulge her pre-pubescent female body in a performance of masculinity to echo that of her friend: 'J'ajuste mon maillot, une éponge bleue. Je marche les jambes ouvertes. Je suis fascinée' (2000: 15). However, she nonetheless continues to gender herself grammatically as feminine 'fascinée' despite performatively stylising her corporeality in terms of masculinity. In this way, the liminality of the environment of the beach is reflected in the fact that neither feminine nor masculine subjectivities are fully claimed by the child.

In Albert Camus's short story 'Noces à Tipasa' (written in 1938, published in 1959), the narrator is overwhelmed by the landscape of the Algerian coast, stating that it was 'le grand libertinage de la nature et de la mer qui m'accapare tout entier' (1959: 13). Likewise, Bouraoui privileges the northern coastline of Algeria as an important landscape in the national imaginary in terms of its wilderness. Claudia Esposito argues that 'both [authors] express a rapport with nature and with the cosmos as well as a form of social rebellion' (2014: 71) but adds that there is a great difference in their approach to representing gender in these spaces (women are entirely absent from Camus's beaches). Bouraoui represents the beach as one of the sensual environments where Nina's body encounters the Algerian landscape far from life in the city, a place of semi-nudity and exposure to the elements:

Ma vie algérienne bat hors de la ville. Elle est à la mer, au désert, sous les montagnes de l'Atlas. Là, je m'efface enfin, Je deviens un corps sans type, sans

langue, sans nationalité. Cette vie est sauvage. Elle est sans voix et sans visage.
Je suis agitée. Je dors mal. Je mange peu. Amine double ma folie. Nous courrons
ensemble, toujours plus vite. Nous fuyons.

Nous nous dévorons. (Bouraoui 2000: 9)

The wilderness is in opposition to the constraints of the city and is where her Algerian life really takes place. The wilderness encourages her ‘vie ... sauvage’ that Bouraoui presents as a liberating effacement of boundaries. Gendered specificity is renounced for ‘un corps sans type, sans langue, sans nationalité’. The sensual encounter, however, does not simply indulge an exoticised vision of the Algerian wilderness in which the bodies of women are absent, as in Camus’s presentation of the Algerian coast. Rather, Bouraoui’s beaches are the site of an experiential mode of knowledge – where the child’s gender performativity is divorced from her mixed nationality and understood experientially through the body. This allows Nina to open up to the gendered Other, especially Amine: ‘Amine et moi. Moi et Amine. Attirés l’un par l’autre. Assis côte à côte. Serrés dans l’eau, à jamais. Des enfants difficiles, disent-elles’ (2000: 30). It is the environment of the beach which allows Nina to form a symbiotic connection to her male friend Amine, whose masculine performativity she mimics and consumes (‘nous nous dévorons’ (2000: 9)).

However, the beach is also a historically-situated environment in which these sensorial encounters also produce memories of *other* beaches. The Algerian beach recalls the other beaches of Nina’s childhood, namely the colder northern coast of the English Channel while visiting her maternal grandparents in Brittany during the summer months. Here, the beaches are different and Nina frequently highlights the beach as a historically and culturally shifting signifier, from Algeria to France:

C'est une plage de France. C'est une plage de Français. Libre d'accès. Même aux Arabes. Pas comme ces plages de la colonisation. Comme ces bars. Comme ces restaurants. Français uniquement. Interdits aux chiens et aux Arabes. (2000: 153)

Although the beaches in France are 'libre d'accès', her isolation as one of the few non-White bodies on the beach of Saint-Malo singles her out and reminds her of the racial segregation of colonial Algeria, evidenced by the curious but aggressive interrogations she receives 'Tu viens d'où pour être si bronzée?' (158). On the French beach, her body is marked out, an affective knowledge of her racialised difference which is produced by her environment and reinforces her postmemory of colonial Algeria. A few decades earlier she would have been denied access to the 'French' beaches of colonial Algeria. As she recalls the burning sun of Algeria on the colder coast of the English Channel, the shifting signification of the racial politics of leisure-time in colonial Algeria come into stark relief with the performative roles of the French beach as a place for French families:

Ici, les familles françaises se retrouvent tous les étés. La plage devient un lieu de rendez-vous. Retrouver les visages de la dernière saison. Chercher. En avoir le cœur serré. Parmi tous ces corps. Toute cette nudité. Courir vers ses amis. S'embrasser. La plage est un lieu témoin. À l'inverse de Moretti, de Sidi-Ferruch, de Tipaza. À l'inverse de ces lignes brutales, de ces falaises, de ces récifs. À l'inverse de ces lieux souvent désertiques. La plage algérienne est brutale. Magnifique et brutale. C'est la nature immédiate. C'est son odeur. C'est sa force. C'est se laisser submergé par ça. Par cette sensation. Elle est sans repères. Sans connaissances. Sans familles. Personne ne s'y retrouve. Chacun se fuit. Le corps est seul. Avec la mer. Avec le soleil. Avec les falaises. Sans attaches. C'est difficile, après, de s'intégrer, de reconnaître, de saluer. Et d'entrer dans la famille française. (172-3)

