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Present Pasts, Plastic Sites: Sited Memory in Paris, Algiers and Marseille

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Summary

In this thesis, I use site as a prism for studying how the past persists and evolves within space, and the role played by remembering in space's constitution and unfolding. I approach site as defined by plasticity, an understanding of matter's morphology drawn from the writings of Malabou. The plastic site is characterised both by its resilience, its form never entirely altered from an earlier mould, and by its malleability, which ensures that whatever persists is nevertheless transformed. Embodied in its present configuration, therefore, are the many moments that have produced it over time, and it is this enduring, dynamic and heterogeneous past that I examine.

My research builds on the work of memory studies scholars and the contention that we always remember within spatial contexts. It adopts a definition of site from geography, however, to more clearly identify these locations and how they are shaped through time. To understand the workings of memory, I utilise a theoretical framework developed from the writings of Didi-Huberman and Olivier, rooted in Walter Benjamin's understanding of matter's temporality, and emphasising an always present past. To observe this memory at work, I approach my chosen sites through what I have termed sited memory: I examine both their development and usage, and the cultural media in which they have been represented and recast.

Studying a series of four case studies across Paris, Algiers and Marseille, I interrogate how different communities and cultural producers have grappled with the present past in space. I argue that memory represents both a site's form and the activities that we carry out within it, and I conclude that an understanding of site as plastic demands that we approach it as defined both by a multiplicity of persistent pasts and by its ongoing evolution.

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Introduction

We have always remembered in and through sites. When we recollect an event or an experience, we call to mind not just what happened, but where it happened, be it a specific place or a broader sense of location. What is more, when we visit places, we are often made aware of the moments or processes that have shaped them, explicitly through information panels and plaques, or implicitly through changes in architecture, reconstruction and decay. The study of memory has thus always concerned itself with questions of space, particularly in French and Francophone contexts. It may have been Pierre Nora who formalised the term “*lieux de mémoire*”, translated into English as “sites of memory” (“Between” 7), yet from its earliest proponents such as Maurice Halbwachs right up to contemporary theorists such as Michael Rothberg, memory studies has continually interrogated sites. It has scrutinised how we call to mind past locations as much as occurrences, how we build edifices for the purpose of recollection, and how we remember in both our day-to-day activities and our cultural production. If memory represents “an umbrella term for all those processes of a biological, medial, or social nature which relate past and present (and future) in sociocultural contexts” (Erl, *Memory* 7), then site must be studied as one of the primary contexts in which this occurs, its configuration and usage shaped by and shaping the remembering that occurs within it.

In this thesis, I will use site as a prism through which to study how the past endures within, gives form to and impacts upon a present space, as well as how our recollection is implicated in its production and evolution. I will aim to address some of the key questions currently underexplored in the study of space and memory. I will ask what place (if any) the past occupies within site. Is it something that may be left behind, or does it survive subsequent renovation? What transpires when a space or building is demolished, so that no traces appear to remain; and if it does perdure, what is the nature of this presence, physical or spectral, real or imagined? I will also address the temporal narrative within which site is understood: do we perceive time in space to proceed neatly from past to present, and present to future, so that prior events have been long since surpassed; or is this story in fact more complex, its present defined by multiple moments, both prior and possible?

Other questions I will broach concern our relationship with the past in site, as well as what part our activities (both concrete practices and cultural media) play in its elaboration. How does our living within a space perpetuate an original state or transform it entirely? Are our actions within this space independent of or circumscribed by the form that it has inherited? Does our writing about or depicting a location simply reflect how it is perceived, or may it impact upon its form and how we experience it? I will interrogate whether the story of a given place is entirely ours to dictate, or whether place itself may prove uncondusive to such rewriting, possessed of a temporal narrative that is never fully within our control. I will ultimately question what constitutes a site in the first place: is it simply a physical space, defined by its material proportions and contents; or does how we think about site influence our experience of and engagement with it to such an extent that the imaginary must be considered one of its integral dimensions?

I will advance an understanding of site as plastic, drawn from the French philosopher Catherine Malabou's work on "*plasticity*" ("*plasticité*") (*Que faire* 40). Seeking to explore the broader implications of recent advancements in neuroscience (famously asking in her eponymous work, "*what should we do with our brain?*" ("*que faire de notre cerveau?*") (36)), Malabou proposes plasticity as the basis for a more general morphology of matter: she argues that it denotes an object's simultaneous openness to change, tendency towards persistence, and the form and evolution that results from their tension. I will argue that the same processes may be identified in site, and point to a particular relationship between past and present: the marks of prior events that have shaped a space are retained within its current configuration, yet they remain capable of transformation as it is continually re-used. I will consequently argue that the plastic site is defined by persistent and evolving pasts, constituting a resilient yet dynamic memory within the present.

It is on this basis that I will seek out and build on confluences of thought across diverse literatures in a distinctly interdisciplinary approach. I will contend that the limitations identified within one disciplinary context might be addressed by drawing inspiration from another, so that the challenges of sites and memory may only be met using a critical framework that transcends and develops these literatures in combination. My choice of corpus and methodology are inspired by the work of memory studies scholarship, which has

examined how narratives of the past are delineated within culture, and how these endure, develop and transect over time. Nevertheless, I also aim to bring greater clarity to how such temporal narratives implicate and impact upon the spatial contexts within which they unfold, drawing on the writing of geographers to advance a refined understanding of site. What is more, I will apply the work of contemporary French thinkers as I seek to understand this site's plastic dynamics and morphology, utilising the work of Malabou, Didi-Huberman and Olivier on the temporality of matter as a critical framework. I will therefore seek to study what I define as sited memory: I will examine site as both an existing entity in which we live and as an ongoing work in which we participate; I will study memory as something that site both has and something that we undertake within and through it; and I will conceive of its temporality and spatiality as fundamentally plastic, as multiform, resilient and dynamic.

My study will be conducted through the examination of a series of sites in Paris, Algiers and Marseille. From the river Seine to a medieval cemetery, from colonial hotels to Marseille's waterfront, these locations range widely in size and nature, form and function. Nevertheless, there exist significant commonalities between the diverse case studies. They represent everyday spaces that have come to be associated with remembering, rather than those constructed for memorial purposes in the first place. Because of this, they are sites associated, not with a single event, but with diverse pasts that are continually added to, their memory constituted through a process of accretion that remains ongoing. Furthermore, they are all places in which this memory is heavily contested: in some cases, the legacy of what has been is deemed undesirable and its suppression has been sought; in others, it is the narrative of the past that cannot be fully agreed upon, and that has consequently been written and re-written. What unites them, then, is that they all represent sites whose associations with the past have continually influenced how they are lived, used and imagined in the present, and it is on this basis that I have selected them for analysis.

In addition, all the sites in question have been subject to a rich and varied cultural production, and it is through this corpus that I shall examine my chosen case studies. From authors, artists and photographers, to architects, online communities and video game designers, these diverse works have attempted to make sense of what has gone before within a given location, to stake a claim to it or to open it up to reinterpretation. In so doing, they

have continually influenced how the past is remembered within the now, shaping both how the site is lived in the present day and how it will be rethought by future communities and cultural producers. It is through these heterogeneous cultural artefacts and how they have represented and reproduced the locations in question that this thesis will progress, examining site through the literatures, artworks and digital media in which its memory has been both perpetuated and produced anew.

My work is positioned at a critical intersection between memory studies and geography, and one that I will argue may be illuminated by drawing upon the work of scholars from a range of disciplines (including, amongst others, architecture, urban studies, trauma theory, philosophy, art history and archaeology), and in particular upon the writings of contemporary French theorists. Whilst the spaces in and through which we remember have certainly been the subject of much discussion within memory studies, the question of what role remembering plays within space itself (its material disposition, how it is conceived and how it evolves through time) has received comparatively little attention; sites are perceived as contexts for acts of memory, rather than as sculpted by them. Contrastingly, whilst geographers have paid more attention to the place of the past within locations and the complex relationship between narratives of time and the unfolding of space, the role of cultural media within this configuration remains ambiguous; there is a need to account for how representations of the past impact upon our experience of the sites in which we live. My work thus seeks to move beyond both the “spatial turn” within cultural studies (Nieuwenhuis and Crouch x), and the “cultural turn” within geography (Alexander 3), studying sites and their memory through the cultural production in which they are reimagined.

What is more, I propose to draw upon and apply the writings of the contemporary French theorists Catherine Malabou, Georges Didi-Huberman and Laurent Olivier as I develop my critical framework. These authors belong to the disparate academic fields of philosophy, art history and archaeology; nevertheless, they share a common interest in what Olivier terms “a sort of morphological property of matter” (“une sorte de propriété morphologique de la matière”) (*Sombre* 287–88). All three approach their chosen object of study (be it the brain, the image or the artefact) as retaining the imprint of past moments whilst remaining open to further inscription and transformation, and the result is what Didi-Huberman describes as

“a certain *dynamic of memory*” (“une certaine *dynamique de la mémoire*”) (Devant 19), whereby an entity’s plasticity ensures that the past is dynamically recalled within its present form. The commonalities between their work have begun to be explored both by the authors themselves and their commentators¹; nevertheless, their texts are only now becoming increasingly available to an English-speaking readership, their development remains primarily limited to their respective disciplinary fields, and certainly their implications for the study of space and remembering remain underdeveloped. Olivier’s most famous work was translated into English as *The Dark Abyss of Time* in 2011, yet to date has been limited in its application to researchers within archaeology such as Christopher Witmore and Gavin Lucas. Didi-Huberman’s writings on the locations and images of the Holocaust have informed memory studies scholars outside of France such as Max Silverman (“Mémoire”); his work on the temporality and morphology of the image in *Devant le temps*, however, has yet to be translated, despite being described by Miguel Mesquita Duarte as “a pivotal work of his extensive œuvre” (1). Furthermore, whilst the theoretical implications of Malabou’s writings on plasticity have been explored in geography by academics such as Chris Van Dyke and Martin Jones, proposing what the latter terms a “*plasticity turn*” in the study of space (2599), this has not seen systematic application to individual case studies. Part of the originality of this thesis therefore lies in bringing these French scholars to light within new fields of research, situating them within an interdisciplinary dialogue, and applying the resultant theoretical framework to French and Algerian sites and the media that have depicted them².

Before embarking upon this thesis, I will begin by outlining more clearly the key writings that I will both mobilise and probe in my work, as well as the methodology that I intend to

¹ Malabou, for instance, writes that the “[t]he work of Georges Didi-Huberman and my own currently share the same preoccupation ... that of plasticity” (“Le travail de Georges Didi-Huberman et le mien partagent actuellement une même préoccupation ... celui de la *plasticité*”) (“Plasticité” 31), whilst Knappett explores the intersections between Didi-Huberman and Olivier on the question of “the temporal dimension of objects” (38).

² In this thesis, I have attempted where possible to work from the original French version of texts and media; this has enabled me to analyse them as closely as possible to the form and wording intended by the author or producer. Nevertheless, because my project has been co-supervised between French studies and geography, and because it is intended for an audience in both fields, I have provided translations in order to make it accessible to anglophone scholars. In addition, where ambiguities or nuances in the French do not translate easily into English, I have provided supplementary explanation to guide the reader in how I have understood the studied text. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own, and the formatting of quotations is that of the original.

employ and the rationale behind my case studies. My literature review will scope out the key fields of thought upon which I will draw throughout the rest of this study, illustrating the highly interdisciplinary approach taken. It will also begin to elaborate and to question these ideas, demonstrating both their usefulness and their limitations; this will form the foundation of the theoretical framework upon which I will build throughout the upcoming chapters. I will then define the method that I have adopted, emphasising a mixed methodology rooted in the close examination of case study and an analysis of cultural media. Finally, I will explain my choice of case studies, briefly outlining each site that I will examine and how they have advanced my understanding of sited memory.

Literature review

In accounting for how the past persists within a present site, for how we recall its events within this spatial context, and what implications our recollection holds for its continued unfolding, I have developed an interdisciplinary critical framework that I will set out in this literature review. Whilst there remains a distinct “lack of consensual definitions of interdisciplinarity”, Lisa Lau and Margaret W. Pasquini posit as a working understanding an approach to research that “embraces notions of the porosity of disciplinary boundaries, and the combination and synthesis of methodologies and techniques” (50). It is such an approach that I have adopted in this thesis: I seek to clarify ambiguities within one field of research using understandings drawn from another or from several others, and to develop a theoretical and methodological framework that transcends disciplinary distinctions to better understand memory in the context of site. This literature review will therefore survey the core literatures upon which I draw, namely plasticity, memory studies, geography, art history and archaeology. It will elaborate upon both their contribution to my work and their limitations, as well as set out how I intend to deploy them. I will then outline this thesis’ approach as one that examines what I term sited memory: I will scrutinise sites through their material form, social usage and cultural representation, and comprehend the past as both a persistent and dynamic constituent of the present space.

Plasticity

My work began with an interest in Malabou's writings on plasticity. The author describes this as a morphology of matter: a plastic object is one whose simultaneous capacity for persistence and transformation as it unfolds over time ensures that it is defined by a present yet evolving past. Plasticity thus offers a critical prism through which to examine any entity wherein the passage of time and intervening events can neither entirely efface that which went before, nor leave the entity untouched. Space represents one such context in which Malabou's work has been rethought, in particular by Van Dyke and M. Jones. It is as a plastic configuration, and as defined by resilient yet alterable pasts, that I have approached site and its memory, and on the basis of the interdisciplinary dialogue that surrounds Malabou's work that I have conducted my theoretical survey.

At its most fundamental, Malabou's conception is in fact straightforward: plasticity represents a material object's capacity to both change and to remain the same, and how the constant balancing of these contradictory tendencies sculpts its form. The author takes as her point of departure the "revolutionary ... discoveries carried out in the domain of the neurosciences" ("découvertes ... révolutionnaires accomplies dans le domaine des neurosciences"), arguing that an understanding of the dynamics that define the brain might have implications of a "philosophical, scientific and political" ("*philosophique, scientifique et politique*") nature (*Que faire* 36). On the one hand, she contends, "*plasticity directly contradicts rigidity*" ("*la plasticité contredit directement la rigidité*") (*Que faire* 43); always transformable, the form of the plastic object is never fixed. On the other, the author notes that this "malleability" ("malléabilité") (90) does not represent "a flexibility without limits" ("une flexibilité sans limites") (57); since it may just as easily retain its current form as change it, limitless transformation is not possible, and something always remains of what went before in that which has evolved. Indeed, this renders resistance a third key dynamic within the plastic object: by changing when persistence is sought, and persisting when change is sought, plasticity represents "a factor of disobedience to all constituted form" ("un facteur de désobéissance à toute forme constituée") (44), always ensuring that its object never entirely conforms to a given mould or model. The plastic is therefore used to describe an object that is neither wholly inflexible nor entirely pliable, but one that is instead the product of a

continuous negotiation between these two extremes, and by the resistance that they pose to one another.

It is the ethical implications of plasticity that are of paramount interest to Malabou, the author asking precisely what a “*conscience du cerveau*” entails for the questions that confront us in the twenty-first century (*Que faire* 36). Indeed, conveyed in the original French term ‘conscience’ are two critical concerns. In the first interpretation, Malabou questions what a ‘*consciousness of the brain*’ would mean for how we conceive and make use of it. In the second, however, a ‘*conscience of the brain*’ lends an ethical imperative to this enquiry, the author asking what plasticity should mean for the individual, for communities and for human society more broadly. What Malabou asserts is a form of “*biological altermondialism*” (“*altermondialisme biologique*”) (183), according to which our understanding of the plastic brain offers a means of envisioning “another possible world” (“un autre monde possible”) (183). If our brains are plastic, she surmises, then so too must be the material, social and cultural frameworks that we have constructed for ourselves through our cortical activity. As Hugh J. Silverman concludes, our own plasticity “becomes increasingly indistinguishable from the interconnected world/society/polis/culture *outside* of us and in which we live” (Silverman, 2010: 99), the plasticity that produces us as individuals the same as that of the communities and the environments that we inhabit.

It is in the tension between change and endurance, and the opposition that these pose to any imposed form, that Malabou locates plasticity’s radical potential. Contemporary capitalism demands that we be endlessly adaptable to rigidly prescribed roles. Plasticity, the author avers, instead enables the individual or community to shape and to hold to its own identity and history, and in so doing to resist the requirements thrust upon it. Malabou contends that the twenty-first-century economy asks much of the human subjects upon which it depends. It requires the individual to be “*adaptable, flexible*, open to switching from one situation to another” (“*adaptable, flexible, susceptible de basculer d’une situation dans une autre*”) (*Que faire* 119), yet accords him or her “no power of creation nor of improvisation” (“aucun pouvoir de création ni d’improvisation”) (96). A consciousness of our plasticity, Malabou argues, enables us to resist such demands to be both continually changing and powerless in how we change.

On the one hand, the transformative power of plasticity allows us to shape our own identity, rather than to have this prescribed for us. If the brain represents “a self-sculpted structure” (“une structure autosculptée”) (90), then the individual may elect which changes to integrate and which to omit, placing them in control of the “the fashioning of the self” (“le façonnement de soi”) (165). On the other, the resilience implied by the plastic brain ensures that limitless change is impossible. The brain is not characterised by “polyvalence” (117), but instead by “solidity as much as suppleness” (“la solidité autant que la souplesse”) (62); it enables individuals to stand firm upon the “temporal and historical permanence of the subject” (“la permanence temporelle et historique du sujet”), and thus to hold fast to the identity that they have crafted (143). Existing in a state of being that is “between determinism and liberty” (“entre déterminisme et liberté”) (*Que faire* 90), plasticity ultimately represents what Malabou terms “a refusal to be submitted to a model” (“un refus d’être soumis à un modèle”) (44). A balance is struck “between the capacity for change and the aptitude for remaining the same” that places the plastic subject in charge of his or her own destiny (*Ontology* 5): it empowers individuals or communities to forge their own histories, to hold fast to the identity that they have crafted for themselves, and in both cases to resist the demand to conform to the exigencies of contemporary capitalism.

Whilst such ethical questions are certainly of interest to this thesis, it is Malabou’s proposal that plasticity form the basis of a “neuronal materialism” (“matérialisme neuronal”), one that might be applied in contexts other than our changing cortical structure and neural networks (162), that is most critical to my analysis. It is thus my contention that sites and their memories may be comprehended through such a plastic morphology. Alexander Hope perceives the author’s work to represent “first and foremost a conceptual working through of *form*” (331), and Malabou studies plasticity in a variety of material contexts³, asserting it as a general “quality of a matter” that is observable in any entity that is simultaneously “fluid

³ Malabou explores examples of plasticity in the human body as a whole (referring to the work of the plastic surgeon), as well as in clay (*Future* 8), in marble (“Conversation” 6), and in plastic explosives (*Que faire* 44), all of which serve as metaphors that refine her concept.

but also resisting” (“Conversation” 6)⁴. The implications of plasticity for materiality have thus been extensively explored⁵ (Hope; Bhandar and Goldberg-Hiller), and space is one example of a context in which it has been theorised (Van Dyke; M. Jones).

Malabou’s writing shows an awareness of the spatial implications of her own theory⁶, yet it is Van Dyke and M. Jones who have further considered how the sculptural dynamics observable in the brain might also be seen in the material landscape. Van Dyke writes that, if our brain demonstrates both “an openness to various influences” and a capacity for “resistance”, then the landscape similarly proves to be “defined, yet malleable” (407). Its existing form is continually altered by diverse actants and events, yet is also capable of limiting what alteration is possible. Van Dyke concludes that “a landscape, conceived ‘plastically’, is pliant . . . but it can also be resilient and resistant to change” (401); M. Jones similarly contends that plasticity points to a morphology of space that “works within the existing parameters of material possibility” whilst also allowing for “deformations [that] reshape the whole” (2600). Drawing on Malabou’s broader understanding of plastic materiality, Van Dyke therefore proposes that plasticity might equally serve as a means of “reconceptualizing the ontology . . . of landscape” (408), and building upon this, I will use plasticity to consider how we conceive of site and its elaboration. I will argue that it offers a model through which to comprehend how locations may be shaped without ever being wholly overwritten or built anew: I will use it to examine how urban planners, architects and communities intervene in a space’s production, the extent to which they are able to preserve

⁴ Indeed, the author goes further, arguing that any “reasonable materialism must accept the existence of a mediation” (“matérialisme raisonnable doit accepter l’existence d’une médiation”) (Malabou, *Que faire* 162).