The narrator emphasises the ritualistic regularity of the annual passage of French families to the beach in comparison to her memory of a timeless wilderness of the Algerian beaches of her childhood. The French beach is a place to meet, ‘retrouver les visages de la dernière saison’, but also to watch and witness the spectacle of the bathing ritual, rendering the beach into ‘un lieu témoin’. In other words, going to the beach every summer is a way of making one’s mark in French (bourgeois) society, of acknowledging the past by re-establishing old acquaintances, while bearing witness for future posterity. It is a place of encounter, in contrast to the solitude of the Algerian beach and wilderness. According to Ahmed, face-to-face encounters are always mediated by the general context that frames the encounter. This means that during encounters in the present, subjects are also historically situated and carry ‘traces’ of power relationships from the past (Ahmed 2000: 8). Similarly, in *Garçon manqué*, the seasonal encounters on the beach, associated with the social rituals of public bathing in France, are a way of recognising and categorising the Other, and the traces of these past power relationships. This is why, for the Arab-French-Algerian child on the French beach, her presence triggers the memory of segregated beaches of colonial Algeria. The bodily encounter on the beach marks out her difference as she experiences these past traces within her.

The interaction between the body and landscape is shown to be a formative component of Bouraoui’s production of historical knowledge and gender performativity in her novels *Le Jour du séisme* and *Garçon manqué*. However, in exploring the rupture landscape of the earthquake and privileging the liminal space of the beach, Bouraoui shows that the bodily encounters with the landscape are never straightforward. As the narrators engage with the past through these landscapes they equally produce knowledge about their own gendered bodies through an oscillating performativity somewhere between normative femininity and masculinity. In the next section, I will interrogate

further how forms of affective engagement are transferred within the family, and how Bouraoui's presentation of memory in her two novels *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage* engage with transnational ethical dilemmas of connective memory.

5.4 Transferring 'Connective' Memory

In *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage* the family is a major arena for the transmission of memory, both collective and personal. The family memory that Nina and Alya acquire throughout these narratives corresponds with postmemory, since they refer to the memories of their parents and grandparents which is then transferred to, and consequentially re-experienced by, the child-narrators. Hirsch argues that postmemory refers to the 'imaginative investment, projection and creation' (2012: 5) of memory and a structure of transmission based on 'inter- and transgenerational returns of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience' (2012: 5-6). In Hirsch's notion of postmemory, the belated and citational *structure* of memory is facilitated by inter- and transgenerational 'returns'. Postmemory is very significant for the narrators of *Garçon manqué* and *Sauvage*, who belong to the 'post-generation' born after Algerian Independence. Although they have no lived memory of colonial violence, a form of memory is transferred to them through the affective, corporeal, and emotive encounters with the past which continues to 'return'. However, this does not mean that the post-62 generation are entrapped in a melancholic cycle dominated by the memory of the Algerian Revolution. The production of postmemory in Bouraoui's texts points to the way that memory can be used to forge kinships and communities beyond the national, ethnic, religious, and gendered divides that have characterised French and Algerian memory narratives.

Natalya Vince has pointed out the difficulties of writing a history of Algeria post-1962 because of the commonly held tropes perpetuated within the country and abroad, such as the following: ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ were at war in Algeria in the 1960s and 1970s, that ‘women were sent back into the kitchen, contemporary political discourse is obsessed by the past, [and that] it was downhill all the way after 1962 ...’ (2015: 13). Vince shows that such narratives are politically coded and she deconstructs the way these narratives have consequently limited the scope of historiographical responses to the post-1962 period, especially for women. I want to suggest that Bouraoui’s narratives in the 1970s and early 1980s reveal how such narratives can be reproduced and transmitted generationally. Bouraoui’s autofictional works reflect the fact of growing up during the frenzied years of state-building in independent Algeria and what Aleida Assmann calls the trend of ‘remembering in order to forget’ in memory practices immediately following the end of conflict. Assmann argues that, in the immediate post-conflict era, the focus is on recovery and healing. As such, only certain narratives are ‘prescribed as a potent remedy against socially dangerous and explosive forms of remembering to foster a speedy integration’ (2010: 16). Remembering politically coded narratives also entails forgetting.