⁵ Hope has identified and elaborated upon Malabou’s reading of the “relationship between neuronal plasticity, [and] materiality” (Hope 344), and Bhandar and Goldberg-Hiller have also extensively drawn upon Malabou’s contention within philosophy to formulate what they define as a “new materialism”, perceiving in plasticity “a kind of immanent thought that materially grounds” our approach to the physical world and its “potential metamorphoses” (Bhandar and Goldberg-Hiller 1).

⁶ Van Dyke writes of the “ontological resonances of landscape through Catherine Malabou’s work” (401): Malabou notes, for instance, the way in which plasticity has been manipulated as a concept to encourage a rootlessness on the part of the modern worker, contemporary capitalism calling on every individual to disdain “moorings in a space or a region” (“les ancrages dans un espace ou une région”) in a bid to be infinitely pliable to the demands of the marketplace (*Que faire* 188).

or transform its already existent form, and the sculpting that occurs as these tensions are negotiated.

What is more, the material dynamics that Malabou identifies have significant implications for how we understand the temporality of plastic objects: I believe that this enables us to account for the complex relationship between past and present that I discern in site, and one that may be understood as memory. Malabou asserts that the brain's plastic evolution ensures that its past remains continually present within it: defined both by "the permanence of form" ("Plasticity" 80), and by the way in which form is "*modifiable*" (*Que faire* 43), each instance of change may leave a lasting impression, so that traceable within its materiality is a "recognizable, identifiable history, with all its events, gaps, and future" (*Ontology* 3). Consequently, Malabou argues that it is insufficient to argue that "the brain *has* a history" ("le cerveau *a* une histoire"), and that we must instead conclude that "it *is* a history" ("il *est* une histoire") (*Que faire* 36), its material form an embodiment of its past, retained and at work within the present.

Conversely, however, Malabou also argues that it is only by means of this present that the past may be comprehended. Whilst changes may leave a lasting mark upon the entity in question, this does not mean that, once made, they cannot themselves be modified. Hope writes that the brain is at once "the product of every previous neuronal activation" and "constantly changing" (337); thus, whilst plasticity ensures the "impossibility of oblivion" (Malabou, "Plasticity" 80), the brain's continued evolution also necessitates the "explosion of an original biological mould" ("la déflagration d'une matrice biologique originaire") (*Que faire* 170). As a consequence, what we observe in the plastic object is a "history but only ever as a continuously transforming present" (Bojesen 1042). The past of an object proves as subject to plasticity as the object itself, and Malabou thus concludes that this past is therefore only accessible through the present within which it continues to evolve.

If an object is defined by plasticity, therefore, its temporal nature must also be understood as plastic, and site is no exception: I will suggest that the way in which the past is recalled within the form and evolution of the present space points to a sited memory that I will explore throughout this thesis. Van Dyke in particular has drawn upon plasticity to explore

the complex temporality of landscape; he argues that, like the brain, the landscape's composition is necessarily defined by the interaction of past and present that renders it a temporally complex space. The many changes undergone "leave traces in the landscape", so that "historical accretions . . . are permanently imprinted"; nevertheless, the permanence of these imprints does not render their form immutable, so that the past's presence must "interact dynamically, even unexpectedly, with the emergence of new forms" (408). Consequently, landscape is revealed to be "a temporally and spatially textured mosaic that is densely and unevenly layered" (409): it is given form and depth by prior moments that persist within it, yet these moments themselves are subject to a continual change. If space is deemed to be plastic, then its past may only be understood through the present in which it is always already renegotiated, and I will utilise this to study memory in site. I will examine the way in which the marks of prior moments are discernible within a location's contemporary form, trace their development through subsequent changes, and will contend that together these constitute a memory of that site's unfolding over time.

Finally, the interdisciplinary nature of Malabou's project, as well as the diverse fields of study within which her work has been utilised, have been influential in my approach to this thesis. Plasticity serves as an overarching model upon which I have built my theoretical framework, yet has also guided me into the varied literatures that have informed it. The author/s own writings draw both on neuroscientific research and on philosophical thought: central to her work are the forms of plasticity identified in the human body⁷, yet she also describes the plastic as rooted within "a long philosophical past"⁸ ("un long passé philosophique") (*Que faire* 58). What Malabou proposes, therefore, is "[a]nother plasticity" ("Une autre plasticité"), one "never envisaged as such by neuroscientists" ("jamais envisagé comme tel par les neuroscientifiques") and whose implications extend far beyond the purview of either philosophy or biology (161). On the basis of this challenge, the author's work has seen

⁷ Malabou defines these as "*plasticity of development, plasticity of modulation, [and] plasticity of repair*" ("*plasticité de développement, plasticité de modulation, [et] plasticité de réparation*"), and these, she argues, govern "the biological phenomenon of the brain's plasticity" ("le phénomène biologique de la plasticité du cerveau") (66).

⁸ Her writing identifies plasticity in the work of writers as Hegel (Malabou, *Future*), Freud (Malabou, "Plasticity") and Merleau-Ponty (Malabou, "Foreword"), appraising their work in reference to contemporary studies in the neurosciences.

development in diverse disciplinary contexts, limited not solely to philosophy (H. J. Silverman; Sparrow; Bhandar and Goldberg-Hiller), but extending to the humanities more broadly (T. Williams), to geography (Dewsbury; Van Dyke; M. Jones), and to fields as disparate as education (Bojesen) and museum studies (Martinon).

Plasticity therefore represents a fundamentally interdisciplinary concept that has benefited from a wide variety of borrowings. Such an approach has encouraged me to cast my net similarly wide in developing my understanding of sited memory, and in doing so has revealed a broad range of literatures in which the dynamics of the plastic are discernible. In many of these writings, plasticity is explicitly described to be at work, even if it is not as extensively theorised as in Malabou's oeuvre⁹; in others, this morphology is merely implied, as authors describe a tension between persistence and change in their object of study¹⁰. Indeed, if Malabou writes that "[o]ur brain is plastic and we do not know it" ("Notre cerveau est plastique et nous ne le savons pas") (*Que faire* 42), then it is my contention that the same might be said of much of the scholarship upon which I have drawn, defined by a plasticity that is not fully recognised. I therefore propose plasticity as a "*unifying concept*" ("*concept fédérateur*") that will guide my approach to the case studies of this thesis (Malabou, *Que faire* 41), offering an interdisciplinary umbrella under which the diverse literatures on which I will draw may be brought into dialogue.

Memory studies

Having first defined plasticity as an interdisciplinary prism through which to comprehend site's morphology and the present past to which this gives rise, I returned to the field of memory studies. I sought to assess the extent to which space had already been theorised within this literature, to discern how it might inform my approach, and to identify key gaps

⁹ Henri Lefebvre, for instance, identifies a "plasticity of space", which he defines as its capacity for "modifications and appropriations", yet one that is necessarily "limited" by the habitat's existing context (*Writings* 79). Didi-Huberman too describes the "fundamental plasticity" ("plasticité fondamentale") of the image (*Devant* 17), defined by both "that which changes and ... that which resists change" ("ce qui change et ... ce qui résiste à changer") (*Image* 107).

¹⁰ Theodore Schatzki, for example, writes that the "mesh of orders and practices" that constitute a site ensure that it is at once always pre-formed and subject to change, as practices reshape a site's form and this form dictates subsequent practices (*Site* 123); he therefore asserts that "an adequate conception" of site "must encompass stability and instability" (17).

in its understanding. From being first mooted to its most recent developments, memory research has always deemed space a primary context within which remembering takes place, affording fertile ground for the site-focused study that I have undertaken. Nevertheless, the question of how such acts are influenced by and impact upon the spaces in which they are carried out remains ambiguous, as does the relationship between past and present therein. I will argue that this gap in understanding would benefit from the clearer definition of site and its plastic morphology put forward in this thesis.

It is arguably Pierre Nora who is most closely associated with the theorisation of the relationship between communities, sites and remembrance. His examination of “lieux de mémoire” (“Entre” XVII) has proven so influential that it is deemed to have been the catalyst for the contemporary interest in memory studies, and continues to be employed and developed to this day (Winter; Legg; Colon). In a trio of edited volumes, collectively referred to as the “Lieux de Mémoire project” (Legg 482), Nora advanced an approach that explored “the places in which the capital ... of our collective memory is anchored, is condensed and is expressed” (“les lieux où s’ancre, se condense et s’exprime le capital ... de notre mémoire collective”) (Nora, “Entre” xlii). He argued that societies deliberately construct sites for the purpose of remembrance, shaping their material form and imbuing them with cultural significance to reassure members of their rootedness in a communal past¹¹. The understanding that Nora put forward, therefore, was one that deemed memory to be a fundamental “part of the landscape” (Winter 1), and would become particularly associated with “how certain sites ... came to embody and instil certain memories and views of the nation” (Legg 482). If Nora wrote at the beginning of the twenty-first century that “[w]e are living the worldwide advent of memory” (“Nous vivons l’avènement mondial de la mémoire”) (“Avènement”), then his study of *lieux de mémoire*, of the sites that we build for ourselves in order to remember, may be considered foundational in modern memory studies. Indeed, Rothberg writes that Nora posited an “innovative methodology for studying collective memory” and is responsible for prompting worldwide “reflection and scholarship” on the

¹¹ Simultaneously “material, symbolic and functional” (“matériel, symbolique et fonctionnel”) (xxxiv), the *lieu de mémoire* “administers the presence of the past in the present” (“administre la présence du passé dans le présent”) (xxxvi), and provides “external frameworks” (“supports extérieurs”) for recollection (xxvi).

way in which spaces prompt and provide contexts for recollection of the past (“Introduction” 3).

Consequently, even as subsequent researchers have sought to move beyond Nora’s explicit focus upon remembrance within the borders of nation-states, a focus upon specific sites has been maintained. Recent memory scholarship has been oriented towards the study of what Aleida Assmann terms the “transnational” (546), exploring a culture and landscape “characterised by streams of migration and dispersed and displaced populations” (547). Whilst the importance of Nora’s work is such that Michael Rothberg deems it “impossible to overstate” (“Introduction” 3), many authors today deem its approach restrictive in its focus upon what Astrid Erll terms “national memory” (“Travelling” 6), rather than “the ‘travels’ of memory, *les voyages* or *les mouvements de mémoire*” (11). Contemporary scholars have therefore sought to progress beyond the limitations of Nora’s rigid framework, focusing upon the “transversal connections across time and space” made possible by individuals and communities on the move, rather than upon locations themselves (M. Silverman, *Palimpsestic* 22).

Whilst eschewing the nation-state as a spatial framework, however, contemporary scholarship maintains what Susannah Radstone describes as an “attentiveness to the *locatedness* of memory” (114). It recognises that “even when (and if) memory travels, it is only ever instantiated locally, in a specific place and at a particular time” (117); whilst the site that Nora proposes has been fundamentally reimagined, therefore, it has not lost its critical place within memory studies. Rothberg’s highly influential “*multidirectional*” approach, for instance, seeks to examine how different pasts are vocalised alongside one another (*Multidirectional* 3). It does so by examining not just the cultural works that facilitate this dialogue (18), but also the locations in which it takes place, examining “both the subjects and spaces” of remembering (5). To study transnational memory, for Rothberg, is therefore to recognise that “‘knotted’ in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialisation” (“Introduction” 7). Remembering is consequently still considered to involve topographic as well as temporal points of reference, and to impact upon the locations that it implicates.

Throughout the now lengthy history of memory studies, therefore, remembering has been understood to take place within spatial frameworks. As Andreas Huyssen writes, “we would separate time and space at great peril” (Huyssen 12), and this has resulted in an extensive body of research. Églantine Colon, for instance, has sought to build on Nora’s earlier work by exposing how sites beyond the monuments of central Paris may become foci for memory. Looking outside the “museified city centre” (66), she examines the “precarious spaces” associated with its Algerian communities, “not sedimented enough to be ... *lieux de mémoire*” (70), yet illustrative of the “relational, contested, and unstable” way in which we may remember (69). Huyssen’s focus, by contrast, is upon a more traditional memorial landscape: his study of Berlin uncovers a built environment fundamentally defined by the “the material traces of the historical past” (1), which consequently form the “present pasts” that underpin its locations (11).

Karen E. Till’s work, by contrast, is concerned with “the practices and politics of place making” (8). Through officially sanctioned monuments (17) and both individual and communal action (18), the author demonstrates that whenever people recollect the past “they are physically located in contemporary social and spatial contexts”, and that, in remembering, they “give a shape to ... that which continues to have an important presence in their contemporary lives” (14). Where, what and how we recollect thus prove inextricable, and Dylan Trigg studies the experience of space that this memory produces. When we recall the past, he writes, “the places we inhabit and pass through come back to us in the present”: the feeling of returning to a well-known location may afford “a sense of familiarity in the midst of uncertainty”, yet its effect may equally be uncanny, “disturbing the course of everyday existence” (xv). Across memory studies, therefore, we observe what Shelley Hornstein describes as “the inseparability of memory and place” (8). The locations that we remember, and those in which we remember, prove indissociable from the very act of remembering itself.

The literature of memory studies has consequently been fundamental to my examination of site and the pasts present within its contemporary form. Nora’s work on the *lieu de mémoire* has prompted me to examine how several of my case studies have been constructed (both materially and symbolically) to sediment and convey carefully crafted narratives of what has

gone before. The writings of contemporary scholars on transnational memory have encouraged me to scrutinise how remembering may connect different points in space as well as moments in time, illuminating that what we recollect, and how we recollect it, is both rooted in places and moves beyond and between them. Memory is shown to govern our activities within a given space, and to shape our experience thereof, and it is this relationship that I intend to examine throughout this thesis.

What is more, the approach taken by these scholars to studying memory has informed my own: I propose to examine my case studies through the cultural works in which they have been represented and reimagined, inspired by the emphasis placed on “cultural memory” within this literature (Erll, *Memory* 104). Erll writes that “[i]t is only through media in the broadest sense” that the knowledge of prior events is made “accessible for the members of a mnemonic community” (*Memory* 104), and as such they “gather, preserve, administer, and impart culturally relevant information about the past” (100). Such works have become a primary object of study for memory studies researchers, and sites have proven central to their analysis. K. Till, for example, writes that “[w]hen people tell stories and fictions about their pasts, they also constitute places as significant contexts and as actors that define who they are”, locations serving to anchor individuals’ and communities’ accounts of the past (15). Furthermore, what such media remember and how they do so becomes bound up with how we conceive of the locations that they depict: as Huyssen writes, “[t]he strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past” (7), so that a site’s memory is situated between its material form and the narratives with which we associate it. The focus of memory studies researchers upon the analysis of cultural artefacts has therefore encouraged me to do likewise: I will argue that the diverse works in which a given site is represented offer a prism through which to examine how the past is perceived within its form and how it is thought of by those who encounter it.

The relationship between memory and site has thus been asserted unequivocally; significant ambiguities persevere, however, in the theorisation of space and the presence of the past within it. Indeed, it is something of an irony that Nora’s theorisation of the *lieu de mémoire* is predicated upon the understanding that a natural coexistence of past and present no longer takes place. The author contends that “[t]here are *lieux de mémoire* because there are no longer

milieux de mémoire (“Il y a lieux de mémoire parce qu’il n’y a plus de milieux de mémoire”) (“Entre” xvii), translated into English as “real environments of memory” (“Between” 7). Nora describes such *milieux* as a former state in which “we lived within the intimacy of memory” (“nous vivions dans l’intimité d’une mémoire”) (“Entre” xxiii), the past a fundamental component of everyday life through oral memory, communal ritual and landscapes barely changed for millenia. In society’s modernisation, by contrast, Nora perceives “the sense of a torn memory” (“le sentiment d’une mémoire déchirée”) (xvii), the then fundamentally distinct from the now, so that sites of memory are required to maintain any “sense of continuity” (“sentiment de la continuité”) between the two (xxvi). For Nora, then, memory is something that we do in site, rather than something that it possesses, the past distinct from the present so that it must be transplanted into it through acts of remembrance.

Such an understanding perseveres in contemporary writings in memory studies: a sense of the present past is implied in this body of work, yet the nature of this co-existence remains unclear. Huyssen describes Berlin and its landmarks as a “a disparate city-text that is being rewritten while previous text is preserved, traces are restored, erasures documented”, the materiality of the city and its spaces composed of diverse moments in time that have left their mark (81). Urban space consequently represents “a complex web of historical markers that point to the continuing heterogeneous life of a vital city” (81), and M. Silverman similarly examines sites and their cultural representation as a “condensation ... [of] historical moments” (*Palimpsestic* 160) that “conjoins past and present, here and there, today’s observers and former actors” (163). The two authors’ work is thus suggestive of an understanding of site in which the past is always already present and complexly recalled.

Nevertheless, what this presence represents is not clearly defined. Huyssen, for instance, argues that memory “is always in and of the present, whilst its referent is of the past and thus absent” (3–4); M. Silverman asserts that, when discussing such a past, we are speaking only of “the shadow of other times and places” (*Palimpsestic* 99), and he thus writes of a “haunted space” in which what went before persists only in a spectral form (164). Whilst the then is confidently asserted to be retained within the now, therefore, what is understood by the present past, the place that it occupies within space, and what this means for memory remains unresolved. The impression given is that “memory and temporality have invaded

spaces” (Huyssen 6–7), as the uncertainty prompted by such open questions causes unease: does the past represent a tangible and vital presence that underpins the locations in which we live, or does it occupy a separate realm whose influence upon the landscape is less substantial yet more unsettling?

A more fundamental issue belies the study of memory and space, however: markedly absent is a clearly elaborated definition of the locations examined. Whilst ‘site’ is perhaps the most commonly employed term, little attention has been paid to theorising its contours and character, resulting in problematic ambiguities in its usage. Indeed, that so many authors refer to ‘sites of memory’ in their writings, as either an implicit nod towards Nora’s original writings or in their critique of his work¹², is itself troublesome: not only is Nora’s own definition extremely general, but ‘site’ itself is far from the only, nor necessarily the most appropriate, translation of the original term. Nora does not restrict his understanding of the *lieu de mémoire* to geographical places, instead using it to describe any location, object or activity that has been accorded a particular significance within a community’s memory culture; this certainly includes “[m]useums, archives, cemeteries and collections” (“Musées, archives, cimetières et collections”) yet it is also used to discuss “festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions ... [and] fraternal orders” (“fêtes, anniversaires, traités, procès-verbaux ... [et] associations”) (“Entre” xxiv). As such, Nora’s usage of the term is not as restricted to the topographical as subsequent usage might suggest, and this ambiguity has been further obscured by the fact that *lieu de mémoire* has itself been so variously translated into English. Stephen Legg notes that “sites” may be the term that the Nora himself favoured, yet the official English translation describes them as “realms”, and still other authors have opted for “places” (Legg 482). Precisely what is understood as a site in memory studies is consequently remarkably unclear, with remarkable opacity even in Nora’s own definition of the term.

Nevertheless, the need to comprehend both how we remember in space, and how space itself accords a presence to the past, has been pressing since the study of memory was first proposed, and I believe that the interdisciplinary approach adopted in this thesis enables us

¹² “Site of memory” is the term used by Jay Winter in his development of Nora’s approach (10), as well as by Erll (“Travelling” 4) and Rothberg (“Introduction” 8) in their respective critiques, and M. Silverman deliberately uses a derivation thereof in discussing “sites of violence” (*Palimpsestic* 13).

to refine this understanding. As early as 1950, Halbwachs argued that, as a community lived within and appropriated a given landscape, they reproduced it in such a manner that it would bear the traces of their common past. The memory embodied by the space he describes might consequently be conceived of in terms of plasticity, and points to the possibilities afforded by studying site as such. Halbwachs wrote that groups “inscribe ... their image in the ground and rediscover their collective memories within the spatial framework thus defined” (“dessinent ... leur forme sur le sol et retrouvent leurs souvenirs collectifs dans le cadre spatial ainsi défini”) (104): the landmarks thus delineated ensure that the past remains present long after the initial act of inscription. What is more, Halbwachs deemed a site’s production to be an ongoing process, implicating both the location itself and its inhabitants. Even in those spaces that appear to be entirely unchanging, he asserts that “[t]hey are only immobile in appearance” (“Immobiles, ils ne le sont qu’en apparence”) (84), and instead are subject to a continual process of transformation in which “the place has received the imprint of the group, and vice versa” (“le lieu a reçu l’empreinte du groupe, et réciproquement”) (85).

The space described might therefore be characterised as plastic, defined by its persistence and change, an anchor for recollection yet one that is continually being produced anew. Halbwachs writes that:

When a group is inserted into a parcel of space, it transforms it in its image, but at the same time bends and adapts to the material things that resist it.