We can think of these narratives in Rosello’s terms as a kind of script of French and Algerian memory by which divisive national, racial, and gendered identities are identified and affirmed (2005, 2006). Although such scripts may assist the processes of state-building, as a consequence, the ‘desire to speak or be silent is trapped by pre-existing, prewritten dialogues and scenarios’ (Rosello 2005: 1). In *Sauvage*, there is a tension between the narrator’s understanding of pre-existing, prescribed scripts concerning Algerian and French history and her affective understanding of the past. For example, memory is transferred to Alya via the father’s entreaty to ‘never forget’ the sacrifices of the revolutionary war, echoing other familiar moral injunctions such as

‘Never again’ and ‘Never forget’ associated with Holocaust commemoration. Alya repeats the father’s entreaty but admits that despite this, she struggles to imagine her father’s Algeria:

C’est difficile d’imaginer l’Algérie d’une autre façon. Pour moi ce pays a toujours été tel que je le connais. Mon père dit qu’il ne faut jamais oublier. Que la guerre n’est pas si loin. Qu’il restera toujours une part de cette souffrance dans chacun des êtres et même à l’intérieur de moi. Parce qu’il a une lignée de la douleur. *Que tout se transmet comme un cadeau ou plutôt un mauvais cadeau mais que l’on est obligé d’accepter, par respect* (Bouraoui 2011 : 91-2, added emphasis)

Despite the father’s insistence, Alya admits that she cannot imagine her country differently, that it has only ever been as she has known it. Generational memory transmission appears to have failed in this instance.

The metaphor of ‘un mauvais cadeau’ illustrates the narrator’s childlike reluctance to go through the labour of ‘never forgetting’ the memory described by her father. The notion of a gift, or the forced gifting, of national memory in the wake of trauma demonstrates the sterility of such memory, and thus does not reflect the affective and deeply felt, ‘imaginative investment, projection and creation’ (Hirsch 2012: 5) of postmemory. Immediately following this extract, however, she is able to reconceptualise her father’s memory by layering it over with her own feelings of loss in the wake of Sami’s disappearance:

Souvent je pense que l’absence de Sami a un lien avec cela, avec l’histoire de ce pays. Puis je me dis que c’est à cause de mon oncle porté disparu au maquis. Et je me dis que la disparition c’est comme un trou dans la vie des autres. Un trou qui ne cesse de s’agrandir. Un trou dans lequel je tombe parfois (91-2).

More than a straightforward point of reference, Sami's disappearance is imagined dialogically with 'l'histoire de ce pays'. It is only by dialogically engaging with the disappearance of her friend Sami (who is increasingly transformed into the memory of a past friend as well as conflated with the uncle) that she can begin to articulate a postmemory of colonialism and war. Mediated via the memory of the lost uncle, the growing hole of memory engulfs her. Whereas the familial transmission of the national memory narrative fails to transfer the memory of Algerian suffering to Alya, her mediated, citational, and performative memory of Sami and her uncle does succeed in conveying this powerful loss. In this instance, the inter-generational script of memory, the injunction to 'Never Forget', masks the affective and emotive production of postmemory. Her own postmemory is a gesture towards the Other and, by acknowledging the 'trou dans la vie des autres', envisages kinship beyond the script of family and nationhood.

While the daughter muses on Sami's absence and what this means for the future, the father is preoccupied with the trauma of the war and continues to grapple with the loss of his brother. The father's loss is superimposed over the present day disappearance of Sami, implicating the violence of the present in the trauma of the past:

Ils parlaient du Pays. Et pour mon père, le Pays, c'était très important. Parce qu'il abritait le corps de son frère disparu. Et je me suis dit que pour moi aussi la terre d'Algérie deviendrait importante si Sami ne revenait pas. Le Pays c'était un jeune homme que l'on avait tous les deux perdus, mon père et moi. (2011: 153)

The past and present temporalities are forged in the image of 'Le Pays' as the body of a young man, uniting father and daughter in their sense of loss. The allegorical function of the young man's body is an interesting twist on the colonial and anti-colonial trope that imagines Algerian territory as a young woman's body and recalls the way in which the

narrator of *Le Jour du séisme* oscillates between different gendered perspectives on Algerian territory. The metaphor of the young man's body indicates the incomplete act of mourning which, rather than being completed, is transferred across generations from her father for Amar, to Alya for Sami. Therefore, Nina learns to mourn for Sami through the way her father mourns for his brother. Although Martine Fernandes reads the War of Independence in *Garçon manqué* as a metaphor for Bouraoui's coming to terms with 'son identité écrivaine « mixte » ou « hybride »' (2007 : 247), in *Sauvage* there is no single way to reconcile with the past.

The theme of transition (whether from the past to the present, from childhood to adulthood, or from different historical periods) is a prevalent one in all three of these texts set in the years 1979 and 1980. Alya, in *Sauvage*, is particularly concerned with this transition and worries about the future as much as she struggles to come to terms with these violent years preceding her birth. The novel's climax takes place on New Year's Eve 1979 during which Alya's family host a party to celebrate the beginning of a new decade. The transmission from one decade to the other is overshadowed by fear and foreboding, alluding to the 1980s, a decade marked by socio-economic crisis and a rise in violence: 'C'est la dernière nuit des années 70 [...] Ce sera comme une fin de tout, la fin du monde' (2011 : 126). For Alya, the future does not offer the cure to the wounds of the colonial past; she offers no such teleological progression. During this transmission from one period (before 1980) to another (post-1980), the past is not guaranteed a closure and nor is the present guaranteed a fresh start – one merges into the other.

This is also true for the transition from childhood to adulthood in Bouraoui's writings. Damlé (2013) has suggested that Bouraouian childhood can be understood in terms of 'wild becomings' as the title of *Sauvage* suggests. Damlé describes childhood in Bouraoui's writing as both joyful (as evidenced through Alya and Sami's adventures

together), but also imbued with pain and the challenges of ethical responsibility required in adult life (2013: 170). In addition to Damlé's comments, we can examine how this childhood pain stems from the fears of an apocalyptic future associated with adulthood. In a premonition of his sudden and unexplained disappearance, Sami is preoccupied by a sense of foreboding paranoia which is linked to his own apocalyptic vision of the wider world:

Sami disait qu'il fallait apprendre à se défendre. Parce que la fin du monde approchait. Ou la fin de quelque chose. Dans sa chambre, en écoutant *Yellow Submarine*, il déplaçait la carte des souterrains d'Alger que son père lui avait confiée. Il était sûr de lui. La guerre allait revenir. C'était écrit. C'est sa mère qui le lui avait dit. (Bouraoui 2011: 19)

In Alya's memory, the map of subterranean Algiers reveals an extra hidden layer of reality to the one the children had thus far taken for granted. This underground world is off-limits to the children, an adult form of knowledge that has only been exposed to them through Sami's father. The periodic and nostalgic reference to *Yellow Submarine* contrasts with the map, juxtaposing childhood with the omnipresent and inevitable threat of adulthood to which they are moving connoted by the lyrics of the song 'Full speed ahead Mr Boatswain, full speed ahead' (Lennon-McCartney 1966). The map and the song reinforce the themes of subterranean and hidden worlds and function as affective objects which, like the palimpsestic photograph of Alya's Uncle, mediate Alya's memory and understanding of Sami's life.

It is with this evidence of the map, supported by the themes of the song, that Sami becomes so assured of the inevitable threat of another war. Sami's morbid fascination with weaponry and global destruction is nurtured by his mother's own paranoia, once again contradicting the notion of childhood as being utterly isolated from the adult world.

Neither Sami nor his parents are wrong, of course. Sami's life is suspended, if not ended, by his unexplained disappearance, and another war did arrive in the form of the national tragedy of the Black Decade. These affective objects stimulate a perspective on memory which shows how the transition from one period to another is never a clean movement, but a messy process of interconnection and overlapping. Traces of the past *and the future* make their mark on the lives of the narrators. For Alya, her understanding of this transition is mediated by her memories of Sami's loss but also by these affective artefacts of his childhood – the map and the song.

Although *Garçon manqué* is Bouraoui's most frequently analysed text, there are currently no commentaries concerning the ways in which the narrator draws on her knowledge of the Occupation of France, as well as the Algerian War of Independence. This is probably because references to this historical trajectory are not frequent and often made only in passing. However, they offer important insights into how historical knowledge informs her gendered and racialised subjectivity as a French-Algerian child. For example, when a man attempts to abduct Nina from the street outside her family home, the trauma of the attack wipes out her memory of its immediate aftermath. She works through the trauma of this gender-based violence by evoking the space of the attack in terms of the concentrationary:

Ma mémoire ne rentre pas dans ce lieu. C'est un lieu interdit et peuplé. C'est le lieu des rêves. C'est un camp. C'est une concentration. C'est mon âge blessé, Amine. (Bouraoui 2000: 48)

The staggered metaphor of her memory as a camp and then a concentration indirectly conjures a concentrationary space. This very brief and indirect reference to the space of the attack as a camp and a concentration opens up some disturbing questions regarding the comparison of victimisation in vastly different historical contexts. Nina is not making

a historical comparison between her experience of gender-violence in Algeria with the totality of the concentrationary system in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. As we have seen in chapter three, the concentrationary can be understood as the space of the concentrationary system, a space of totalitarian terror and violence which is ‘enacted in a historically specific time and space, but not identical with that moment alone’ (Pollock and Silverman 2011: 8). In other words, the concentrationary is mobile and its aesthetics can appear in historically-situated moments, other than the network of Nazi camps in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. In her insistence on the ‘space’ of the attack, of its dream-like qualities, we can understand this reference as an affective engagement with the past, where the emotive and corporeal experience of historicised terror (the concentrationary) is evoked in order to comprehend her own experience of violence in a different context.