Lorsqu’un groupe est inséré dans une partie de l’espace, il la transforme à son image, mais en même temps il se plie et s’adapte à des choses matérielles qui lui résistent. (84)

The relationship between the remembering community and the site in which they remember may thus be interpreted through the prism of plasticity: defined both by its ability to be sculpted anew by new events, whilst ensuring the framework of the old cannot be entirely erased. If Halbwachs argued that “there is no collective memory that does not unfold within a spatial framework” (“il n’est point de mémoire collective qui ne se déroule dans un cadre spatial”) (93), then it is this framework that must be interrogated more closely. Plasticity offers a model by means of which to comprehend the dynamics that ensure that the past

represents a resilient yet shifting presence in site; it is to geography that I will turn to define the site itself.

Geography

Having identified a lack of clarity within memory studies regarding the role of space in remembering, and indeed in the definition of the locations in which we remember, I turned to geography to provide a more focused framework for this phenomenon. Writers within this field have long asserted the indissoluble relationship between time and space, arguing that how we think about the one thus has implications for the other (Ingold; May and Thrift; Massey, *For Space*). This points to the critical contribution that the work of geographers might make to our study of memory, and it is on this basis that I have drawn upon and developed Schatzki's conception of site. Site is akin to theorisations of place in emphasising the particular location and spatial context within which social life transpires¹³ (Agnew; Massey, "Global"). Nevertheless, I believe that site affords greater emphasis than place to the activities and processes that delineate, produce and re-produce a space, rendering Schatzki's term more useful as a model upon which to base my study of memory. In addition, Schatzki's work has a number of methodological implications for my research. The author encourages the close scrutiny of case studies, yet is not restrictive in how these are defined, offering a focused yet flexible framework of analysis. What is more, the author outlines site's production in similar terms to those used to describe plasticity. He argues that site is characterised by both a form that is inherited and one that is continually reproduced, so that embodied in a space is a persistent yet evolving past. Memory is thus implicit in Schatzki's conception of site, and it is on this basis that I have utilised it to define my object of study so that its dynamics and evolution might be examined more closely.

Geographers argue that, far from representing separate spheres, time and space are entirely bound up in one another. If time is deemed to be complex, heterogeneous and evolving, therefore, then space must be considered similarly so, with significant implications for how

¹³ John A. Agnew writes that, at its most basic, place "refers to either a location somewhere" or to "where an activity or object is located" (318), and Doreen Massey similarly contends that a traditional understanding of the term deems places to possess "single, essential, identities" ("Global" 152) that are rooted in the "particular, unique, point" (154) that they occupy within the broader context of space.

we conceive of past, present and future. May and Thrift argue that “the foundational categories of Space and Time” have often been positioned within “a familiar and unhelpful dualism” (1): they write that, “rather than seeking to clarify their inter-dependency”, the two primary dimensions of human experience have been “treated in isolation” (3), theorised as distinct realms rather than as an interwoven whole. This has led to the periodic prioritisation of one over the other, and in particular of time over space¹⁴.

More recent geographical theory, however, has argued that the two dimensions benefit substantially from being thought of in combination. Massey contends that “time and space must be thought together”, and that as a result “the imagination of one will have repercussions... for the imagination of the other” (*For Space* 18). She consequently argues that “if time is to be open then space must be open too”: the theorisation of temporality must lead us to approach spatiality as similarly “open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming” (59). What is more, Tim Ingold encourages us to study a given space as one in which both previous and forthcoming events are held in tension, so that remembering within this context is an act that engages an always already present past. In theorising landscape, Ingold writes that “the present is not marked off from a past that it has replaced or a future that will, in turn, replace it”; instead, the space of the now “gathers the past and future into itself” (159), so that remembering involves “engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past” (153). If the study of memory in site is therefore concerned with how different moments in the past continue to give form to present locations and to resonate within them, then geography offers the foundations upon which to build a more dynamic conception of this space and its temporality.

It is on this basis that I have deployed Theodore Schatzki’s theorisation of site to identify the case studies through which this thesis has carried out its analysis. Schatzki defines the site at its most fundamental as a location in which the day-to-day existence of a community transpires: first and foremost, it represents “the place where, and as part of which, social life inherently occurs” (*Site* xi). The author argues that the site is both material and social in form

¹⁴ Jon May and Nigel Thrift write that even current writings “continue to see-saw between a prioritisation of either space or time” (2), and Massey argues that a focus upon time has rendered space “a residual category whose definition is derived without much serious thought” (*For Space* 47).

and function, and is constituted by “interlocked practices and orders” (70): orders denote the “artifacts, organisms, and things” that form the physical framework within and through which social existence transpires (22); whereas practices represent the “activities” by means of which a site is lived in and used, ranging from official ceremony to everyday work and leisure (70-71). This means that the concrete dimensions and social usage of site are entirely interdependent: it is composed of “arrangements of entities” that only exist because of the “organized activities” that arrange them, and vice versa (xii).

What is more, Schatzki contends that, whilst site always represents a preformed space for a group’s activities, the site itself is not unchanged by what occurs there. Instead, it is defined by the way in which its existing spatiality is appropriated and made by the community, the resultant newly transformed space providing the context for future reappropriation and remaking. Schatzki concludes that “[h]uman coexistence thus transpires as and amid an elaborate, constantly evolving nexus of arranged things and organized activities” (xi). Site as defined by Schatzki therefore represents the most basic spatial context for everyday human activity. It is constituted by the material dimensions that delineate its location and the social structures that govern its usage, and is subject to continual transformation as its inherited form is produced anew; as such it has been widely discussed, developed and deployed within geography (Jones et al.; Woodward et al.; Maus; Everts et al.).

It is my contention that Schatzki’s definition of site affords a number of insights that might hone our approach to memory and space, whilst also displaying the plastic dynamics that unify the different literatures on which I draw. To begin with, Schatzki emphasises the need for close examination of individual case studies, yet is not prescriptive as to their precise nature. The study of site should be carried out through particular examples, but these can and should range widely in their location, dimensions and usage. Schatzki’s work stresses that human activity is indissociable from the particular location in which it transpires, so that the life of a community is “intrinsically and decisively rooted in the site where it takes place” (*Site* xi). Consequently, an understanding of site must be built up through the close examination of selected case studies rather than abstract theorisation; he asserts that “substantiality, perspicuity, understanding, and grasp” are achievable only when “select empirical phenomena serve as foci where the theory as a whole can be concretized,

elaborated, and corroborated” (xix). Nevertheless, Schatzki leaves the definition of such a site deliberately open. He writes that “practices and orders are entwined ... in varyingly tight or loose multilayered webs” so that the nature of each site is “intricate, contingent and shifting” (154); a site may be clearly identified, yet we cannot generalise about such aspects as its size, usage and evolution.

This concentrated yet far from prescriptive approach is deemed by John Paul Jones et al. to render site a productive prism of analysis. They argue that geography has often approached space as either wholly defined by its specificity, or as completely devoid of it¹⁵. Site, they assert, avoids reduction to either side of this binary: it is defined by its “compositional specificities” that mean that it cannot be ignored as the context for our activities, yet not structured within “a priori transcendental forms” that rigidly delineate it. (265). It is characterised as “a localized relation through resonant, unfolding doings and sayings” (Woodward et al. 210), situated in space yet varying in form. Such a definition lends itself to the study of memory in space; indeed, that Schatzki stresses the “embedded located-ness” of human activity (*Site* 140) echoes Radstone’s insistence upon the “locatedness” of memory (Radstone 111), so that site represents an ideal prism through which to examine how remembering shapes and is shaped by the particular locations in which it occurs. On the one hand, it emphasises that remembering is always defined as much by where a recollected event (and indeed the event of recollection) took place as by what occurred there. Whilst memory may be tied to sites, however, the sites themselves vary broadly in form and function. Schatzki’s site therefore enables us to closely study the relationship between memory and space, whilst nevertheless recognising that the locations we interrogate will be diverse and dynamic in character.

In addition, Schatzki emphasises site as both a product and as a process, both as a configuration of entities that has already been constituted, and as one that is defined by its continued reproduction. The morphology identified is definitively plastic in nature, and

¹⁵ The authors contrast space as composed of rigidly defined locations within “an already ordered spatial imaginary”, unchanging and immovable, with that of “spaces of flows”, in which locations themselves are of less importance than the connections and mobility between them, and in which our activities appear to “fly above the stickiness of space” (265).

results, Schatzki argues, in a past that both structures the present space and is reproduced by the activities that occur therein. Noting that “[t]hings tend not to form random aggregates of continuously metamorphosing matters” (*Site 1*), Schatzki argues that site is instead subject to continual “[o]rdering”, which he describes as “the dynamic processes that organize-order social existence” (6). This entails that, on the one hand, site represents the product of prior activity, of how its material dimensions and contents have been previously arranged; what we observe in a space, he contends, is “the way things are laid out or hang together in that domain” (1). On the other, however, Schatzki stresses that “orders are not self-standing or self-propagating configurations”, that a site’s disposition will not endure if it does not continue to be ordered (59). The practice of site does not, therefore, cease after its initial production, but instead persistently constructs and reconstructs it throughout its existence, either perpetuating its existing configuration or transforming it.

Keith Woodward et al. similarly understand the site defined by Schatzki as a work in progress: its production commenced long before a community’s engagement, yet it will also continue long afterwards. They contend that site “exists by virtue of its specific hangings together”, the way in which it has already been configured (210); nevertheless, the fact that we inherit site as “a prefabricated, pre-existent ‘thing’” does not mean that it remains as such, as its inhabitants and users seek either its “maintenance or transformation” (210). In so doing, they produce the inherited space anew, so that site is consequently illustrative of a “processual bricolage” at work (210). It embodies the activity of its production thus far, whilst remaining open to (and indeed demanding) continued practice, and the morphology identified is therefore one of plasticity. If Malabou’s concept has guided the thinking of this thesis, then the site outlined by Schatzki offers a spatial prism through which to examine its dynamics at work, characterised by the tension between the resilience of form and its simultaneous capacity for transformation.

What is more, understanding site as simultaneously process and product has significant temporal implications. If a space is always already elaborated, yet equally in perpetual transformation, then the resultant site represents a constant negotiation between the site as it is inherited and what the site will become, between past, present and future. Site represents the concrete embodiment of a community’s development, its existing

configuration the product of prior actions and habits that underpin the space's contemporary usage, ensuring "the prolongation of the past into the present" (Schatzki, *Timespace* xiv). Nevertheless, site's pre-existing dimensions "do not cause or antecedently pin down" the activity possible therein (x); novel interactions subject its space to "multifaceted change" as it is reinscribed (*Site* xii). As Jones et al. conclude, sites "'hang together' through the congealments" of what has already occurred within them, yet the "'actuality' of any site is always poised for compositional variation", open to reworking and continually reworked (265). Schatzki thus defines site as a "timespace", possessed not just of spatial dimensions and dynamics, but also of a complex temporality (*Timespace* ix), and the result is a space that proves simultaneously "complete, perduring, autonomous, and final", and "precarious, unstable, and transitory" (Schatzki, *Site* 6). Defined both by the persistence of the past and inevitability of present and future transformation, site manifests a continual cycle of inheritance and reproduction as it is elaborated over time.

Memory is therefore fundamentally implied in Schatzki's understanding of site. Maus promotes Schatzki's work as "a promising path in geographies of memory", by means of which we may "analyse explicit and implicit memory work" as well as its role in "place-bound memory-making" (Maus 215–16). Arguing that the approach outlined by the theorist might be applied to diverse instances of commemoration¹⁶, Maus suggests that the examination of space as consisting of orders and practices enables us to identify "geographies that are ... enmeshed with commemorative meanings" (221); to examine those locations situated as "relics of a time past", as well as the "practices of localised memory" that produce them (215).

Maus is concerned with "landscapes of memory" more than the individual locations that structure them (215); nevertheless, I believe that such locations might also benefit from Schatzki's theorisation, and site has consequently been utilised to define this thesis' object of study. If a location's material form represents the ultimate product of a lengthy process of transformations and renegotiations, then recalled in its present disposition are the diverse moments and durations in which it has been arranged over time. In engaging with this site

¹⁶ G. Maus writes that a broad range of space-based "practices that explicitly engage with the past" present "potential objects of study", including "monument protection, curating a museum exhibition, or historical research" (217).

and reproducing it for ourselves, we either perpetuate those traces of the past that already persist within its form, or we record the imprint of our own present; in either case, the space is transformed through the work of remembering. Memory thus represents something that a site has and something that we do in and through it; the form of the present space recalls its past evolution, yet it is only through memorial acts that this past may be processed, preserved or produced anew. Schatzki's conception therefore enables us to clearly identify the spaces in which remembering occurs: plastically sculpted over time, defined by the present past, and both pre-existing and produced anew, it is this definition of site that I have used to determine the case studies upon which I will focus.

Art history and archaeology

Thus far I have outlined how scholars within memory studies have examined the way in which we remember within spatial contexts, and have argued that the implications of this recollection for the locations in which it occurs have not been fully explored. I have asserted that an understanding of site drawn from geography offers a model through which this memory might be examined more closely, using plasticity to conceive of site's morphology. Absent from these literatures, however, is a critical lexicon that might be used to describe how we experience the present past within site and the memory dynamics that constitute it. To provide this vocabulary, I turned to the work of the art historian Didi-Huberman and the archaeologist Olivier. Whilst disciplinarily distant from one another, I identify a shared focus on materiality and memory in the theorists' work, one rooted in a Benjaminian understanding of time and plastic in its dynamics. What is more, the two authors pay close attention to the relationship between past and present in their objects of study, and it is the heterogeneous memory that they theorise that I believe might be used to study site. What is more, their emphasis upon excavation as a means of engaging the present past (drawn again from the work of Benjamin) is suggestive of how we might ourselves study site, and it is this approach that has inspired my methodology.

At first glance, the writings of Didi-Huberman and Olivier might not appear to offer obvious foundations for being used in tandem. Didi-Huberman's work is primarily concerned with the temporality of "the image" ("l'image") (*Devant* 9) and Olivier with that of "archeological remains" ("*vestiges archéologiques*") (*Sombre* 14). Nevertheless, common to both is an interest in

what Olivier describes as “material memory” (“Past” 212), examining the way in which the past persists within the present of their chosen object of study. They share an intellectual genealogy, rooted in the writings of Benjamin and his understanding of the temporality of matter. Both authors quote Benjamin’s “Excavation and Memory”, in which he writes that “memory is not an instrument for exploring the past”, but instead represents “the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried” (576). The past, he contends, is thus not a point along a temporal continuum that has been left behind, but is instead embodied within the materiality of the world in which we live.

As a consequence, Benjamin argues, “[t]he present ... comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgement” (*Illuminations* 263); he proposes that the past is retained within the present, and it is this phenomenon that Didi-Huberman and Olivier examine in their own disciplinary fields. Olivier contends that “the past is the very matter of the present, ... its weft, its thickness” (“le passé est la matière même du présent, ... sa trame, son épaisseur”): what has occurred in an object’s unfolding through time shapes the very substance of its form today (*Sombre* 67). Its present configuration therefore represents “nothing more than the sum total of all the past times which physically coexist in the present moment” (“Past” 205); when Didi-Huberman describes material objects as sculpted by “a certain *dynamic of memory*” (“une certaine *dynamique de la mémoire*”), it is as a present and evolving force within their unfolding that he understands this. The two authors consequently argue that the workings of memory fundamentally underpin material objects, direct their evolution and shape our experience of them. The result is that accumulated within the present of an entity are a diversity of pasts, prior moments whose mark has both persisted within it and been transformed by the inscription of subsequent events, and it is this understanding that I will use to examine the plastic memory observed in sites.

Didi-Huberman and Olivier note that the memory observed in both the archaeological artefact and the image testifies to a multiform and dynamic temporality, one that Didi-Huberman defines as that of “the anachronism” (“l’anachronisme”) (*Devant* 13). It is on this basis that I believe their work might be used to study the site, offering a critical framework through which to examine its dynamics at work and how they impact upon our experience

of the present past. Olivier writes that we are habituated to thinking of time teleologically: we perceive it to progress from past to present and present to future in a neat, linear fashion, so that prior events are surpassed as new ones occur. He writes, however, that the “memory of places and of things ... is not the sequential and unilinear time of conventional history” (“cette mémoire des lieux et des choses n’est pas le temps séquentiel et unilinéaire de l’histoire conventionnelle”) (*Sombre* 103); instead, these are defined by “a pluri-temporal time” (“un temps pluri-temporel”) that he defines precisely as “that of memory” (“celui de la mémoire”) (14).

Didi-Huberman elaborates on the temporality that Olivier identifies within the context of the image. This, he contends, is defined by the traces of multiple events and processes, moments and durations; within an artwork, photograph or sculpture “*all times meet*, enter into collision or melt plastically into one another, bifurcate or become entangled” (“*tous les temps se rencontrent*, entrent en collision ou bien se fondent plastiquement les uns dans les autres, bifurquent ou bien s’enchevêtrent”) (*Devant* 43). Didi-Huberman describes this temporality as one of anachronism; ordinarily understood as “the intrusion of one era into another” (“l’intrusion d’une époque dans une autre”) (29), he argues that the inevitable presence of multiple pasts within the now means that anachronism is the most appropriate term by means of which “to express the exuberance, the complexity, the overdetermination” (“exprimer l’exubérance, la complexité, la surdétermination”) of the present. When examining the temporality of a material object, therefore, Didi-Huberman argues that what went before consequently cannot be deemed distinct from the current site that it continues to structure; instead, the past must be conceived of as multiply remembered within its present form. Ultimately, the writings of Olivier and Didi-Huberman testify to the “exuberant *complexity of time*” (“l’exubérante *complexité du temps*”) that we observe in material objects (*Devant* 83), and I will draw on their work to open up and to describe memory in the context of site. I will utilise their work as a critical prism through which to study how the past persists within my case studies, how it shapes the lives of their inhabitants, and how these individuals have responded to a memory that proves both indestructible as a presence and unstoppable in its evolution.

What is more, the two authors have inspired how I will approach these case studies, taking the excavatory method that they propose and utilising it in my examination of site. Didi-Huberman and Olivier argue that archaeology is the discipline best suited to the interrogation of the present past¹⁷; in defining this, the two theorists draw on Benjamin's 'Excavation and Memory', in which he argues that the individual "who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging" ("Excavation" 576). To excavate, they contend, is to engage the past in site through the present in which it is remembered, to examine its traces for evidence of how this memory has evolved (how it has been retained and how it has been transformed), and to discern within these traces (both material and imagined) site's plasticity and anachronism. It is such an approach that I will seek to employ in my study.

To begin with, I will argue that we must approach the site as memory, and the pasts it preserves as belonging to the present. The site that we excavate does not allow us "to touch the past" ("toucher le passé") as it was, for as such it "is dead and ... it will never return" ("est mort et ... il ne reviendra plus") (Olivier, *Sombre* 13); utterly transformed from the moment it was first marked out by years of usage, addition and change, it is only as we encounter it here and now that site may be studied. Site thus represents a "reminiscent present" ("présent réminiscent") (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 100), an aggregation of times in which the past is retained yet transformed, and our second task is to discern the narrative of how this memory has evolved over time. Benjamin describes the materiality of the excavated site as where its story is secreted: its "matter" is composed of "strata which yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigation" ("Excavation" 576). It is through the study of how the different pasts that compose a site have persisted and changed that the full extent of the site's memory may be appreciated; as Olivier writes, "their alterations are the memory itself of the very long journey that they had to undertake across the obscurity of time to arrive here" ("leurs altérations sont la mémoire même du très long voyage qu'il leur a fallu effectuer à travers l'obscurité du temps pour parvenir jusqu'ici") (*Sombre* 21). To study memory within site is therefore not simply to identify the moments in which a given temporal inscription

¹⁷ Whilst Olivier is an archaeologist by training, Didi-Huberman similarly defines his own approach as one of a "critical archaeology of the history of art" ("archéologie critique de l'histoire de l'art") (*Devant* 12).

originates; it is to trace how this mark has evolved through time, how it has changed as well as what has persisted.

It is therefore through the examination of site's unfolding that its memory may be discerned, and the final step of excavation is to collate the heterogeneous entities, both material and cultural, that collectively constitute it and from these to expose its pluritemporal present. To do so is to undertake what Didi-Huberman describes as a "double archaeology" ("double archéologie") (*Devant* 104): we must carry out "a material archaeology" ("une archéologie matérielle"), studying the site through its concrete form, its contents and how these have evolved through time (104). Simultaneously, however, we must perform "a psychic archaeology" ("une archéologie psychique"), in which we study how that site and its past have been perceived by those who occupy and use it, both how this has remained constant and how it has evolved (104).

It is precisely such a double excavation that is utilised by Benjamin, and that Didi-Huberman identifies "in the disparate notes of the *Arcades Project*" ("déploie surtout dans les notes éparses du *Livre des passages*") (*Devant* 104). This work's monumental account of Paris's architecture and inhabitants is a perfect example of the approach that the writer puts forward. Nevertheless, if Didi-Huberman deems Benjamin's work to be primarily concerned with the "material" and the "anthropological" ("anthropologique") (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 109), we might also assert the centrality of the cultural to Benjamin's study. The *Arcades Project* certainly collects together the details of the Eiffel Tower's two and a half million rivets (Meyer qtd. in Benjamin, *Arcades* 161) and accounts of how "people despaired of the art of iron" (Dubech and d'Espezel qtd. in Benjamin, *Arcades* 161), yet it does so through a diversity of writings and images, and situates the site within an imaginary that encompasses poetry and artwork (Benjamin, *Arcades* 163–64). If excavation is the method most appropriate to the study of site and its memory, therefore, it is through the material and the imagined that it must take place. Such an approach has inspired my engagement with the case studies of my thesis, taking the present site, discerning its evolution through time, and examining both the history of the location itself (its construction, development and usage) and how it has been depicted and reimagined in the work of cultural producers.

Sited memory

Memory studies has raised the key questions upon which this thesis will focus; geography has provided the framework through which to delineate my case studies; the writings of Didi-Huberman, Olivier and Benjamin have provided the lexicon with which to describe the workings of memory in space; and Malabou's plasticity offers a unifying framework within which to comprehend site's morphology and temporality. I will now outline how I have chosen the sites through which I will carry out this thesis' analysis and how I intend to approach them; this draws upon all the bodies of work described above, and deploys them in conjunction in an approach that I have termed sited memory. Building on Schatzki's writings through the work of Lefebvre, I propose to study lived locations in which remembering represents but one activity that occurs there. Additionally, I will use Lefebvre's work as well as that of James Donald and Marcel Roncayolo to theorise site as both a material and an imagined space, and to assert the fundamental role played by cultural memory in its unfolding. Finally, I will draw on Erll and Alev Çinar and Thomas Bender to examine how sites are represented and rethought by cultural producers. I will argue that the study of literature, film, artwork and digital media enables us to analyse both how the past is perceived by users of a space, and how this influences its present construction and usage. Memory in site must therefore be approached both through the space's material form and through how it has been lived and reimagined, and it is this that I define as sited memory.

Lefebvre's understanding of space is fundamentally akin to that of Schatzki, identifying similar dynamics in its form and unfolding. Lefebvre deems space to represent both an already constituted entity and an ongoing work, so that "production and product present themselves as two inseparable sides" ("la production et le produit se présentent comme deux côtés inséparables") (*Production* 47). In addition, Lefebvre pays similar attention to how the past is recorded within, added to and renegotiated within this space, so that he understands it as defined by the presence of the past. He writes that "what took place in modifying locations and places ... comes to be inscribed in space" ("ce qui s'y passa en modifiant les endroits et places ... vient s'inscrire dans l'espace"), so that evidence of what has been remains present through "its traces, its inscriptions" ("ses traces, ses inscriptions") (47). He also writes, however, that "this space is always, today as it was formerly, a present space ... with

its liaisons and connections in action” (“cet espace est toujours, aujourd’hui comme jadis, un espace présent ... avec ses liaisons et connexions en acte”), always being produced anew in ways that add to or reform the already existent past (47). Edward W. Soja summarises this understanding as one in which “inextricably intertwined temporal, social, and spatial relations are being constantly reinscribed” (18), and common to Schatzki and Lefebvre is an understanding of space and its temporality as plastic.

Both Lefebvre and Schatzki emphasise that space is a social construct: this has led me to focus upon sites that are first and foremost lived environments, claimed and contested by remembering communities, and that continue to be produced anew by their present-day activity. If Lefebvre asserts as his focus “[l]’espace social” (*Production* 41), then Schatzki’s work is similarly concerned with the “site of the social” (*Site* xii); nevertheless, it is the French theorist who has more closely examined how groups appropriate a space, sculpt it to their needs and desires, and, in doing so, transform it into the embodiment of their past. Lefebvre writes that “each society ... produces a space, its own” (“chaque société ... produit un espace, le sien”) (*Production* 40), so that it is rooted in the site thus constructed; the author also contends that this work “is not accomplished in a day” (“ne s’accomplit pas en un jour”), so that the site is an ongoing “process” (“processus”), rather than a finished project (43). Discernible within this site is the way in which “[t]he past has left its traces” (“Le passé a laissé ses traces”) (47), so that its present-day form represents the story of that community’s relationship with their landscape.

The past is consequently implicated in the many everyday practices that its members carry out; these may be diverse in character¹⁸, yet they are all defined by the way in which “past phenomena circumscribe, induce-orient, and underwrite ... present activity” (Schatzki, *Timespace* x). When we study a site, therefore, what we examine is the still unfolding memory of a community and how it underpins, informs and is added to by their day-to-day existence. On this basis, I have chosen as my case studies everyday locations in which memory represents but one aspect of their form and usage. They are sites whose associations with the

¹⁸ Schatzki cites as just a number of examples “political practices, cooking practices, banking practices, recreation practices, religious practices, and educational practices” (*Site* 70).

past represent the accumulation of many years of living within, co-producing and often contesting ownership of a given space, rather than the result of a single event. What is more, they are locations that continue to be used within the present day, so that their memory continues to represent an ongoing work.

Lefebvre also emphasises that our conception of what constitutes space should not be limited to its material form and its social usage. Instead, he argues that the way in which a location is imagined (how we perceive its contents, what we think about it and how this directs our activities) is an equally fundamental aspect of space, and it is through this imagined dimension that I contend that memory may be studied in site. Like Schatzki, Lefebvre approaches space as defined by its concrete arrangement and day-to-day usage, by how it is physically “perceived” (“perçu”) and by how it is “lived” (“vécu”) (*Production* 49). Nevertheless, Lefebvre identifies an additional facet to this formation, one that he defines as the “conceived” (“conçu”) and that serves to render it a “triplicity: three terms and not two” (“triplicité: trois termes et non pas deux”) (49). The conceived, Lefebvre argues, makes up what he describes as space’s “mental” sphere (49): it is constituted by “representations of space” (“représentations de l’espace”), the way in which it has been captured and reimagined within the work “of thinkers, of planners, of urbanists” (“des savants, des planificateurs, des urbanistes”) (48). He therefore argues that how a space is thought of is as important as its physical order and communal practice.

This is not to suggest that an understanding of space as a mental as well as a material and social construct is not implied in Schatzki’s writings. The theorist does not delimit his conception of practice to physical interaction with a site; instead, he writes that this might represent “a set of doings and sayings”, in which what is spoken or written about a site may contribute to its unfolding form (*Site* 73). What is more, the author writes that “[e]very entity has meaning”, a set of associations ascribed to it and from which it is indissociable, and that “its meaning can be multiple, unstable, and constantly changing”, subject to the same dynamics of preservation and reproduction that he identifies in site itself (19). Nevertheless, it is Lefebvre who ascribes the imaginary a critically determinant role in space’s production. He argues that the conceived informs our experience of the material and social to the extent that the individual “may pass from one to the other without losing himself” (“puisse passer

de l'un à l'autre sans s'y perdre") (51): so inextricably bound are these dimensions that Soja defines them as a fundamental and indissociable "trialectics" of space (10). Combining this with Schatzki's model, I therefore propose to study the sites in which we remember as "*real-and-imagined places*" (6), locations in which the material, the social and the mental cannot be extricated.

Lefebvre is far from the only author to propose that space is possessed of a conceived dimension (Donald; Çinar and Bender; Roncayolo). Theorists such as Roncayolo and Donald also assert that our landscapes represent "an imagined environment", one in which cultural media shape how we think of and live within it (Donald 8). Any work that reflects or informs how we imagine a space is consequently implicated in its production, cultural media both offering an insight into the forms and processes that constitute a site and actively contributing to them. Focusing on urban space, Donald asks "why reduce the reality of cities to their thingness, or their thingness to a question of bricks and mortar?" (8); Roncayolo similarly argues that "the tissue of the city" ("le tissu de la ville") exists not just in its streets and buildings, but also in "the mind of its inhabitants" ("l'esprit de ses habitants") (*Imaginaire* 38). What results is a continuous back-and-forth between the concrete environment and our perceptions of it, so that:

ways of seeing and understanding the city inevitably inform ways of acting on the space of the city, with consequences which then in turn produce a modified city which is again seen, understood and acted on. (Donald 27)

In this intermingling of material and mental, anything that informs our imagination must be deemed to reproduce space itself. When literature, images or other artforms offer a new perspective on a site and its story, Donald contends that this represents, not "the mental reproduction or representation of a thing external to the mind", but instead "a creative act of appropriation or meaning-making" (18). Applying such an understanding to site, what we observe is the fundamental place of cultural reimagining in its unfolding. As writers and artists depict a location, they capture something of its form and how it is interpreted by its inhabitants and users; in addition, their work informs how we conceive of the space itself, and shapes how we live within and reproduce it. Cultural artefacts therefore serve as a lens

through which we might examine site's production, as well as a medium in which it is produced anew.

Memory represents one of the facets of site most often captured and reconceived within this cultural work. I will argue that this represents what Erll defines as a process of "remediation", the way in which media transform that which they recall and in so doing alter our perception of the past ("Literature" 392). On this basis, I have chosen to examine case studies that have been diversely represented and reconceived by authors and artists, and will utilise their works as a lens for studying site's plasticity and memory. Erll argues that the way in which producers recall the past through cultural media does not leave that which they remember untouched. She asserts that what we recollect about an occurrence or an era is rarely "what one might cautiously call the 'actual events'", but instead "a canon of existent medial constructions", in which the past has been repeatedly reimagined even before we encounter it ("Literature" 392). This she defines as remediation; cultural media, she contends, do not simply convey the past, they construct it.

Erll does not apply the concept of remediation in the context of concrete locations. Nevertheless, if site is deemed to be constituted both by its material form and how we conceive of it, then this suggests that the cultural media that depict a site and its memory must be implicated in its preservation and development. Like Donald and Roncayolo, Çinar and Bender assert that urban space consists of more than simply the "social and physical" (xiii); they argue that we must also account for how it is "located and continually reproduced through ... acts of the imagination" (xii). To account for "the constitutive power of the imagination" (xiii), therefore, Çinar and Bender contend that we must study the city through the works in which this takes place; they write that:

if cities are constructed through the act of collective imagination, then we need to look for the city in such media ... as literary texts, popular media, films, the daily discursive reality of inhabitants, and numerous other forms of the public culture of daily life. (xv)

When Erll writes that cultural remediation may "create in our minds certain images of the past and ... even shape our own experience" (397), then this must be considered as true of site

as it is of the memory with which it is associated. I therefore propose to study sites and their memory through the work of the cultural producers who have remediated them. It is such individuals who are able to recognise the marks of past events and processes for what they are, whose present-day work is guided by what they perceive, and whose remediation of site conceives of it as other than what it is right now, imagining both prior and possible forms. Cultural media are consequently implicated in both site's memory and its plasticity, and will form the primary corpus through which I will interrogate my chosen examples.

Drawing on the insights detailed above, what I propose to study in this thesis is sited memory. Whilst the distinction between *site of* memory and *sited* memory may appear slight, I believe that this encourages an important shift in how we conceive of the locations in which we remember, and the role of our remembering in their ongoing production. In studying sited memory, the importance of the spatial contexts in which recollection occurs is affirmed: I will study site as the embodiment of an always already existing past that underpins present activity within it. Nevertheless, the change from noun to a participle adjective recognises that memory is both something that a site has, and an activity that we undertake within and through it: I will examine not solely what pasts are already recalled into a location, but also the diverse ways in which its memory is conceived of anew and added to in the present. I will argue that sited memory is consequently concerned both with site as a material entity and site as it is practised, memory as it perdures and memory as it evolves. It recognises the past's resilience within a given location, and the contingency of its particular form upon present interventions and occurrences, so that what we understand as the memory of site is fundamentally plastic.

Methodology and case studies

The methodology that will be used in this thesis is heavily inspired by the interdisciplinary framework outlined in the previous pages, examining my chosen sites from a number of different perspectives to discern their implications for our understanding of memory. Indeed, if a mixed methods approach “combines elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches ... for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”

(Johnson et al. 112), then such is the approach adopted in this thesis. On the one hand, I will carry out a cultural analysis typical of memory studies research: I will select a variety of media, closely examine the narratives of the past that they relate, and utilise these to construct an understanding of sited memory. On the other, I will carry out this analysis within the context of carefully chosen case studies. Having researched the history of these locations, I will situate the cultural works within the broader story of their development, undertaking a transhistorical study of their memories' evolution over time. It is through this research that the theoretical framework of my thesis has been developed: I have followed something of a practice-led model, developing its key concepts by applying them to case studies and expanding, revising or abandoning them as a result of what was discovered.

As previously stated, I have selected as my case studies lived sites. Each represents a location whose memorial significance is the result of a lengthy relationship between a community or communities and the present past; indeed, the majority continue to host everyday activities to this day, even as they have become loci for remembering. Additionally, I have chosen sites that have been remediated by a wealth of cultural works. From novels and photography to blogs and video games, these offer diverse media through which to undertake my study of sited memory, examining how producers have represented and reimagined the sites in question. What is more, in each of my case studies the memory or memories with which the site is associated has presented unique challenges for its designers, inhabitants and users, the present past proving far from straightforward to negotiate. In some, attempts have been made to suppress an undesirable memory that has nevertheless proven impervious to erasure; in others, a narrative of the past was carefully constructed to the exclusion of others, yet has not taken root as intended; in all cases, sited memory has demonstrated a plasticity that has undermined the efforts of some yet been engaged productively by others. The examples selected thus offer varied perspectives through which to study sited memory, and are as follows:

As the French capital's central waterway, the memorial symbolism of the Seine is self-evident: it represents Paris's oldest landmark, and embodies the memory of the metropolis' ancient and illustrious past. The presence of the river, however, has been perceived as both a blessing and a curse by the city's inhabitants and planners. Harnessed to facilitate the

modernisation of the city, its seasonal flooding has proven impossible to prevent, reminding Parisians of the prehistoric landscape on which their streets are built. The Seine is consequently demonstrative of a memory whose presence cannot be suppressed or contained, the site emblematic of a diversity of pasts that persist within its form and periodically resurge through it into the collective consciousness.

The Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George in Algiers are illustrative of the way in which sites may be constructed to materially inscribe memory narratives. In a city whose visage is testament to the repeated attempts by different regimes and communities to impose their vision of the Algerian past, the two hotels were constructed in the late 1920s to partake in this memorial rewriting, fêting the perceived success of France's imperial project and appropriating the vernacular only on the terms of the colonisers. Constructed within a pre-existing landscape, and used long after the colony's independence, however, these restrictive accounts of the past have not stood the test of time. The Aletti and Saint-George therefore demonstrate that the lived site is always home to an evolving memory, one that precludes rigid narratives from taking hold indefinitely.

The Cimetière des Saints-Innocents is conspicuous amongst this thesis' case studies as the only site no longer standing. An ancient burial ground in the Les Halles district, for centuries the Saints-Innocents represented a social hub in central Paris; in 1786, the site was cleared for reasons of public health, yet also because it embodied a medieval past that the city's inhabitants wished to consign to oblivion. Gone, however, the cemetery was not forgotten; its memory endures both in the Catacombes built to replace it, and within the city's imagination, repeatedly depicted in cultural media to this day. The Cimetière des Saints-Innocents is consequently illustrative of the way in which the materially absent site may survive its own erasure, maintaining a persistent yet dynamic presence within the landscape.

Marseille embodies the peculiar paradox of a settlement that is almost as ancient as Rome, yet whose lack of monuments or ruins causes it to be more commonly perceived as the most modern of France's cities. Where the material landscape betrays few traces of the Provençal capital's past, however, its diverse inhabitants ensure that this is never forgotten. It is in the

cultural production of Marseille that its memory may be discerned; these works constellate the experiences of the metropolis' migrant communities, and situate the city at the heart of a web of different places and times. The study of Marseille therefore illustrates how an awareness of the cultural imaginary might guide our readings of site, exposing previously undisclosed memories and inscribing new ones of our own.

Structure of thesis

The chapters that form my thesis will each take one of the case studies identified above, examine its development and usage over time, and study the cultural works in which the site or sites have been remediated. In addition, each chapter will be preceded by a section outlining the theoretical framework to be used; in this way, I will develop my understanding of sited memory through the examination of critical examples.

My first chapter will take the Seine as its case study: through Paris's primary waterway, I will interrogate the temporal nature of site. If the traditional narrative of history is one of linear and chronological progression, then I will argue that site is instead characterised by an accumulation of heterogeneous pasts that do not easily conform to this model; I will argue that it must be understood instead in terms of a multifaceted and dynamic memory. I will begin by defining these two visions of time according to Didi-Huberman's terminology; if history is deemed to be "*euchronic*" ("*euchronique*") (Devant 13), then sited memory may be better defined as "*anachronic*" ("*anachronique*") (21), and I will argue that this points to a fundamentally plastic temporality. The chapter will then proceed to study the photography of the 1910 flood, an event that unsettled Parisians' perception of their modern capital by appearing to return it to a pre-modern state. Following this, I will turn to Victor Hugo's 'A l'Arc de Triomphe', a poem in which the author muses anxiously on the ancient river and its implications for Paris's present and future. Illustrated in these works is the way in which the present past embodied in the site does not conform to a modernist understanding of history. By contrast, I will study the association of the Seine with the memory of the Algerian Massacre and Leïla Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge*. I will argue that this novella approaches the

past not as history but as memory: in so doing, it engages this memory as a present and ongoing work, and produces the site of the Seine anew.

The second chapter will utilise the examples of the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George in Algiers to examine how memory narratives come to be inscribed in site by its architects and users, and the extent to which these prove enduring. I will expand upon Nora's understanding of the *lieu de mémoire*, and will argue that this is undermined by what Didi-Huberman defines as the "survivance" (*Image* 51), the way in which the past persists and evolves within the present. I will study the architecture of the two hotels, as exemplary of both the colonial regime's efforts to impose their own vision of Algeria's past upon the landscape, and of how this proved ultimately unsuccessful. I will also examine the work of the Pied-Noir community ES'MMA, who undertake a similar project in their online writings, seeking to capture their childhood memories of the Hôtel Aletti. What their blog demonstrates, however, are the limits of an approach thus rooted in nostalgia; what went before can never be preserved as it was, for it is always already transformed from this originary moment. In contrast, I will argue that Zineb Sedira's video installation *Safir* illustrates that we may only work with the past as it is encountered in the present. The artist's work similarly depicts the Aletti, yet does so in its twenty-first century form: it embraces the multitude of pasts associated with the hotel, and therefore engages the site and its memory as plastic.

My third chapter will study the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents as an example of how a site may maintain a presence within the landscape despite attempts to erase it. I will examine this through the framework of what Didi-Huberman defines as the "*lieu malgré tout*" ("*place in spite of all*") ("*Lieu*" 37), a site in which something always survives in spite of efforts to suppress it, and I will argue that cultural remediation is critical to this process. I will begin by studying the history of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, the clearance of its contents and their relocation to the Catacombes as illustrative of attempts to both physically and symbolically bury an undesirable past. Following this, I will examine how the Catacombes would in fact enable something of its predecessor to persist, as well as the role of Louis-Sébastien Mercier's writings in preventing the cemetery from being forgotten. I will then turn to Émile Zola's *La Fortune des Rougon* and its depiction of a fictional burial ground based on the Saints-Innocents. I will use this to show how a site might attain a vitality and potency within the

imagination that exceeds that of its material form. Finally, I will study Ubisoft's video game *Assassin's Creed Unity* to demonstrate how remediation has transformed the site of the cemetery in memory, ensuring that it retains its plasticity as a presence within the Parisian landscape long after its suppression was sought.