The concentrationary is evoked here as a mnemonic framework to mediate her own memory of present day violence. In the section following this statement, this mediation is extended and worked through by her internalisation of her attacker’s masculinity; ‘Je deviendrai un homme pour venger mon corps fragile’ (Bouraoui 2000: 46). In a similar manner to the embodiment of the uncle’s masculinity, Nina takes on and internalises the masculine features of her attacker; ‘Ses traits derrière mes traits. Son masque sur mon masque. Je me travestis’ (2000: 49). Husung (2014) and Arenberg (2015) are correct to describe Nina’s performative masculinity as a response to the violence of patriarchy in the time of the narrative. However, it is also necessary to acknowledge that this is also mediated through an affective engagement with a concentrationary memory. Commentators on the concentrationary have remarked that it is an aesthetic that represents the psychological experiences (as opposed to judicial terms) of victimhood, perpetration, and testimony as occupying suspended and in-between states (Silverman

2013: 41-8). In terms of Nina's attack, her performative gendering incorporates the masculinity of her attacker. The concentrationary is an effective, although uncomfortable, framework for this incorporation of victim and perpetrator in a single subjectivity, Nina's. If, in this scenario, masculinity is a pre-condition to being the perpetrator of patriarchal violence, Nina's performative masculinity in turn internalises this subject-position by adopting her attacker's bodily traits. Her masculine performativity is, however, not a straightforward act of theatre or parody; it is an accumulative and productive sedimentation of different encounters with violence. It is a complex series of reiterations based as much on the memory of a revered uncle as the internalisation of patriarchal violence that she experiences in the streets of Algiers. Both these subjectivities are influences and contributors to her masculinity as her alter-ego 'Ahmed', precariously balanced between two polarised narratives of masculinity; on the one hand, the martyred hero, and on the other, the paedophilic predator. Through the frame of the concentrationary, she can introduce these contradictions and tenuously open up memory links between gendered violence in post-colonial Algeria and the concentrationary universe.

In *Garçon manqué*, forms of connective memory are not only active in Algeria. Every summer Nina holidays with her maternal grandparents in Brittany, France. The grandparental home is a site of personal memory where she searches for traces of her mother's childhood as a French girl in France – a childhood which is drastically different to her own as a French-Algerian in Algeria: 'Chercher une trace de ma mère. Ses copies de philosophie. Ses cours de droit civil. Son écriture, inchangée' (Bouraoui 2000: 125). In addition, the house is also a site of collective memory for the child, triggering memories of historical cases of racism and imperial conflict. Her French grandparents explain to Nina and her sister that they had to give up the house as accommodation for

German soldiers during the Occupation. This wider historical narrative intermingles with Nina's personal memory of her mother's childhood, and she starts to re-imagine and retrace the history that led to her and her sister, French-Algerian 'métisses', to also lay claim to this house:

Qui l'aurait pensé, en 1960? [...] Et plus loin encore. Après la libération. Quand ils ont retrouvé leur maison confisquée par l'armée allemande. Qui aurait pu penser à ce tableau-là? Deux petites métisses le nez dans le chocolat Poulain. Les filles de Rachid. Qui dorment dans la maison. Qui vont au jardin. Qui montent aux étages. Qui fouillent le dernier étage. [...] Dans la maison des officiers allemands. Là où ils vivaient. Où ils s'étaient installés. Le temps de la guerre. Une autre guerre encore. Avec les boches, il fallait marcher droit. Il ne rigolait pas, l'Allemand. Dit-il. Allemagne-France-Algérie. La marche de la guerre. (125-6)

The child imagines her presence in the house as a new kind of occupation by 'deux petites métisses' and juxtaposes the proper nouns of Poulain and Rachid to exaggerate the shock of historical trajectories that have led them there. The child refers to her multidirectional knowledge of her own family history and the intersecting histories of the German Occupation in France and French colonialism in Algeria. As a result, the two histories are layered over each other in the single site of the grandparental home. By superimposing the present with these two layers of history – France in 1980, French-Occupied Algeria in 1960, and German-Occupied France in the 1940s – the child-narrator understands these histories in terms of connections and affiliations, rather than antagonism. In the above extract, Nina affirms this triangulation of memory in terms of geography: the house of the grandmother is simultaneously 'Allemagne-France-Algérie', not a static site of memory, but a place of nebulous interconnection, what Rothberg, Sanyal, and Silverman (2010) have described as a 'nœud de mémoire'.