The fourth and final chapter of the thesis will focus on Marseille to more closely examine how cultural remediation shapes our remembering in sites, as well as our experience of them. I will build on the work of Rothberg and his conception of memory as "multidirectional" (Multidirectional 3) to illustrate how cultural media may bring into dialogue, not solely diverse times, but also diverse places. I will argue that these connections shape how we conceive of space, exposing previously undisclosed pasts and constellating them in new ways; the effect, I contend, is profoundly uncanny, defamiliarising the present site yet also shifting our perception of it. In Maurice Attia's detective novel *Pointe Rouge*, I will study how the author exposes the diverse traumatic memories that underpin Marseille's memorial landscape, thereby revealing its place within a wider topography of violence. In Philippe Claudel's *La Petite fille de Monsieur Linh*, I will examine how the Provençal capital is produced anew through memory connections forged between the novel's protagonists, the city's sites exceeding their material limits through this reimagining. I will conclude the chapter by examining the Fort Saint-Jean, a military installation turned heritage landmark; I will demonstrate how approaching Marseille's sites with an awareness of the city's broader cultural memory may enable us to discern present and complex pasts that might otherwise be imperceptible.

The Seine: Modernity, Memory and Models of Time

Introduction

To speak of Paris without also speaking of the Seine is unimaginable: that the historic heart of the capital is on the Île de la Cité, its very name uniting city and waterway, indicates the extent to which Paris is a riverine landscape. Nevertheless, the river's presence in the city is not as straightforward as its ordinarily untroubled flow might suggest. The Seine has been central to the building of the modern capital: mobilised in successive attempts to renovate of the city, and flanked by clean-cut levées, it has for centuries been deemed symbolic of modernity's ability to control the primal forces of nature, and to cast off the trappings of what went before. However, even as the city's modernisers have sought to bridle the Seine, the river's natural flooding and the havoc that it repeatedly wreaks upon the urban fabric of Paris, points to an ancient past that is persistent and dynamic within the present landscape, and one whose presence the city ultimately cannot master.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will examine the traditional temporal narratives of modernity, and the questions asked of them by a site in which the past proves to be a persistent, shifting and complex presence. I will challenge the modernist claim that the past may be left behind as we move towards the future, so that time's passage is one of relentless progress and clear delineation between what has been, what is and what will be. Taking the Seine as my case study, I will demonstrate that in fact what went before may not be so easily abandoned, unsettling the neat chronology of modernity, troubling those who adhere to it and calling into question the modernist vision of the world. In its place, I will propose an understanding of time that is rooted in what, drawing on Malabou and Van Dyke, we may define as site's plasticity. I will argue that, through materiality's simultaneous yet contradictory tendency towards persistence and change, a site's plastic morphology produces it as an entity in which diverse pasts are retained and continually transformed within its present form. I will argue that the resultant temporality may be understood as what Didi-Huberman describes as anachronic, and that we must consequently approach sites through their memory rather than their history; studying the location as one in which

multiple pasts are recalled within its present form, and in how it is conceived by the city's inhabitants and cultural producers.

Marshall Berman defines modernity as a common “experience of space and time” that has defined society since the early 16th century (15–16), and at its heart lies a particular understanding of temporality. As the modernist seeks to transform the world in which he or she lives, Berman writes that they are drawn towards a future that promises “adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation” (15); nevertheless, in order to attain this future, the modernist deems it necessary to surpass “the physical and social landscapes of our past” (35), to rid the world of that which is “in the way of history, of progress, of development” and that is consequently “classified, and disposed of, as obsolete” (67). For modern society to prosper, therefore, it is deemed necessary that the old mould be continually cast aside to make way for the new, and this understanding is common to many of modernity’s commentators (Berman; Terdiman; Muray; Harvey). Like Berman, David Harvey understands the modern to be defined by both the ambition of insatiable progress and the abandonment of the past, so that “[t]radition has to be overthrown, violently if necessary, in order to . . . create the future” (15), and Benjamin too understands the modernist project as “given impetus by the new” and driven by the desire “to distance oneself from all that is antiquated” (*Arcades* 4). From this understanding emerges a particular temporal narrative: individual events and eras are understood to succeed one another in a neat progression, so that modernity understands time as a neat, unilinear chronology, each moment distinct from and surpassed by the next.

Within the iconography of the modern, the river holds a critical significance, deemed at once emblematic of modernity’s progressive temporal narrative, and symbolic of the natural forces that must be mastered by it. The power contained within rivers, ancient courses that have sculpted landscapes since prehistory, has rendered them a force that the modern must contain and harness for the new world to be built. Embanked or drained, mobilised to power industries and sewers alike, and even redirected in canals and viaducts, rivers have always been implicated in the pursuit of progress, “bridled, tamed, and rerouted in order to modernize” (Zeisler-Vralsted 11). Indeed, so strong is the association between waterways and the modern that Zygmunt Bauman asks “has modernity not been fluid since its inception?”

(3) in its “transgressive, boundary-breaking, all-eroding” nature (6). The river has consequently become a potent emblem of the modern and its ambition to build the world anew.

Nevertheless, the symbolism of the river is not entirely straightforward: critical to every modern society’s history, waterways also represent a past whose presence does not sit easily within the modernist narrative, and frequently prove far from controllable. The importance of rivers to human life means that “the rise of civilizations has always been inextricably linked to the successful management of water” (Mauch and Zeller 1): as prosperous communities formed within riverine landscapes, the waterways upon which they were built became “enshrined in the collective memory” (13). Celebrated by modernity, therefore, rivers are equally suspect for the pasts that they make present: as Margaret Cohen writes, their waters represent as “a chthonic realm” in which society’s “secrets and its past” survive (55). Furthermore, even as rivers have been yoked to modernity’s purposes, efforts to have their power “subdued” (Zeisler-Vralsted 13) have been largely unsuccessful. Each time that they rise up, surge or burst their banks, the river proves that “no security against the water could be established” (Blackbourn 15–16), both its material force and the past embodied proving ultimately irrepressible.

This conflict between the modern and the river, progressive present and ancient past, is perhaps most famously examined in Berman’s study of Alexander Pushkin’s ‘The Bronze Horseman’. The Tsarist capital of St Petersburg represents “probably the most dramatic instance in world history of modernization conceived and imposed” (Berman 162). Constructed upon a swamp that was far from ideal for the purposes of city-building (176), St Petersburg represents the apotheosis of the modern as a desire for progress; “a vision of . . . grandeur and magnificence” (188), its “very existence is an assertion that Tsars *can* control the elements” (186). Peter the Great’s eighteenth-century capital was therefore founded upon the assumption that the prehistoric Nyeva could be “permanently tamed and dominated” (188); when the waterway flooded catastrophically in 1824 (the event reimaged in Pushkin’s work (Berman 182)), it appeared instead that the “elements that Peter’s imperial will had supposedly subdued” had exacted “their revenge” (Berman 185). In this poem, Berman argues, are consequently “brilliantly crystallized and compressed” the contradictions

inherent within modernity (188). If the object of the modern is “a totally modernized space, in which the look and feel of the old world have disappeared without a trace” (68), then rivers are both critical to the fulfilment of this ambition and that which ultimately undermines it; a site both of progress and of the past, to be simultaneously harnessed, fêted and feared.

The relationship between modernity, waterways and time have been the subject of extensive and interdisciplinary research (Cusack; Mauch and Zeller; Blackbourn; Zeisler-Vralsted), and within this corpus, Paris and the Seine occupy a particularly prominent place. Indeed, if Berman posits the city as the archetypal space of the modern¹, then Paris is commonly considered the archetype itself: Patrick L.S. De Oliveira writes that “the association of . . . Paris with urban modernity is about as close as we get to an academic cliché” (739), and David Harvey describes Paris as the ‘Capital of Modernity’ in his eponymous work. Like so many cities, the story of Paris is inextricable from that of its river², and the capital’s renovation sought to mobilise and to contain the waterway upon which its prosperity depended. Its flow was directed, for instance, to power a sewer system that is “a marvel to this day” (Harvey 113), yet it was equally embanked to delineate “a clear boundary between the human-built domination of the city and the natural force of the river” (Jackson, *Paris* 23).

Nevertheless, such is the intertwining of the French capital with its waterway that the Seine embodies what Benjamin describes as “the Oldest Paris” (*Arcades* 796), and against this ancient presence, heightened quays could only ever provide “an illusion of protection” (Jackson, *Paris* 23) as the river repeatedly flooded to enable “the memory of this ancient arm to resurge” (“ressurgir le souvenir de cet ancien bras”) (Lacour-Veyranne 9). Thus, even as modern Parisians believed they had “replaced the prehistoric water” with a progressive and ordered urban space, with each “overflowing” the Seine proved them catastrophically wrong (qtd. in Benjamin, *Arcades* 99). This has resulted in a rich cultural tradition that surrounds the Seine, which has been perceived both as an ancient presence that stands in stark contrast

¹ The author argues that it is in the “highly developed, differentiated and dynamic new landscape” of the urban that the modern may be most easily observed (18).

² So imbricated are city and waterway, that we can speak of “neither the history of Paris, nor the history of the Seine . . . but those of the relationship between a city and its river” (“ni l’histoire de Paris, ni l’histoire de la Seine . . . mais celles des relations entre une ville et son fleuve”) (Lacour-Veyranne 9).

to the modern city, and as a threat to its inhabitants³. By examining the site of the Seine, we may therefore study the complex and often contradictory place of the river within the modernist imagination: a symbolic force for modernity's transformation and its vision of time, yet also one by which the pre-modern persists and disrupts.

Through the case study of the Seine, I believe that we may expose the deficiencies of the modernist understanding of time, and instead establish an understanding of temporality that, rooted in its material form and morphology, enables us to account for the past as a multifaceted and dynamic constituent of a site and its present. To do so, we must begin by recognising that the river is in fact a far less apt metaphor for the modernist narrative of past, present and future than its proponents assert. Whilst a waterway certainly flows in one direction, this flow (as flooding repeatedly demonstrates) is neither consistent nor uniform; and that it travels from its source to its mouth does not mean that it cannot carry something of the places upstream in its descent, the silt and detritus of different landscapes mixing in its waters. What is more, as humans have occupied riverine spaces, they have added to them: ancient oxbows co-exist with nineteenth-century wharves, so that the present site proves to be home to multiple and changing pasts.

The temporality embodied in the river, therefore, is not the simple chronological history of modernity; instead, it is a complex memory that we observe within such a site. Olivier writes that the past embodied by materiality is not “sequential and unilinear as the chronological continuity of history would wish it” (“séquentielle et unilinéaire comme le voudrait l'existence d'une continuité chronologique de l'histoire”); it must be approached as “a moving memory of the past” (“une mémoire mouvante du passé”), one whose nature is “pluri-temporal’ (“pluri-temporel”) and “whose meaning is only established by and within the present” (“dont la signification ne s'établit que par et dans l'actuel”) (*Sombre* 14–15). Drawing on the terminology of Didi-Huberman, the site proves to be not “*euchronic*” (“*euchronique*”)

³ Charles Baudelaire famously mused upon the Seine from the Pont du Carrousel in his poem ‘Le Cygne’ when he wrote that “[t]he old Paris is no more (the form of a city / Changes more quickly, alas! than the heart of a mortal)” (“Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville / Change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d'un mortel)”) (119). In Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, by contrast, the river is positioned as the eponymous protagonist's enemy, imagining both that “the water was going to throw itself upon her and attack her” (“l'eau allait se jeter sur elle et l'attaquer”) and how “she could vanquish the floods” (“elle pourrait vaincre les flots”) (27).

(*Devant* 13), its narrative a linear sequence of discrete moments, but rather “*anachronic*” (“*anachronique*”) (21), defined by a multiplicity of times that continually evolve and accumulate within it. The river may flow inexorably towards the future, yet its present is always defined by a past that is dynamic and heterogeneous. If modernist history cannot account for the complex temporality of sites, then it is through memory that I believe that it may be understood.

Furthermore, perceiving the waterway exclusively in terms of the water that travels along it fails to do justice to a more complex morphology at work; one that sculpts its course through time, and that produces moments both of ebb and of flow that continually transform its aspect. A river is a dynamic entity, constituted as much by the fluid it channels as by the banks and bed that channel it, and subject to near-constant change even as it persists within the landscape. Whilst its contents are certainly always on the move, the waterway itself is a permanent feature of the landscape, always pointing to the events (both ancient and recent) that sculpted it. Discernable in the present form of a waterway is the story of its millenia-long transformation: if the evolution of the river is not a simple narrative of progression from past to present, then it is its dynamic sculpting through time that gives rise to such a complex temporality.

I therefore contend that the river represents a site that may be better understood as plastic in nature, and that its anachronic memory is the product of this plasticity at work. Malabou defines plasticity as the “tension born of the resistance that constancy and creation mutually pose to one another” (“une tension née de la résistance que constance et création s’opposent mutuellement”) within material objects (*Que faire* 166); it denotes a tendency in materiality towards simultaneous fixity and malleability, and the way in which this tension plays out through time, as prior form is retained and new form produced. This has two significant implications for our study of site and time. Firstly, if an entity is plastic, it is always subject to transformation: it is never “fully formed” (“tout fait”), but always “a work” (“une œuvre”) in progress (47) that is only ever approachable through the present in which this work is ongoing. Secondly, however, an object’s form necessarily represents a “recognizable, identifiable history” of its evolution (*Ontology* 3). Events leave their mark in a way that persists beyond subsequent transformation, rendering the object itself “a plastic map of its

own history” (Hope 337), and its present a “now which is many nows” (Malabou, *Future* 15). Plasticity thus denotes an object’s capacity for both fixity and modifiability, and gives rise to an anachronic temporality. It is this morphology that I believe may be observed in the waterway, a site in whose contemporary form may be discerned the traces of the many events and processes that have shaped it throughout its lengthy history.

The structure of this chapter will be as follows. I will commence by outlining Didi-Huberman’s, Olivier’s and Benjamin’s writings on the temporality of objects, and how these writings might inform how we interpret the relationship between past and present in a site. I will argue that spaces are characterised less by a euhchronic history (in which the prior moments have long since been left behind as time progresses) and more by an anachronic memory. Constellated within them are a multiplicity of times that both underpin the present and evolve within it, and this indicates a temporality rooted in the plastic morphology of site. I will then begin the chapter’s analysis of the Seine by studying the event of the 1910 flood, its depiction by contemporary photographers, and how such images exemplify a crisis of confidence in modernity. This disaster was neither unprecedented nor atypical, yet its occurrence after Paris’s modernisation rendered it an especially distressing moment for the city’s inhabitants. Evident in this collection of images, therefore, is a profound questioning of the modernist vision: the river brought a city defined by perpetual transit to a standstill; it exceeded measures implemented both to harness and to contain its flow; and modernisation proved, not to have minimised the devastation, but to have exacerbated it. Indeed, the most unsettling impact of the flood was its apparent restoration of the city to a pre-modern state, undermining a narrative of inevitable and unstoppable progress. What the river’s overflowing disturbed was therefore not merely the coherence of an urban fabric that was believed to be proof against such problems, but also a present that believed them to belong to the past, and this photographic corpus continues to shape perceptions of the Seine and its prehistoric threat to this day.

I will then turn to Hugo’s “A l’Arc de Triomphe” to further explore the anxiety that the Seine, even at ebb, could arouse in adherents to a modernist time. An ode to the monument, Hugo’s poem celebrates the archway as a symbol of modernity, its destruction of the past and its pursuit of the future. Nevertheless, the poet also acknowledges that the past may not be so

easily got rid of: he perceives the pre-modern to persist within the Seine, whose resurgence might prove the undoing of that which has replaced it. Imagining this future apocalypse, Hugo pictures the Arc de Triomphe as the only ruined remnant of a once modern landscape; in verse that jumps between past, present and future, the poem anxiously muses upon the relationship between them. Indeed, belying this reverie is a contradiction inherent in modernity: whilst the past's suppression may be sought, this prompts as much disquiet as it does celebration, the modernist acutely aware of eroding their own referents in time and space. Demonstrated in Hugo's ode, then, is the way in which the Seine's temporal complexity unsettles modernist narratives of time, the embodiment of an irrepressible past whose nature is shifting, multifaceted and unpredictable. The Seine depicted is one defined by its anachronism, and the poem illustrates the role of cultural works in enabling us to simultaneously conceive of a site's past and future, the imagination holding in tension both previous and prospective moments in time.

The chapter's final task will be to contend that, if modernist historiography cannot account for the past in a site, then it is instead through memory that this should be approached. I will illustrate this through Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge*, its depiction of the Algerian Massacre, and the particular role accorded to the Seine in how this event is remembered. Outlining the brutal repression of Algerian protesters by the Parisian police on 17 October 1961, the state's suppression of the massacre's details, and their later exposure by scholars and cultural producers, I will argue that the Seine is highly symbolic within the story of this event. A site in which bodies were disposed of and from which they were retrieved, the river is implicated in the massacre's perpetration yet also in its memory's resurgence, and I will suggest that the waterway is central to Sebbar's novella. I will argue that *La Seine* does not approach this past through history: it acknowledges that its details are too incomplete, too contested and too mediated by time to facilitate a definitive narrative. Instead, the writer mobilises the site of the Seine to creatively engage with the memory of the massacre, situating it as a nexus for different communities' experiences of oppression and facilitating new solidarities, new narratives of the past and new means of remembering. Sebbar demonstrates that cultural engagements with the present past contribute to its continually evolving memory, and to conclude the chapter, I will argue that our perception of the present past must change

(embracing as opposed to resenting its inevitability), in order that we might best take advantage of the opportunities that sited memory affords us.

Euchronia, anachronism and time's plasticity

As we begin to study the relationship between the past and present in the site of the Seine, and how what went before continues to be implicated in the unfolding of the now, we will examine Didi-Huberman's reading of the temporality of the image, and explore its implications for our own object of study. Didi-Huberman argues that, when approaching the past of an artwork, the historian works on the basis of two core tenets. Firstly, it is assumed that time proceeds according to a sequential and progressive chronology, within which both the scholar and the artefact are situated: they represent points along a "line of progress" ("ligne de progrès") within "an oriented history" ("une histoire orientée") that leads from past to future (*Devant* 102). Secondly, the historian approaches the artwork as an artefact of the past that must necessarily be treated as distinct from his own time; the "key" ("clé") to comprehending the image is deemed to be locatable "within the same past as the past of the object" ("dans le même passé que le passé de l'objet"), rather than within the present in which it is studied⁴ (13). What results is an understanding of time that Didi-Huberman defines as "euchronic" ("euchronique") (13), and it is precisely through such a temporal framework that sites have frequently been understood. Huyssen writes that "monuments and museums, palaces, public spaces and government buildings" are often perceived as "the material traces of the historical"; they are deemed to embody "the relative stability of the past in its pastness", and to enable the historian, architect or urban planner to "anchor the ever more transitory present" (1–2). Like the image, therefore, sites have been approached first and foremost through a euchronic vision of time: one that perceives entities to be framed within and subject to a progressive history, composed of successive, discrete moments that demarcate the then from the now.

⁴ As a result of this distinction between past and present, Didi-Huberman notes that traditional art history believes firmly that one should not "project" ("projeter") one's own temporal context, "our conceptions, our tastes, our values" ("nos concepts, nos goûts, nos valeurs") onto the past (*Devant* 13).

Didi-Huberman observes, however, that the temporality that characterises the image proves too multifaceted, shifting and complex to be comprehended within such a “closed epistemic regime” (“régime épistémique fermé”) (*Devant* 61). The author chooses as his most famous example a fresco by the fifteenth-century Dominican monk Fra Angelico (9). Examining in detail its colour, pattern and technique, Didi-Huberman notes that it has hitherto gone unremarked “in the immense scientific literature dedicated to Renaissance painting” (“dans l’immense littérature scientifique consacrée à la peinture de la Renaissance”) (11), as it does not echo the typical iconography of its period. Instead he argues that it is more “easily comprehensible under the label of ‘abstract’ art” (“facilement appréhendable sous l’étiquette d’art « abstrait »”) (10); he identifies its rich red background, flecked and streaked with white (9), as more closely resembling the work of Jackson Pollock than of Alberti (21). The image thus resonates potently and productively with works that it predates by centuries, and within an era to which it is not supposed to belong.

Fra Angelico’s painting thus challenges the euhchronic model of time. The artwork calls into question a narrative of neat, linear progress by prefiguring the motifs of a later era; it cannot be isolated within its own period without shutting down productive readings prompted in another; and it can only be comprehended in and through the present, rather than the past of its creation. In its approach to the image, therefore, traditional history is revealed “to simplify, that is to say deny, its complexity” (“simplifier, c’est-à-dire nier, sa complexité”) (*Image* 104), seeking to extract a single, causal narrative rather than account for its temporal heterogeneity and ambiguity. If the historian seeks “the concordance of times . . . *euhchronic* harmony” (“la concordance des temps . . . la consonance *euhronique*”) (*Devant* 13), then the image proves to be too “heavily overdetermined with regard to time” (“hautement surdéterminée au regard du temps”) (18) to fit into this schema, and the same is true of the site. Huyssen writes that “memory and temporality have invaded spaces ... that seemed among the most stable and fixed”; far from enduring and unchanging, even the most carefully preserved edifices prove “transformable and transitory” and always “subject to the vicissitudes of time” (7), so that it appears as if “temporal boundaries have weakened” between the then and the now (1). As such, the temporality of both the image and the site

undoes the traditional chronology of history; as Huyssen concludes, the “model no longer works” (2).

Rather than approach such an entity through the lens of euchronic history, therefore, Didi-Huberman contends that we should instead study the image through “the anachronism” (“l’anachronisme”). In common parlance, an anachronism is something that is perceived as out of place in the time in which it is encountered. It is “defined as the intrusion of one era into another” (“défini comme l’intrusion d’une époque dans une autre”) (*Devant* 29); the past in the present, the present in the past, or any time within another from which it is perceived to be distinct. This understanding is retained in Didi-Huberman’s theorisation, yet he suggests that anachronism be critically broadened to embrace the inevitability and creativity of such apparent temporal trespassing. The image is understood, not as belonging to a single moment or period nor as distinct from all others, but instead as a “veritable constellation . . . of heterogeneous times” (“cette véritable constellation . . . de temps hétérogènes” (19).

In this assertion, Didi-Huberman is indebted to Benjamin, who similarly contends that the historian should cease to tell “the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary” (*Illuminations* 263). Instead, Benjamin argues, he must seek to grasp “the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one” (263); in studying the image, what we examine is how “what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation” (*Arcades* 462). Within a single entity might thus be conceived “the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgement” (*Illuminations* 263), and the anachronic therefore represents a model that affords “the temporal means by which to express the exuberance, the complexity, the overdetermination of images” (“la façon temporelle d’exprimer l’exubérance, la complexité, la surdétermination des images”) (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 16). It is such a temporality that may be identified in sites: it means that they may only be comprehended as defined by a plurality of “present pasts” (Huyssen 11), and as characterised by “a complex web of historical markers that point to the continuing heterogeneous life” of the contemporary space (81). Anachronism therefore understands objects as defined by the temporal complexity that arises when the then and the now prove inextricable, and this phenomenon is observable not just in Fra Angelico’s painting, but by extension in sites as well.

Having argued that the traditional framework of history cannot account adequately for an object's temporality, Didi-Huberman contends that its past might better be understood and engaged as memory, and such is also the contention of Benjamin and Olivier. When describing the particular way in which the traces of prior times persist, shift and change within an object, and how they complicate our experience of the now, Didi-Huberman writes that "[t]his time which is *not exactly the past* has a name: it is *memory*" ("Ce temps qui n'est *pas exactement le passé* a un nom: c'est la *mémoire*") (*Devant* 37). Benjamin similarly writes that memory forms "the medium of that which is experienced" ("Excavation" 576), the context of everyday existence, and that it ensures that prior events and actions may continue to affect the now, as "historical 'facts' become something that ... just now struck us" (*Arcades* 883). Olivier too writes that to recognise the memory of the material object, we must first concede that "[t]he past is not behind us, like a former state of things" ("Le passé n'est pas derrière nous, comme un état ancien des choses"): instead is "before us, with us" ("devant nous, avec nous") (*Sombre* 30), so that memory forms "the matter of the present" ("la matière du présent") (32). "All that which lives produces memory that inscribes itself into materiality in movement" ("Tout ce qui vit crée de la mémoire qui s'inscrit dans la matière en mouvement"), the author contends, so that it represents the past as it "continues to work the present" ("continue à travailler le présent"), in which it is "ceaselessly decomposed and recomposed" ("sans cesse décomposée et recomposée") as life transpires therein (264).

The three authors thus define memory as the past as it is retained and recalled within the now, as an active and dynamic constituent of the present, and it is memory that explodes the neat chronology of modernist history that has commonly guided our understanding of objects and sites. Didi-Huberman declares that, if we are to "renounce secular models of historical *continuity*" ("renoncer aux séculaires modèles de la *continuité* historique") (*Devant* 102), then it is with an understanding of the "*passé comme fait de mémoire*" that they should be replaced (103). This might be translated both as the "*past as made of memory*", the way in which it remains materially present, and as the "*past as a fact of memory*", the narrative through which the entity is conceived, and both interpretations are implied in Didi-Huberman's writing (103). To study memory in a site is therefore to account for the past as it is mediated by both "objects and practices in the present" (Huysen 6), prior events and processes recalled both

in the form and imprints that characterise a contemporary location, and in the activities (both concrete and imagined) of those who inhabit it, so that “the strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past” (7). It is memory, then, that represents the anachronising force in a given site: it ensures that multiple pasts remain present within its present-day configuration, and that they are constantly recalled through the activities that occur within it.

It is my contention that the memory identified in the sites of my study, and the dynamic interplay of pasts and present that constitute them, is the product of their plastic morphology, and that this memory points to a plastic as opposed to a modernist temporality. Indeed, time’s plasticity has proven to be one of the most widely applied aspects of Malabou’s writings⁵, and has crucial implications for how we understand sited memory. If plasticity denotes an entity’s simultaneous tendency towards permanence and transformation, the way in which an earlier state endures whilst nevertheless remaining open to novel inscription and alteration, then embodied in the plastic object is what Malabou terms a “recognizable, identifiable history” (*Ontology* 3), yet one that Emile Bojesen contends may only be conceived of as “a continuously transforming present” (Bojesen 1042). The complex co-existence of multiple and dynamic times observed in the plastic entity thus represents what Didi-Huberman, Benjamin and Olivier define as memory.

It is the plasticity of a site as it unfolds over time that gives rise to an anachronic memory as opposed to euchronic history, and that thus offers an alternative understanding of temporality to that espoused by modernity. Like these authors, Malabou recognises that, traditionally speaking, time’s passage has been understood as “a sequence of ‘nows” (*Future* 2), in which the past represents “a present time which is just past”, and the future “a present which is to come” (3). By contrast, Malabou identifies in plasticity the basis of a “material time”, in which “past, present, and future are merely referred to . . . matter” (“Plasticity” 79). If the plastic object is defined in the tension between fixity and changeability, then within

⁵ Brenna Bhandar and Jonathan Goldberg-Hillier have explored what they described as “a time of plasticity” (5), whilst Jean Paul Martinon has mobilised the concept to critique the museum, arguing that doing so might enable this institution “to think of its future in a different way”, moving away from “a grand narrative of progress” and towards an “unravelling of temporality” (158).

this understanding the now represents the moment of simultaneous “preservation and dissolution” in which this tension is resolved (Malabou, *Future* 12). It is not a predetermined point within an already established sequence, but is instead determined by “the interplay . . . of teleological necessity and surprise” (13), always contingent upon the particular context in which it occurs and the forces that are in play. What is more, Malabou asserts that the present of the plastic object is defined by a multiplicity of prior moments, and space is no exception. The imprint of a novel event does not replace that which went before it, but instead “every earlier stage persists alongside the later stage which has arisen from it” (Freud, qtd. in Malabou, “Plasticity” 80); Van Dyke observes the same plurality at work in the landscape, plasticity rendering it a composition of “densely layered overlapping forms that accumulate and interact with one another over time” (401).

The fact that different moments persist alongside one another entails a sited memory that is multifaceted, interwoven and multilinear, one that is fundamentally anachronic in nature. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Didi-Huberman describes the image as defined by plasticity, and argues that it is this sculptural force at work that produces its anachronism. The theorist writes that the “*morphology*” (“*morphologie*”) of the image is driven by the simultaneous yet contradictory tendencies towards “*becoming and stability*” (“*les rapports du devenir et de la stabilité*”), defined by “that which changes and . . . that which resists change” (“*ce qui change et . . . ce qui résiste à changer*”) (*Image* 106–07). Didi-Huberman thus ultimately concludes, “[t]o pose the question of anachronism is therefore to interrogate this fundamental plasticity” (“*Poser la question de l’anachronisme, c’est donc interroger cette plasticité fondamentale*”) (*Devant* 17), and Malabou’s conception thus facilitates “an opening-out of the meaning of time” (*Future* 13). If Malabou asserts “the very *plasticity* of temporality itself” (13), therefore, then it is through such an understanding that I suggest that sited memory be approached: as sculpted both by the persistence of diverse pasts and their changeability in the present, and consequently as defined by anachronism.

Modernity Undone: The 1910 flood

Of the countless occasions upon which the Seine has inundated central Paris, it is the disaster of 1910 that has left the most lasting imprint upon the Parisian psyche. In late January of that year, and following unseasonably heavy rain (Jackson, *Paris* 28), the river rose by an astounding twenty feet (230). The resultant flooding covered 7.2km² of central Paris (Lacour-Veyranne 76), wreaking extensive destruction⁶. The event is thus often cited as one of the worst incidents of flooding in Paris's history, yet it is important to note that the 1910 flood remains far from unprecedented: the city's experience of inundation runs deep, and that of 1910 was not especially unusual. As early as 358, written records testify to the Seine's seasonal violence (Lacour-Veyranne 13); the Seine had attained the same height of twenty feet in 1658; and between 886 and 1185 the Petit-Pont alone was destroyed on ten separate occasions (Jackson, *Paris* 7–8). Indeed, similarly impressive winter flooding had been experienced as recently as 1880, so that the “terror . . . when faced with this incredible chaos” (“l’effroi . . . face à cet incroyable chaos”) was well within living memory (Lacour-Veyranne 58).

In its magnitude and in its devastation, then, the 1910 flood was far from atypical; instead, it is the fact that it was the most serious event of its nature since Paris's wholesale nineteenth-century modernisation that renders this event remarkable. As such, it called into question the beliefs and assumptions upon which the city's transformation was predicated, as well as the capital's supposed invulnerability to such disaster. By the early 1900s, Parisians believed theirs to be “the most modern city in the world” (Jackson, *Paris* 4) and the Seine to have been central to this success; it was both the “cradle of the capital” (“berceau de la capitale”) (Backouche, *Trace* 9), and instrumental to its society and economy⁷. Furthermore, the city's renovation, in which the Seine had been harnessed and channelled to revolutionise “the control of water” on behalf of residents (Gandy 25), was also believed to have nullified “the

⁶ The floods of January 1910 forced the evacuation of 24,000 homes and caused 400 million francs in damage (Jackson, “Envisioning” 177).

⁷ Backouche writes that “[t]he urban importance of the Seine” (“L'importance urbaine de la Seine”) need not be “assumed *a priori*” (“postulée *a priori*”), but instead stems from the “social structures that were predominant upon the river” (“des configurations sociales qui règnent sur le fleuve”) and “its economic weight” (“son poids économique”) within the city's finances (*Trace* vi).

permanent threat that it posed to the population” (“la menace permanente qu’il impose à la population”), the reorganisation of urban space enabling the city to “master the phenomenon of flooding” (“maîtriser le phénomène des crues”) (Backouche, *Trace* vi). The Seine’s inundation in 1910, and the havoc it wrought, fundamentally undermined this belief, Jeffrey H. Jackson writing that “Parisians’ self-image as residents of a city that had mastered urban living now seemed fragile and tenuous” (“Envisioning” 177). The flood was therefore explicitly perceived as an assault upon the modern city itself, prompting a widely felt crisis of confidence in the desirability of progress and in modernity’s ability to bend the elements to its will.

What made this assault more troubling was the association of the river with the city’s ancient past. In an urban landscape that was being fundamentally reconstructed from the ground up, nineteenth-century Parisians increasingly perceived a rift between the new city and the historic river. As Isabelle Backouche writes, they perceived “[o]n the one side, the city: a construct, a society, authority” (“D’un côté, la ville: un bâti, une société, des pouvoirs”), and “on the other, the river: a physical birthplace, benefactor and murderer” (“de l’autre, le fleuve: un espace physique original, bienfaiteur et meurtrier”) (*Trace* 11). Whilst the former was being moulded to a modernist image, the latter embodied an increasingly undesirable past; to modernise the city, then, Parisians concluded that the Seine should be similarly renegotiated. The waterway was “challenged in its nourishing, ancestral role” (“remis en cause dans son rôle nourricier ancestral”), and subjected to the same “functionalist vision” (“vision fonctionnaliste”) seen elsewhere in the city (ix), as high banks and limited access were imposed to homogenise its appearance, police its use, streamline its economic efficiency and prevent flooding⁸. Paris’s modernisers thus “transformed a riverine space once familiar to Parisians into one estranged from the City” (Backouche, “From” 26), the historic river apparently bent to the will of the modern landscape through which it ran.

⁸ Paris’s river had historically been characterised by “natural banks, high piers, dwellings, and commercial enterprises built along and even over the water” (Backouche, “From” 30). Over the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, dwellings were cleared (30), and replaced with high levees (26) and designated river ports and harbours (37). The purpose of such projects was to clear ‘obstacles to traffic’ (32), restrict “access to the banks” (26) and prevent “periodic, devastating floods” (30).

However, efforts to constrain the Seine's ebb and flow, or to distance it from everyday life, could not overcome the simple fact that the Seine was irremovable from central Paris. The capital may have "turned its back on the Seine", yet the Seine continued to "flow on with an indifference to urban life" (Backouche, "From" 26), so that the "the futuristic utopian vision on display" throughout the city contrasted starkly with "the Seine's ancient presence" (Jackson, *Paris* 23). The river remained then, and in remaining accorded a presence to the past at the heart of the capital. Furthermore, so long as it remained, the Seine retained the ability to flood; it would periodically return the landscape to something of its pre-modern state, so that "Paris was left vulnerable" to the very dangers that were believed to have been relegated to history (15). When the river flooded in January 1910, it was explicitly perceived as a resurgence of the past: it was not solely the modern city's ability to contain the ancient waterway that was found wanting, but, by implication, its ability to truly leave the past behind.

In this respect, it is notable that that the 1910 flood was the first such event to be extensively and creatively photographed in Parisian history⁹. Jackson writes that the disaster resulted in 'a wealth of visual artifacts': newspaper accounts were always 'accompanied by dozens of photographs', and images adorned everything from the charity pamphlet to the collectible postcard ("Envisioning" 177–78). These offer an ideal body of work through which to study the site of the Seine within the early-twentieth-century Parisian imagination. They afford "the ability to tour the destroyed city" (178), and enable us to contrast images of the flood's devastation with those taken prior to the flood. More than this, however, Jackson argues that such images shaped how Parisians "came to understand what was happening" (177), providing the "interpretive frameworks by which to make sense of, respond to, and, ultimately, decide the meaning of the event" (178). The photographs taken both captured and sculpted fears that the violence unleashed was the result of a clash between an implacable modern city and an immovable ancient river. It is therefore through the prism of

⁹ Charlotte Lacour-Veyranne notes that photographs exist of similar events in January 1880, depicting the ice-bound river in a state of chaos and strewn with detritus (56). Notable amongst such photographers Hippolyte-Auguste Collard, who is noteworthy for also having captured images from floods in 1876, particularly at Alfortville. Nevertheless, the number of such images appears far more limited, and focuses more on the Seine itself than on flooding's impact upon the fabric of the city and its inhabitants.

photography that we will examine the crisis of confidence in Paris's urban modernity that the 1910 flood prompted, its perception in terms of a conflict between present and past, and the symbolism that the site of the Seine assumed during this event.

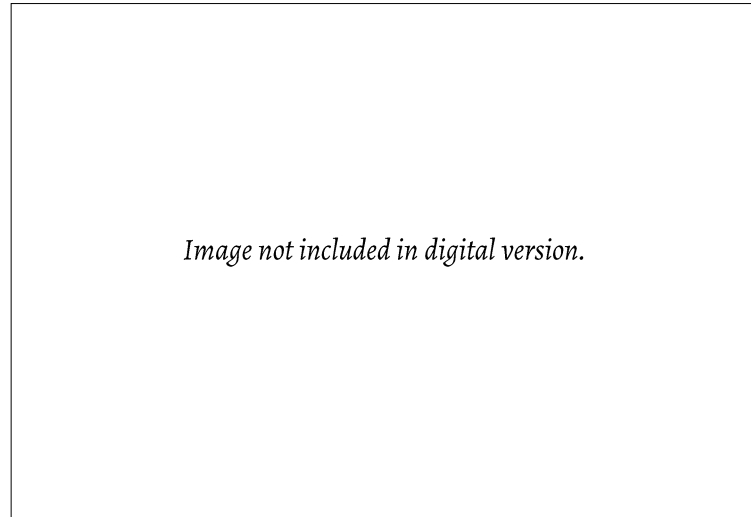


Fig. 1: Branger, *Tramway électrique "Louvre-Versailles"*, Paris en images

A core narrative that runs through the photographic depiction of the 1910 flood was the way in which it disrupted modern life in the French capital, disturbing those accustomed to its conveniences and security. Paris's urban planners believed that they had resolved the problem of flooding, so that inhabitants had "faith that their city's infrastructure would protect them" (Jackson, *Paris* 32); January 1910 exposed this "illusion of protection" (23), the Seine proving as capable of inundating the surrounding city as ever before. Two images by Marcel-Louis Branger, taken in 1908 and 1910 (see figs. 1 and 2), enable us to contrast the belief in public transport as a modernising force with the acute awareness of its vulnerability when the river overflowed. Harvey argues that modern urban life is defined by its "capacity for the circulation of goods and people" (112), and that this belief underpinned much of nineteenth-century Paris's renovation¹⁰. By the early twentieth century, "[m]oving through the city was far faster and easier than before" (Jackson, *Paris* 22), and this encouraged Parisians to believe firmly in "the inevitable force of progress" (177). Branger's image of an electric tram in 1908 (see fig. 1), may be read as a celebration of precisely such innovation,

¹⁰ Harvey writes that the city was restructured primarily to facilitate transit "between center and periphery, between Left Bank and Right Bank . . . to and from places of recreation . . . [and] between industry and commerce" (113).

facilitating clean and easy transit from the outskirts of Paris to its centre for the city's inhabitants.

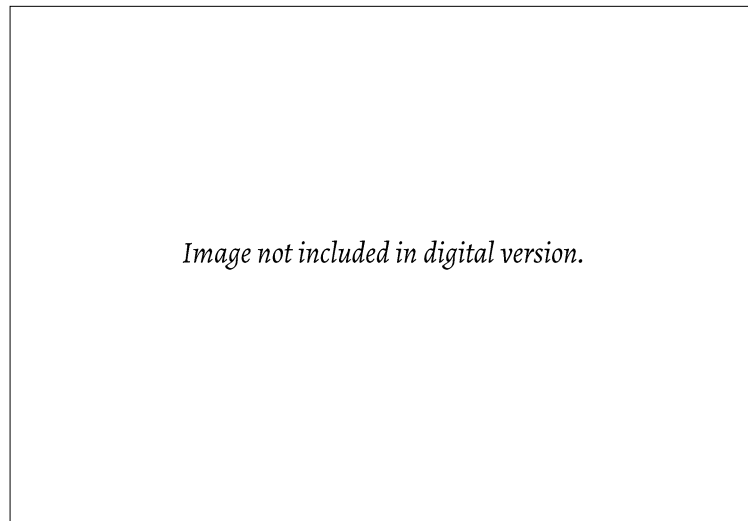


Fig. 2: Branger, *Tramway sur les quais*, Paris en images

This only served to render the Seine's ability to halt such movement all the more shocking when it inevitably occurred in January 1910. By the end of the month, the majority of the city's transport links were underwater, and its bridges either inundated or closed to the public (Lacour-Veyranne 72). Branger's second image (see fig. 2) captures this threat of the Seine, the water rising above the carriage wheels so that it appears only a matter of time before the tram can travel no longer, capturing the last moments of Paris in motion and foreshadowing the river's ability to arrest the modern city's perpetual circulation more widely. Furthermore, by contrasting the two images, we note the impact of the flooding upon everyday Parisians. In the earlier image (fig. 1), the city's inhabitants stroll by the tram or sit comfortably within its carriages, enjoying the leisure that it affords; yet in the second image (fig. 2), passengers are visibly perturbed by their journey through the flood, leaning off the footplate or out of the upper deck to observe the city under water. The 1910 flood thus exposed the very infrastructure that emblematised modernity to be fragile and flawed, prompting profound anxiety for those affected.