The knotted and intersecting trajectories of memory in her grandparents' home corroborate Nina's rejection of singular categories of identity. These memories allow her to leave the following questions unanswered:

Une fille? Un garçon? L'arrière-petite-fille de Marie? La petite-fille de Rabiâ ?
 L'enfant de Méré ? Le fils de Rachid ? Qui? La Française? L'Algérienne?
 L'Algéro-Française? De quel côté de la barrière? (Bouraoui 2000: 141)

In her grandparents' house, Nina lives with the demands of these questions but refuses to pick a side, leaving them suspended in the text. Pamela Pears has argued that Nina's place in the grandparental house is an uneasy one, somewhere in-between the immigrant guest and the being-at-home of the granddaughter (2012: 70). The child recognises her grandmother's resentment of her parents' marriage that she herself perpetuates through her presence in the multidirectional home: 'Quelle faute alors? D'être la fille des amoureux de 1960. De rendre ce temps éternel. Par ma seule présence' (Bouraoui 2000: 124). Her presence in the house seems to perpetuate the time of the 1960s, of terrorism in France and Algeria, and her grandparents' shame concerning their daughter's marriage. Conversely, as Pears later suggests, it is by never being-at-home in the grandparent's home that she can reject national and gendered categories: 'Her refusal to be the guest in France and to be the host in Algeria translates also into her rejection of the gender roles assigned to her in both countries' (2012: 73).

I suggest that, in rejecting the dichotomous roles of guest/host, Algerian/French, masculine/feminine, Nina is also liberating herself as a mnemonic agent, as someone who can move freely around the 'nœuds de mémoire' and seek out the ways in which these histories are connective, and not simply antagonistic. The fluidity of her identity differentiates her relationship with the past from the lived memory of her parents which has framed her childhood:

De leur souffrance. De leur humiliation. Notre berceau. Ce qui nous attendait. Le contexte. Ce qui a été fait. Ce qui a été dit. Leurs blessures transmises. Cet héritage-là. Ces regards sur eux, en France, en Algérie puis encore en France. C'est cela qui nourrira le désir de vengeance. (130)

The mixed-heritage, non-binary child, born after the events of war and genocide, understands, more than her parents or grandparents, the implications of 'cet héritage-là' of the past, which has become their 'berceau' in the present. From her perspective, she can see that 'leur souffrance' and 'leur humiliation' will only feed 'le désir de vengeance' in the future. Nina's understands that her knowledge of both French and Algerian pasts gives her an exceptional insight into the politics of the present. This perspective echoes Gabriele Schwab's argument that if the term 'collective memory' is to be meaningful, it must emerge from the dialogical point where 'histories intersect and different participants or agents read them in conflicting ways, especially when they come from different sides of the divide between victim and perpetrator' (2010: 29). Bouraoui's narratives expose the intersecting and conflicting 'participants or agents' of collective memory by highlighting the knotted memories in her Algeria/France/Germany paradigm and the production of memory across the divide of victim and perpetrator in the post-1962 generation.

The narrator of *Garçon manqué* is, therefore, placed in a unique position through the postmemorial process of experiencing memory in *belated* terms. Although she receives and explores the knotted memory of her grandmother's house within the context of inter-generational transmission, she expresses and imagines this memory in terms of a future anterior, where her memory not only recalls what *was* but what *will have been*:

Je sais. Je sais l'avenir de l'Algérie. Comme je savais le séisme. Je sais le sang, bientôt. Il suffit de regarder. La tristesse. Ces visages fermés. Ces nouveaux

gestes. Les visions de ma mère. Ce sera facile d'écrire. De le dire après. Mais c'est vrai. Il suffit de regarder. D'écouter l'Algérie. (Bouraoui 2000: 86)

This extract appears to be the meta-narrative of a writer who writes about her childhood from the position of hindsight. This narrative shift points to the ways in which memory can also be a process that enables us to imagine the future. Here, Nina's postmemory is an expression of the future anterior, or an expression of the past that equally looks forward. In these typically Bouraouian sentences (short and fractured), the narrator hints that it will *only* be 'easy' to express this history after the fact – the past, therefore, cannot offer a utopian solution to the problems of the future. However, as Marta Segarra notes, the refusal of 'cette obligation de choisir son camp' is inherently connected to anti-racist politics throughout Bouraoui's writing (2010: 113). This is, essentially, Bouraoui's politics of memory. By privileging narratives which engage performatively, as well as wilfully, with the borders of gendered and national affiliation, Bouraoui's writing highlights how memory can be mobilised to complicate the categories of present day injustice, although it offer no singular ways to solve them.

This section has shown that Bouraoui's narrators are firmly situated in the postmemorial era of post-Independence Algeria. Their belated and affective acquisition of colonial and Second World War memory make them ideally placed to bear witness to the connective histories of these disparate histories. As I have shown, this 'connective' memory is inseparable from their performative gendering. Just as they refuse to select a camp on the French-Algerian divide, so they are able to performatively renegotiate both masculine and feminine identities.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Bouraoui's novels *Le Jour du séisme*, *Garçon manqué*, and *Sauvage* attest to how historical knowledge can be acquired outside dominant forms of memory transmission. All three narratives develop a perspective of a childhood in-between French and Algerian histories, at a specific transitional moment in both the history of Algeria and their own personal development. All three narrators examine this transitional period in terms of a simultaneous engagement with the past and their performative gendered and national identities. Historical knowledge pertaining to their French and Algerian backgrounds is not confined to the usual channels of intellectual discipline or family memory. Rather, historical knowledge is acquired in the form of an 'affective engagement' with landscapes, artefacts, and the experience of loss and violence in the contemporary moment. In this analysis, I have highlighted how 'affective engagement' is a dual process, it both triggers a corporeal and experiential engagement with memory, but also forms the gendered subjectivity of the remembering subject. Simply put, the way in which Bouraoui's narrators produce memory also produces gendered effects.

However, in these texts, gendered and racialised identity is not a linear re-performance of *past* utterances – remembering masculinity does not make one masculine. Neither does historical knowledge derive directly from the narrators' biological parentage as the children of a French mother and Algerian father. In Bouraoui's narratives of gender fluidity and childhood development, affective engagements with the past are shown to disturb binaries of gender, nationality, ethnicity, and even blur the victim-perpetrator divide that has been prevalent in popular understandings of French and Algerian historiography. The refusal of singular categories of identity is, thus, central to Bouraoui's 'connective' approach to memory.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to show the intersecting performativity of gender and memory in the works of Assia Djebar, Hélène Cixous, Ahmed Kalouaz, Malika Mokeddem, and Nina Bouraoui. It has made the case for reading literatures from and about France and Algeria through a feminist, ‘connective’ approach to memory. The memory narratives studied here productively forge connections between disparate historical trajectories as part of an overlapping and constantly shifting network of referents and remembrances. The works studied in this thesis are examples where these ‘connective’ movements have an intimate relationship *with*, or are facilitated *by*, the performative reiterations and reproductions of gender. I have suggested that a feminist approach to ‘connective memory’ can be developed by analysing the gendered inflections in cultural memories of French colonialism in Algeria.

In order to trace the intimate relationship between gender and memory performativity in ‘connective’ memories of colonialism, it was essential to first establish the role that gender has played in the portrayal of French colonialism and its legacies in Algeria, France, and elsewhere since 1962. In chapter one, I suggested that Djebar responds to the tension between the silencing and symbolic mobilisation of Algerian women in narratives of national memory through her textual strategy of ‘écriture de cinéma’. Bearing witness to the testimonies of women requires a formal approach which is extremely sensitive to questions of performativity, visibility, and effacement. Both Djebar and Cixous are renowned feminist authors who explicitly engage with feminist theories of writing and history in their fictional and autofictional representations of colonial memory. However, in my analysis of Cixous’s works in chapter two, it was found that this is less a question of representing the memories of women from Algeria, than considering the symbolic gendering of a lost connection with a childhood in Algeria. I

suggested that her depiction of decolonisation in India was a way of reiterating and restaging her memories of a childhood spent in colonial Algeria. Her melancholic association of the father with an impossible Algerian mother-, father-country is reflected in the gendering of Gandhi as a 'bisexual' saint of Indian decolonisation. Analysing the gendering of transnational memory in her works has revealed the previously unrecognised connections between her depiction of colonialism in Algeria and decolonisation in India.

Gender is frequently considered to be an explicit concern for the women writers considered in this thesis. Kalouaz's writing is very rarely considered in these terms and he himself denies an interest in gender politics. Nonetheless, in chapter three, I considered how the implicit gendering of the republican, universal concern for 'fraternity' between all men inflects Kalouaz's depiction of family and transnational memory in terms of a naturalised form of masculine solidarity. The depiction of 'connective' memory as a 'fraternity' in Kalouaz's works appears, on the one hand, within the framework of familial postmemory and, on the other, as a transcolonial form of mnemonic solidarity through the figure of Geronimo. In other words, the role that gender plays in the portrayal of colonialism and its transnational legacies is pervasive and structural. Rather than supporting mono-national concepts of collective memory (the memory *of a nation, of a community*) as a fixed object, possession, or concept ('la mère-patrie'), this analysis has suggested that gender implicitly inflects the kinds of solidarities and connections that are formed between transnational, transcultural, and transcolonial remembering subjects and their representation in cultural production.

In chapters four and five, the interplay between gender and memory was explored as a 'performative encounter' (Rosello 2005) in a selection of novels by Malika Mokeddem and Nina Bouraoui. Both authors respond to the gendered metaphors that have characterised French and Algerian cultural encounters as a bitter divorce. Some

commentators of Bouraoui and Mokeddem's works have suggested that they identify the sea as a felicitous transgression of 'les limites géographiques pour habiter un espace illimité et mouvant comme la mer/mère Méditerranée' (Mansueto 2017: 2). I complicated this celebratory feminisation of the Mediterranean space in Mokeddem's work by investigating the protagonists' implication in the ongoing migrant crisis. While Mokeddem focuses on tropes of feminine representation in the Mediterranean, Bouraoui's works expand the gendered frame to non-binary performances in her protagonists' search for memory and belonging that disturb the memory camps which have propped up mono-national French and Algerian identities. The preoccupation with transnational memory in these works demonstrates a resistance to the ways in which gendered imaginaries have supported concepts of postcolonial national identities.