During this event, the Seine became a particularly symbolic site as the contradictions inherent in the modernist narrative of progress were exposed. City planners who claimed to have harnessed the Seine's power, and to have nullified its threat, were shown to have exaggerated their own ability to control the waterway. This may be studied by comparing

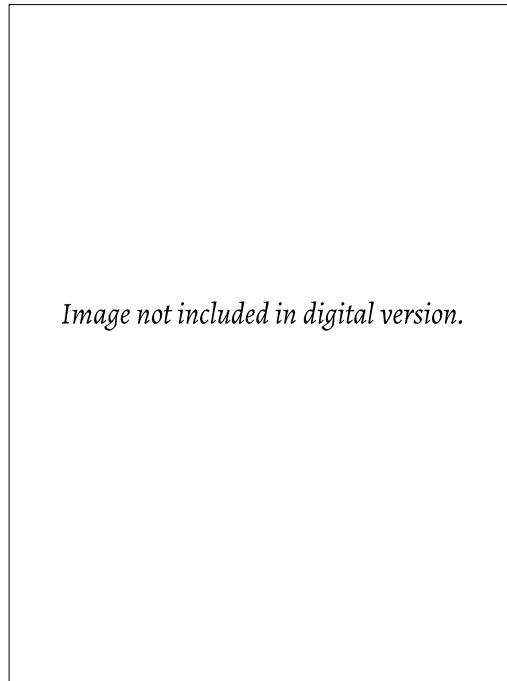


Fig. 3: Nadar, *Chambre du boulevard Saint-Denis*, Wikimedia Commons

Nadar's work in the city's sewers in 1861 (fig. 3) to an image of the flooded métro service by Charles Maindron (fig. 4), contrasting the celebration of Paris's nineteenth-century renovation with the chaos that occurred some fifty years later. During this period, water and its efficient usage became symbolic of a productive, healthy and vibrant metropolis¹¹, and the renovation of Paris's underground waterways proved essential in modernising the metropolis¹². The Seine was instrumental in achieving these objectives, Matthew Gandy noting "the construction of a vast siphon under the Seine in 1968" that utilised one of its tributaries to power the new sewer network (29). As both a symbol and a tool of progress, the river and its successful management were therefore celebrated as a force for modernisation, and this may be observed in Nadar's photograph of a sewer line under the Boulevard Saint-Denis (see fig. 3). Emphasis is placed by the photographer on the revolutionary underground technology and the order that it has achieved: lengths of new metal pipes running along the passage's ceiling, and the space is defined by straight lines, neat brickwork and barely a

¹¹ Harvey notes that "the flows of goods and people" (115) were explicitly linked to "flows of water" (113), and Haussmann dreamed of a city in which 'Pure and fresh water, along with light and heat, would circulate like the diverse fluids whose movement and replenishment sustain life itself' (qtd in Gandy 24).

¹² Jackson writes that Haussmann "quadrupled the number of miles of sewer lines ... and rebuilt old lines to be larger and more effective" (*Paris* 14); whilst Gandy notes that an "increasing demand for personal use of water" prompted the construction of a "comprehensive water supply" (32).

suggestion of dirt. The composition of the image is also suggestive; leading from the darkness into bright light, it captures modernity's promise of a better future for the city.

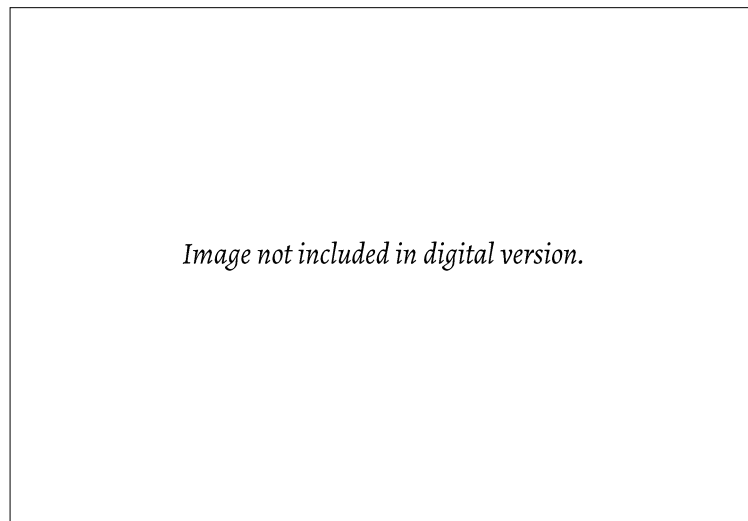


Fig. 4: Maindron, *Station Carrefour de l'Odéon*, Paris en images

Furthermore, whilst today we may associate this underground renovation with the city's sewage, it is noteworthy that its original purpose was in fact to prevent flooding. Indeed, Haussmann initially opposed using the sewers for waste management¹³; instead, the initial objective in this project was "the drainage of storm waters" (Gandy 30), and the modernisation of this network was therefore primarily concerned with preventing and containing the Seine's overflowing. Thus, whilst water was mobilised in the modernisation of the city, the purpose of the sewers was also to bring the river under control; not merely managing its circulation, but also neutering its threat. These efforts, and their apparent success, are also captured in Nadar's image (fig. 3); indeed, so effective does the sewer appear, that the channelled water is barely visible, as tamed underground as the river was perceived to be above it. Nadar's objective in his photographic project had been "to recognise the admirable human work accomplished in our Parisian sewer network" ("reconnaître l'admirable travail humain accompli dans le réseau de nos Égouts Parisiens") ("Quand" 1088–89), and the image studied may therefore be read as fêting the achievements of Paris's modernisers, both in utilising river water, and in bringing it under municipal control.

¹³ Gandy writes that Paris's most famous moderniser was "reluctant to allow any human faeces to enter" the system (30).

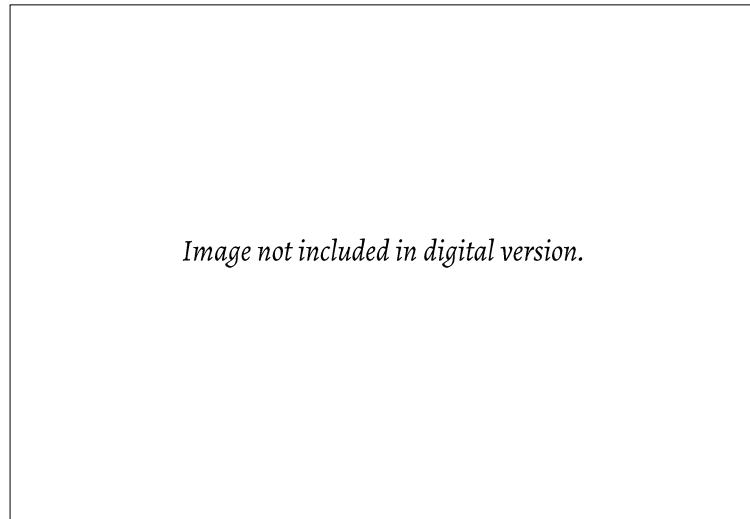


Fig. 5: Anon., *Effondrement du boulevard Haussmann*, Paris en images

When the Seine flooded in 1910, many photographers captured the way in which the city's underground itself was inundated. The water-filled stations of the city's métro became a recurring motif, and that these images echo those of Nadar reflects the irony of modernity's undoing by a force that it believed to be contained. The most modern means of circulation around the French capital, by the early twentieth century Paris's métro was central to its day-to-day life¹⁴. Nevertheless, the system was also one of the first casualties of flooding¹⁵, and very rapidly the city's underground became symbolic of modernity's failure, rather than its success. This upheaval may be discerned by comparing Nadar's image (fig. 3) to one taken by Maindron in the Odéon station (fig. 4). The two are notably similar in composition and subject, depicting the neat construction of Paris's underground tunnels and seemingly untroubled channels of water. Nevertheless, the apparent orderliness of the latter photograph belies the disorder it represents, the anonymous image showing the tracks of the métro so flooded that it is only possible to travel along them by boat. What we discern in these images, therefore, is the contrast between the belief in the city's ability both to harness and contain the Seine, and the reality that transpired when this belief proved optimistic.

¹⁴ Jackson writes that between 1900 and 1909, passenger numbers increased from 15 million to 300 million, a surge that was seen as "a sure sign of further progress to come" (*Paris* 22)

¹⁵ The stations and lines nearest to the Seine filled with water almost immediately after the Seine began rising, and the inundation of power stations around the capital put many more out of action (Jackson, *Paris* 41).

Furthermore, the events of 1910 exposed the fact that the modernisation of Paris's water management not only failed to prevent flooding, but in fact exacerbated the problem. An unknown photographer's image, depicting collapsed paving on the Boulevard Haussmann (see fig. 5), is pertinent in this regard. In 1910, the Boulevard was not believed to be a threatened location, being "some distance from the Seine" (Jackson, *Paris* 128). When the network of the métro was breached, however, it channelled water "where no one had expected it to go and where it could not have gone on its own" (127). Water was forced up from the underground in unanticipated locations, and this came as "a great shock" (128): the city's renovation had extended the destruction of the flood, rather than limiting it as intended. The anonymous image thus depicts a Paris under an assault of its own making and a profoundly shaken populace: the street is twisted and pitted by the power of the river, and passers-by anxiously eye the destruction caused. Indeed, the location of the upsurge could hardly have been more symbolic: not only had the Préfet's work been undone by the flood of 1910, but it had played a key role in its devastation. Captured in this image is therefore "a deep crisis of confidence in the power of science, technology, and engineering" (Jackson, *Paris* 177). Exposed to "the speed with which modern urban life could be undone", Parisians' "belief that the future would always be better than the past" was fundamentally called into question (177); far from preventing the possibility of flooding, modernisation had in fact worsened it.

Yet perhaps the most remarkable, and most unsettling, impact of the 1910 flood was the way in which Paris's inundation appeared to herald the return of a pre-modern past. One of the first indications of severe flooding was the fact that clocks throughout Paris stopped on 21 January¹⁶, giving the impression that "time itself came to a halt" (Jackson, *Paris* 39). The following days would appear not merely to freeze time, but to reverse it, as the disorder of submerged streets transported "the city backward in time to the era before Haussmann's renovations" (177). For a metropolis that prided itself upon its artificial illumination (21), for instance, Jackson writes that "the City of Light grew darker as the water rose higher" (50); similarly, accumulating waste and the appearance of rats created scenes that Parisians

¹⁶ This event occurred at precisely 10.53pm, as water flooded the compressed air service that powered them (Jackson, *Paris* 39).

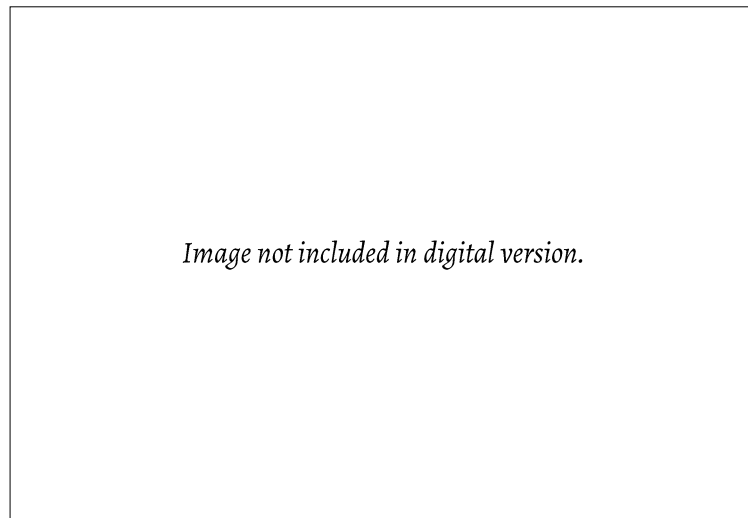


Fig. 6: Branger, *Avenue Ledru-Rollin*, Paris en images

associated with the historic city rather than its modern inheritor (62–64). Amongst an urban populace that had undergone what Gandy describes as “the sensory realignment of modernity”¹⁷, the flood thus appeared to prompt the return of “disorder, decay and physical repulsion” to their streets (32), and Jackson writes that this “upset Parisians’ sense of how the city should be arranged and left its residents feeling violated” (*Paris* 177). Indeed, even such events as the appearance of Halley’s Comet took on an especial symbolism, “harkening back to earlier epochs when signs and wonders in the sky were the way to explain unusual events” (140). If the intention of Paris’s renovation had been “to liberate . . . people from their medieval constraints” (Harvey 115), then the Seine’s flooding appeared to its inhabitants to have undone this work: put simply, “the ‘modern’ city did not look nearly as modern as it had before” (Jackson, *Paris* 177).

The river’s inundation was therefore perceived as the past revisited upon a present that believed it to have been left behind, and the anxiety prompted is manifested in the photograph by Branger (see fig. 6), which depicts a lone police officer or soldier on horseback in an inundated street. This not only documents one of the few reliable means of travelling¹⁸, but also the return of the past, the horse symbolic of a pre-modern mode of transport

¹⁷ Gandy notes that, during the nineteenth century, modernising societies became “newly sensitized to body odour”, so that the discreet management of human waste took on a novel significance, both in the privacy of the home and in the public sphere (32).

¹⁸ Jackson notes that, despite their declining usage, horse-drawn buses and carriages were brought back to cope with the scale of the disaster (85).

rendered obsolete by technology. Branger's image perhaps romanticises this revival, the helmeted rider and white mount suggestive of a medieval knight. Set against the flooded and chaotic boulevard, however, he appears a far less impressive figure: dwarfed by the degree of devastation, and surrounded by the hallmarks of modernity, the figure appears precisely as an anachronism within the twentieth-century city. The Seine's inundation therefore caused such concern amongst Paris's citizens precisely because it appeared to signal the return of the past within the urban landscape, and further disturbed their belief in modernity's ability to conquer it. It exposed "the failure of the modern technological city's ability to cope with the primeval forces" embodied in its waterway (Jackson, *Paris* 177): the Seine proved to be as much of a threat to the modern city as it had been to its pre-modern forebear, and was capable of returning their city to a state above which they believed it to have risen.

Confronted by the Seine, its simultaneous yet contradictory associations with both the city's renovation and its past, and the impossibility of fully containing it, the modernist understanding of time to which Parisians subscribed in 1910 was found wanting. The flood had "challenged many of the era's most basic assumptions about the inevitable force of progress", and left them with a profound "sense of betrayal" (Jackson, *Paris* 177); as an editorial in *Le Matin* lamented, "[h]ow could science, so sure of itself, be defeated by primitive waters?" (qtd. in Jackson, *Paris* 177). The site of the Seine thus proved problematic for the traditional temporal narrative espoused by modernity. If the objective of Paris's nineteenth-century modernisation had been to build a city that was unencumbered by the past and oriented towards the future, then the events of 1910 appeared to indicate that this past could not be so easily disposed of, nor prevented from continuing to shape and influence their present. The Seine, in both its materiality and its symbolism, unsettled the euhronic narratives that Parisians had written for themselves; the story of the modern city, supposedly driven the inevitability of progress, could not account for a past that would not be left behind.

In addition, the photography of the 1910 flood did more than simply reflect Parisians' temporal anxieties when faced with a present and seemingly unruly past. This body of work also interpreted the events and scenes of the day, and shaped how the city's inhabitants would remember them; in addition to capturing what occurred, their work muses upon the place of the past in the present in a way that has shaped how the site is remembered. Jackson

notes that images of the period went beyond pure documentary: they represent “a series of highly artistic images ... that used light, perspective, and reflection to create a vision of the city” (“Envisioning” 187). In this way, the photographers of 1910 suffused their work with what Shao-Chien Tseng has described in Nadar’s oeuvre as a form of “photographic Romanticism”¹⁹ (Tseng 252): whilst certainly producing “a veritable record” of what transpired (254), their work presents an “elegaic view of the old Paris [that] paradoxically coexists with ... enthusiasm for the new” (249).

If Nadar’s works thus “stand witness to the material remnants of history embedded in a modernising present” (Tseng 244), then the same is true of photographs of the 1910 flood. They represented a key means by which not merely to capture history, but also to inform and to sculpt memory: Jackson argues that the wealth of images taken have contributed to the “visual mythology” of Paris (“Envisioning” 185), and would shape how its inhabitants would “remember the flood when it was over” (*Paris* 187). They offered “a counter-narrative to modern life” (Jackson, “Envisioning” 182), prompting Parisians to question what the past should mean for their present-day city, not just in the early twentieth century, but long into the twenty-first. Indeed, it is noteworthy that these photographs are frequently contrasted with images of the city today (for example, in a piece by Emeline Gaube), and that the early-twentieth-century event is always used as a benchmark for contemporary inundation, such as in January 2018, when it was reported by *Le Parisien* that flooding had exceeded the levels of those of 1910 (Ch.R and B.H.). More than simply the “cherry on the cake of history” (“la cerise sur le gâteau de l’histoire”) (*Devant* 9), photography represents a critical means by which the events and symbolism of a site are interrogated and recast for perpetuity. In the case of the Seine’s flooding in 1910, they would would inform Parisians’ grappling with the present past embodied by the river for years to come.

¹⁹ Tseng describes this aesthetic as one drawn from Hugo and Baudelaire, in which the photographer sought a “rendering of the contemplative mood and material texture of subterranean Paris” and mobilised “the modes of the sublime and the uncanny to characterise its spatial poetics and shadowy recesses” (252).

Temporal Anxiety: Hugo's "À l'Arc de Triomphe"

When the Seine overflowed so devastatingly in 1910, it caught most Parisians by surprise, as did the pre-modern past that appeared to have resurfaced. Photographers captured a city in shock, yet such an event, and the temporal complexities that it would illuminate, were not unforeseen. Written in 1837, Hugo's "À l'Arc de Triomphe" represents what the author describes as an "immense reverie" ("rêverie immense") upon the future of Paris (247), inspired by the eponymous monument and by the Seine's inundation. The author fêtes the achievements of the contemporary city, and predicts a bright future symbolised by the triumphal arch; yet he also casts his mind forward three thousand years into this future, and imagines the monument in ruins after the Seine has returned to its historic bounds. Such an occurrence was far from unimaginable in early-nineteenth-century Paris: Lacour-Veyranne writes that winter flooding was a persistent threat throughout this period, and the destructive inundation of 1802 was well within living memory of many Parisians (57-58). The Seine's embodiment of the city's pre-modern past, its persistence within a city undergoing sweeping modernisation and its capacity for devastation were thus to be a source of both awe and anxiety for one of the capital's most famous chroniclers of the nineteenth century, and Hugo's poem captures the tension between progress and the past that defines Paris's modernity.

Hugo was not the only cultural producer to explore this theme during the period, nor was his grappling with Paris's modernity restricted to the ode in question. Eric Fournier describes the culture of nineteenth-century Paris as one of "ruinist" ("ruiniste") obsession (168), seen in the writings of Edouard Fournier and the artwork of Hubert Robert²⁰; and Hugo's wider œuvre reveals a preoccupation with the tension between the striving for progress and the

²⁰ The theme of ruins was addressed both by writers such as Edouard Fournier, who asserted that "every day more and more ruins have come to litter the oldest parts of Paris, and every day the new city hqs continued to emerge from it, more optimistic and more superb" ("les ruines se sont accumulées davantage dans l'ancien Paris, et tous les jours la ville nouvelle a continué d'en sortir plus à l'aise et plus superbe") (XVII), and by artists such as Hubert Robert, whom John D. Bandiera describes as "the foremost French practitioner of ruin painting", so synonymous with this turn of the century movement that he was, and continues to be, known as "Robert des Ruines" (21).

continued influence of the past on the present²¹. What distinguishes “A l’Arc de Triomphe”, however, is the particular role accorded to the Seine. Hugo perceives the waterway as a site that is symbolic of Paris’s past that places it in conflict with the city’s modernisation; it has been violently but necessarily repressed in the construction of the capital’s contemporary form, yet the poet also predicts that it will be the agent of Paris’s future destruction, when the constraints placed upon it prove insufficient. The concern prompted by this belief causes Hugo to question what this past means for his present, and what will become of his present when it is a future past. Within the ode, therefore, the Seine is a site that exposes a complex temporality at the heart of Paris that cannot be conceived of through the temporal narratives of the modern, so that Hugo both recognises this dynamic within the waterway and is profoundly troubled by it.

The predominant tone of “A l’Arc de Triomphe” is triumphal, Hugo lauding the nineteenth-century metropolis as a symbol of modernity. When Artes describes Hugo as the “authoritative voice of the city [of Paris]” (2), the capital that he celebrates is one defined by “both liberty and progress” (1), and Eric Fournier argues that the author perceives it as a “microcosm and summary of civilisation” (“microcosme et récapitulation de la civilisation”) (28). In “A l’Arc de Triomphe”, the poet presents the French metropolis as both the capital of the modern world and the pinnacle of its achievement. He extols Paris’s merits and accomplishment: he identifies it as the point at which “the ephemeral whirlwind” (“le tourbillon éphémère”) of modern society “[t]urns upon an eternal centre” (“Tourne sur un centre éternel”); as a “Babel for all men” (“Babel pour tous les hommes”); and as a “pure star” (“pure étoile”) that shines its ideals across the globe (232). The French capital is thus presented as the nexus of and guiding force for the modern world.