To varying degrees, all the chapters of this thesis reflect on the role gender plays in the 'connective' memory frameworks where memories of French colonialism are portrayed *in relation* to other traumatic histories, namely the Holocaust, Partition, and slavery in the Caribbean. As Max Silverman argues in relation to 'palimpsestic' memory, this requires a new way of approaching 'a critical space of relationality' which 'could serve as a model for imagining new democratic solidarities in the future across the lines of race and nation commensurate with the interconnected world of the new millennium' (2013: 178-9). Mokeddem's representation of an odyssey *à l'Algérienne* in the Mediterranean Sea connects the memory of colonialism and the Black Decade to the present-day crisis of *harragas* and migrants drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. Bouraoui's protagonists are able to lay claim to a multidirectional ethics of memory by their performative positioning between masculinity and femininity, Algeria and France. Transnational postmemory was shown to nuance the historical paradigms that are used to justify contemporary racism and antagonism in the 21st century. In Kalouaz's monologue

Geronimo, memory is galvanised by a transnational, masculine solidarity, symbolised by Geronimo himself as he travels across borders and histories to locate ‘d’autres Geronimos’, where memories of the Algerian War of Independence, the Second World War, migration to France, slavery in the Caribbean, and the Holocaust are not discrete and separate, but overlapping and interconnected.

This thesis has also developed the idea that gender performativity is a vehicle for the transmission of memory. In chapter two, I suggested that Cixous uses the ‘bisexuel’ memory of her father as a framework to reimagine Gandhi and the history of Indian decolonisation in her play *L’Indiade*. While my analysis of Cixous’s texts shows that her gendered imaginaries and metaphors allow a form of transcolonial memory transmission, I also suggested that there are risks of appropriation which fail to fully explore the multidirectional potential of such ‘connective’ trajectories – what Erll calls ‘travel without effect’ (2011: 15). Although my thesis agrees with the multidirectional aims of Rothberg, Silverman, and Sanyal, I have, like Alison Landsberg in her caveat regarding the sometimes unethical consequences of prosthetic memory (2004: 49), suggested that gendered remembrance can efface memory traces in ways that support the marginalisation of those disenfranchised by the grand narratives of history. Nonetheless, a gendered approach to cultural memory helps to reveal the hierarchical structure of memory transmission. What memories are taken up by others? How? And by whom? Paying attention to these hierarchies in terms of gender is a feminist strategy for creatively and imaginatively engaging with the past.

Arguing that gender performativity is a stylised mode of knowledge production rather than an ontological essence, I have considered cases where gender is also a means for memory transmission. Based on Astrid Erll’s notion of ‘travelling memory’ (2011), in chapter three I suggested that gender is not necessarily an object of remembrance, but

becomes a 'mnemonic form' and structure by which memory is transferred. Certain forms of knowledge, values, and memories are carried with the reiteration and re-enactment of gender in corporeal and discursive ways in the present. Performative masculinity in the works of Kalouaz and Bouraoui is a pathway for the cultivation of a postmemory concerning the histories of France and Algeria. For Kalouaz, performative masculinity is a way to recall an inaccessible memory of the father, repressed by sequential traumas of colonialism in Algeria, migration to France, and a life lived in racist and precarious conditions. In Bouraoui's works, her characters' performative masculinity encourages their 'affective engagement' with the past. This does not mean that 'remembering masculinity' makes the protagonist masculine as a direct and linear re-performance of a past utterance. Rather, memory produces an accumulative and productive sedimentation of gendered histories and subjectivities which inform the protagonists' understanding of the past. Bouraoui's fluctuating engagement with Frenchness, Algerianness, femininity and masculinity also helps to blur the lines of victim and perpetrator in her texts, categories which have defined the dangerously rigid memory camps of French-Algerian encounters.

However, this thesis has not advocated an absolute approach to gendering the cultural production of 'connective' memory. This would only narrow my findings and obfuscate the transgressive and border-crossing principles of gender and queer theory. There is no universal way of reading *all* modes of cultural memory from a perspective of gender. Furthermore, as I have highlighted in chapters two and three, there is no guarantee against gendered articulations of memory which reproduce appropriative or reductive instrumentalisation of the past. Ultimately, this thesis has made the case that feminist memory work is an unending, repetitive, unstable process which oscillates between plural and transnational perspectives. To fix and to unequivocally explain this as a singular

process would be to foreclose it. In short, it has been the aim of my thesis to contribute to a growing body of ‘connective’ memory work, by demonstrating the pivotal role that a gendered approach can play in the forging of an empathetic politics of memory.

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