Furthermore, Hugo argues that the pursuit of modernity has required the reconstruction of Paris itself, in which the city’s past has been regrettably but necessarily suppressed. The poet writes that Paris “remakes, reconstructs and raises up / The level of the earth to the heavens”

²¹ Hugo’s “Introduction” in *Paris-Guide*, published in 1867, describes the city as the fan to the “magnificent fire of progress” (“magnifique incendie du progrès”) (XXVI), yet an earlier poem, titled “Le temps et les cités” and written in 1817, questions “what may nimble Time not do / To the works of humans?” (“que ne peut le Temps agile / Sur les ouvrages des humains?”) (1239), and even his later work acknowledges that “[t]o dissect this ruin in all its depth seems impossible” (“Disséquer cette ruine à fond semble impossible”) (“Introduction” VI).

("refait, recloue et relève / L'échelle de la terre aux cieux") ("Arc" 233), the modernisation of the urban landscape emblematic of a broader transformation. Throughout the nineteenth century, the clearance of the old city was perceived as necessary to enable this to take place, so that "destruction appeared to be the painful but necessary precondition of progress" ("la destruction apparaît comme le douloureux mais nécessaire préalable au progrès") (E. Fournier 21). Hugo's poem hints at the destruction inflicted upon old Paris, the capital described as a "[c]ity enveloped by a storm" ("Ville qu'un orage enveloppe") ("Arc" 232), and as a "forge of a thousand clamours" ("forge aux mille clameurs") (232). In the process, the city "cries and groans" ("s'écrie et gronde") (233), yet it is only through these violent forces that the city is constructed anew, Hugo describing it as a "furnace" ("fournaise") that "transforms and renews" ("transforme et renouvelle") (232). What we observe is the belief that the sweeping away of the city's historic form, albeit regrettable, is a prerequisite of Paris's foundation as a modern city.

Nevertheless, whilst the aim of Paris's modernisation may have been to liberate the city from the restraints of its past, Hugo acknowledges that this is far easier said than done. The poet recognises that the past can rarely be entirely exorcised; he writes that one may "[s]mell, in the dust kicked up by our feet / The ashes of the dead" ("Sentir dans la poussière à nos pieds soulevée / De la cendre des morts") ("Arc" 230), and such a suggestion is reinforced in *Paris-Guide*, where he writes that "[u]nderneath today's Paris, the ancient Paris is distinct" ("Sous le Paris actuel, l'ancien Paris est distinct") ("Introduction" X). Whilst modernity might claim to have abandoned the past for the future, therefore, Hugo recognises that what went before cannot be truly left behind; indeed, it proves constitutive of the present itself.

In this context, the Seine proves particularly salient: inextricable from the radically transformed urban landscape of Paris, the river's ancient presence persists, and Hugo believed that the river would prove to be the modern city's undoing. The poet imagines a time when "all that the Seine reflects in its waves" ("tout ce que la Seine en son onde reflète") at the time of his writing "[w]ill have disappeared forever" ("Aura fui pour jamais") ("Arc" 234). Indeed, Hugo's poem asserts that Paris's devastation is inevitable, that it will be the result of its own modernisation. He describes the river as barely contained by the city's constructed waterways, so that it "crashes against sonorous bridges" ("se brise aux ponts sonores"), and

this suggests that the attempts made by the modern city to channel its flow have left its existence precarious (234). In imagining a flooded city, therefore, the poet imagines a point in time when Paris's defences against the river will be overcome: "the Seine will escape the stones blocking it" ("la Seine fuira de pierres obstruée") (234), and, in so doing, will destroy the city that sought its containment, so that "all will be dead" ("tout sera mort") (244).

The notion of the river as the agent of the city's downfall is not novel in Hugo's "A l'Arc de Triomphe", nor limited specifically to Paris²²; what distinguishes the poem is this explicit association of the Seine with Paris's past, and thus its inundation with the return of the pre-modern. It is noteworthy that, in predicting Paris's devastation, Hugo describes the surviving river as the "orphaned Seine" ("Seine orpheline") ("Arc" 243). The Seine is thus deemed a vital embodiment of the city's identity, and in its waters Hugo perceives "the flow of years" ("le flot des ans") (242), the many events that have produced the city through time. If the Seine was to be the agent of Paris's ultimate downfall, then Hugo perceived the cataclysmic flooding unleashed explicitly as the revisiting of Paris's ancient past upon its modern present. He writes that the riverine landscape "[w]ill be returned to murmuring and bending rushes" ("Sera rendue aux joncs murmurants et penchés"), thereby "putting to bed its long-troubled surge" ("endormant son flot longtemps troublé") (234). When Hugo writes of the Seine's future flooding, therefore, it is not merely as a channel of water that he understands Paris's river. Instead, it embodies the city's past, a means by which this past continues to act upon the present landscape, and one that might prove the modern city's ultimate downfall.

If the Seine is therefore understood as a symbol of Paris's past, then at the core of Hugo's "A l'Arc de Triomphe" is an anxious reflection upon precisely what the past should mean for the metropolis. It is for this reason that the poet selects the titular monument as the subject of his musings; the Arc de Triomphe serves as a site through which he questions how the workings of time might both undermine and glorify the modern project. The poet projects

²² In his earlier poem, Hugo writes of Rome that: "[p]erhaps soon the Tiber / Itself, in its unexpected floodwaters / Of this once free city / May reflect the debris" ("Peut-être bientôt le Tibre / Lui-même, dans ses flots surpris / De cette cité jadis libre / Réfléchira-t-il les debris") ("Temps" 1235)

the archway three millennia into a future in which the city has been washed away: he describes a scene in which:

Nothing more in this plane
Than a faded people . . .
An arch, a column, and, over there, in the middle
Of this silvery river and its scum,
A church, half stranded in the mist.

(Plus rien dans cette plaine
Qu'un peuple évanoui . . .
Un arc, une colonne, et, là-bas, au milieu
De ce fleuve argenté dont on entend l'écume,
Une église échouée à demi dans la brume.) ("Arc" 245)

In its reverie, Hugo's writing belongs to what Eric Fournier describes as a "culture of ruin" ("culture de la ruine") (167). Whilst a "rich discourse on Paris and its ruin" ("riche discours sur Paris et sa ruine") was well established by the end of the eighteenth century, Fournier writes that the nineteenth would be particularly dominated by this cultural theme (8), with a young Hugo as one of its most important proponents (168). Punctuated by cataclysmic moments of violence²³, the capital during this period "came to be covered in spontaneous and short-lived ruins" ("se couvre de ruines impromptues et éphémères"): between 1851 and 1859, for instance, 4,349 homes in Paris's oldest quarters were demolished, representing 13% of the total, and such sites were perceived by many contemporary authors as "prisms inviting its rereading, [and] its rediscovery" ("prismes invitant à sa relecture, [et] à sa découverte") (7). What particularly concerned such writers were the associations drawn between Paris, the now ruined cities of antiquity and "the implacable cycle of civilisations" ("l'implacable cycle des civilisations") of which these served as models (168). This cycle was defined by ascension and collapse, the lauded present destined to one day become the forgotten past,

²³ Eric Fournier notes Haussmann's renovation, the Prussian siege, and the Commune's fortification of the city in particular (8).

and a now considered to be progressive destined to become a then that would be considered archaic. If the nineteenth century was defined by “its faith in progress” (“sa foi dans le progrès”), therefore, then its culture was equally defined by “its taste for ruins” (“son goût des ruines”) (168). It was a motif that recognised the fragility of the modern, the progressive vision upon which the city was rebuilt by no means guaranteed to stand the test of time.

In its “anticipation of the capital’s ruins” (“anticipation des ruines de la capitale”) (E. Fournier 181), therefore, “A l’Arc de Triomphe” belongs firmly to this ruinist tradition. The three thousand-year-old archway envisaged represents both the apotheosis of modernity’s achievement and a symbol of its collapse, and belying Hugo’s celebration of Paris’s modern present is the anticipation that it will one day be an ancient and forgotten past. That the poet associates the French capital with classical civilisation is repeated throughout his writing²⁴, and in “A l’Arc de Triomphe”, he declares it the [b]rother of Memphises and Romes” (“Frère des Memphis et des Romes”) (233). As their inheritor, Hugo asserts the French capital as carrying their mantle of “progress striving towards the Ideal” (“progrès faisant effort vers l’Idéal”) (“Introduction” XXVI), yet their ruination also forces the author to recognise that Paris will likely share their fate. Whilst the modernist may dream of glory for his legacy, the reality is likely to entail oblivion: Hugo may claim that “[i]t will only be in sounding a loud fanfare for you / [t]hat the centuries will pass beneath your imperious arch” (“Ce n’est qu’en te chantant une haute fanfare / Que sous ton arc altier les siècles passeront”) (“Arc” 242), yet, writing from the perspective of a future onlooker, it is evident that the author is not entirely confident in this prophecy:

Oh! Was everything not grand in this ancient era!
If the years had not devastated this portico,
We would still find many remains of it!
Yet time . . . Touches all monuments with a familiar hand,
And rends the book of the most beautiful places!

²⁴ In *Paris-Guide*, the author associates Paris with Rome, Athens and Jerusalem, writing that it represents “the sum of these three cities” (“la somme de ces trois cités”) (Hugo, “Introduction” XXVI).

(Oh! que tout était grand dans cette époque antique!
Si les ans n'avaient pas dévasté ce portique,
Nous en retrouverions encore bien des lambeaux!
Mais le temps . . . / Touche les monuments d'une main familière,
Et déchire le livre aux endroits les plus beaux!) (237)

In the figure of the devastated monument, Hugo consequently captures both “Parisians’ pride and the century’s anxieties” (“la fierté des Parisiens et des angoisses du siècle”) (E. Fournier 181); both the belief that modernity’s achievements had put the past behind them, and the realisation that they might themselves one day belong to a long-forgotten civilisation.

In the ruined Arc de Triomphe, and in the Seine that has caused its ruination, is embodied a complex temporality that does not fit comfortably into modernist narratives: past, present and future become entangled, prompting profound anxiety on the part of Hugo. The poet shuttles dizzyingly from date to date, and, even as he alights upon one, he remains preoccupied with the others that have defined, define or will define Paris. The poem begins in the present of 1837, before jumping forward three thousand years; when discussing this future, however, Hugo seems to be primarily concerned with the pre-modern condition to which he believes the urban landscape will be returned; simultaneously, the poet muses upon the eighteenth-century present that he has departed, asking what will remain of it when it is a future past. Paris proves to be defined not solely by the persistence of the past in the site of the Seine, therefore, but also by the other temporalities to which the river’s flooding might give rise, and which consequently are contained within the site as possibility or as probability. The effect upon the poet is one of profound disorientation and destabilisation, and “A l’Arc de Triomphe” is oppressed by the constant presentiment that “the past presses the troubled soul” (“le passé presse l’âme inquiète”) (236). This sensation is expanded upon elsewhere in Hugo’s œuvre²⁵, so that it is not merely the possibility of the past’s persistence

²⁵ In *Paris-Guide*, Hugo writes that the history of Paris is defined by its “enigmas” (“énigmes”) that offer “a double sense, sometimes a triple sense; sometimes none” (“un double sens, quelquefois un triple sens : quelquefois aucun”) (“Introduction” XIII), so that “[h]e who looks into the depths of Paris experiences vertigo” (“Qui regarde au fond de Paris a le vertige”) (VII).

and return that troubles the poet, therefore, but also what this means for his experience and understanding of time.

Belying this shifting temporality and the anxiety that it prompts in Hugo's writing, however, is a more fundamental question: is the suppression of the past as desirable, or as widely desired, as modernity would have it believed? It is noteworthy that, whilst Hugo may fête the Arc de Triomphe as an embodiment of modern Paris, he equally laments the fact that the archway and its symbolism are not contemporarily appreciated, precisely because it is devoid of past associations. Its façade, he argues, should render its onlookers "entirely dazzled" ("tout ébloui") by "the light of a vast future" ("les rayons de l'avenir immense"), yet he notes that "not a single passer-by . . . / [t]rains his dreaming eye upon your triumphant wall" ("aucun passant . . . / Ne fixe un oeil rêveur à ton mur triomphant") ("Arc" 230). He thus declares, "[n]o, you are not complete, even though you are superb" ("Non, tu n'es pas fini quoique tu sois superbe") (230); the monument's "new stones" ("pierre neuves") may be superficially impressive, yet they lack a depth of meaning that the poet asserts only time may afford (231). Absent from the Arc de Triomphe is a past to match its splendour, Hugo writing that, "[y]ou are missing cracks and proud antiquity, / A past . . . in which each century has its stone" ("Il te manque la ride et l'antiquité fière, / Le passé . . . où tout siècle a sa pierre") (230), and he thus concludes that that the monument will only achieve its full significance in ruin. This further complicates the shifting temporalities within the poem: for Hugo, the new Arc de Triomphe is devoid of true meaning precisely because it lacks a past to lend it grandeur; yet equally, the past that futurity might afford will also mean that its nineteenth-century meaning is lost to forty-ninth-century oblivion. Furthermore, it calls into question Hugo's claim that the pre-modern must be suppressed for the modern city to achieve its potential, for if "[a]ge crowns and ruin completes" ("La vieillesse couronne et la ruine achève") (230), then this begs the question of whether the past should be abandoned in the first place.

Reflected in this anxiety is a conflict that lies at the heart of modernity, which has always been torn between striving towards the future and attachment to the past. Harvey writes that Paris's urban planners may have "bludgeoned the city into modernity", seeking to make of it "a tabula rasa, upon which the new can be inscribed without reference to the past" (1), yet even Haussmann recognised that "the most striking of modern tendencies' is to seek

within the past for an explication of the present” (qtd. in Harvey 10). Indeed, Berman concludes that society’s evolution has been guided simultaneously by “a will to change . . . and by a terror of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart”; both “revolutionary and conservative” (13), modernity is defined not solely by its “insatiable desire for growth”, but by a simultaneous “desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past” (35). The modern thus represents both a preoccupation with progress and a need for continuity, a desire both to leave the past behind and to cling to it.

Observable in Hugo’s writing, is the profound anxiety and agitation prompted by the question of how to comprehend the present past within a site such as the Seine. The modernist vision of time simply cannot accommodate site’s temporal complexity, and indeed consciously disavows it; it is averse to anachronism, and the way in which this complicates the temporality of the landscape. Long acknowledged as a phenomenon, the anachronic has equally long been overlooked, ignored or disdained; indeed, Didi-Huberman (2000) writes that the “golden rule” (“règle d’or”) of history has hitherto been “the rejection of anachronism” (“le refus de l’anachronisme”) (13)²⁶. Certainly the author acknowledges that its effect upon us is one of a “*vertiginous play of time*” (“*jeu vertigineux du temps*”), directly caused by “the powerful sensation . . . that the present is woven from multiple pasts” (“la sensation puissante . . . que le présent est tissé de passes multiples”) (*Image* 55). Nevertheless, as Didi-Huberman and Olivier contend, time’s complexity is inevitable, and demands that we confront it. To reject anachronism represents “the denial of the substance of things” (“le déni de la chair des choses”) (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 14); as Olivier writes, “[t]he history that poses the past as different from the present ... makes no sense” (“L’histoire qui pose le passé comme différent du présent ... n’a pas de sens”) (*Sombre* 31).

Hugo’s musings on the Seine demonstrate that the past persists in, gives form to and impacts upon the present, regardless of whether we would prefer to preserve or to abandon it. The anachronic certainly represents the antithesis, and indeed the undoing, of the

²⁶ Didi-Huberman writes that anachronism has variously been perceived as the “the mischievous in history” (“la malice dans l’histoire”) (119), the “bête noire” of the discipline (30), and that which is “aberrant” (21); he quotes Febvre as deriding anachronism as “Caesar killed by a shot from a *browning*” (“César tué d’un coup de *browning*”) and Bloch as calling it “the most unforgivable of sins” (qtd. in Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 29–30).

euchronic history that underpins a modernist vision of time. Nevertheless, as Didi-Huberman concludes, the inevitability of the present past means that “*there is no history except that of anachronisms*” (“*il n’y a pas d’histoire qu’anachronismes*”) (*Devant* 39), and whilst the theorist writes this in the context of the image, the same may be said of Hugo’s ode. Indeed, it is only through the work of the cultural producer that the diverse temporalities that define the Seine may be unpacked and constellated. In reimagining the nineteenth century river, Hugo is able to exceed the strict temporal limits of his own era to conceive of a multiplicity of moments both past and possible: if Didi-Huberman writes that “[i]n order to remember one must imagine” (“*Pour se souvenir il faut imaginer*”) (*Essayer* 44), then the poet illustrates the role of cultural media in complicating the way in which a site and its present pasts are recalled. It is therefore our understanding of time that must change to acknowledge the “[i]nevitable of anachronism” (“*Fatalité de l’anachronisme*”) (15), and it is to the question of how to better comprehend the temporality of site, to embrace its anachronism as productive rather than destructive, that the next section of this chapter will turn.

History and Memory: Sebbar’s *La Seine était rouge*

Illustrated by the photography of the 1910 flood and Hugo’s “Ode” is the fact that, when approaching the Seine in central Paris, the then cannot be thought of as distinct from the now. The waterway and the pasts with which it is associated prove fundamentally uncontainable and irrepressible, and represent a continually evolving and multifaceted presence at the heart of the present city; the site consequently does not conform to the modernist vision for this landscape, and confounds its understanding of time. In studying the Seine, it is through memory rather than history that it may be most productively conceived, and to demonstrate this, it is to the Algerian Massacre, how it is remembered in Sebbar’s *La Seine était rouge*, and the place of the eponymous river within this novella that the final section of this chapter will turn.

On 17 October 1961, and at the height of the War of Independence, the Algerian population of Paris’s suburbs turned out on the city’s streets to protest the oppression under which they

lived in metropolitan France²⁷. The demonstration was explicitly peaceful, yet was met by extreme police brutality²⁸, and as such has been described as “the bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history” (House and MacMaster 1). What renders this event all the more remarkable, however, is the initial efficacy with which it appeared to have been erased from both the Parisian consciousness and from sanctioned French histories. Unremarked by French and Algerian political parties and greeted with relative indifference by the city’s population²⁹, the police and government’s “repressive intervention” facilitated the blotting of the historical record of this event (184), so that it was “virtually erased from public visibility” within a matter of weeks (2). The massacre was therefore subjected to an intentional and careful “construction of silence” (18), one that would last for “several decades” with little interruption or outcry (2).

Nevertheless, the memory of the Algerian Massacre was not to be repressed indefinitely. Silenced but not forgotten, the events of 17 October 1961 re-emerged into the public consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s, provoking the outrage that its original perpetration did not. Widespread recognition was prompted in large part by the trial of Maurice Papon in 1997-1998³⁰, which led to the first official admission that “the police response to the Algerian demonstration constituted a ‘massacre’” (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 234). In so doing, however, the court only confirmed what researchers and cultural producers had been asserting for over a decade. Through both “social movements and works of the imagination”, the brutality of 17 October 1961 was brought to light³¹ (233), enabling the memory of this event

²⁷ The Algerian protesters aimed to defy a curfew imposed solely upon their workers, as well as to protest wider police oppression and their abysmal living conditions (House and MacMaster 1).

²⁸ Of some 20,000 - 30,000 protesters (House and MacMaster 115), estimates suggest that between 108 and 121 were killed (166-167), and more than 11,000 were arrested (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 227).

²⁹ Jim House and Neil MacMaster write that, whilst many initial responses certainly “challenged the official versions of what took place”, all parties saw little to gain in condemning the plight of the protesters: the French Left feared “state and OAS violence”; Algeria’s provisional government viewed it as “a source of possible conflict with French negotiators”; and few Parisians felt great sympathy for those affected, as years of war relegated this minority to “the bottom of the sliding scale of moral outrage” (184).

³⁰ Investigated for his role in the deportation of Jews under the Vichy regime, Papon was also the Préfet de la Police in place at the time of and largely responsible for the brutal repression perpetrated on 17 October 1961, and it was during this trial that the latter event received wide public attention (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 234).

³¹ Published in 1991, Jean-Luc Einaudi’s *La Bataille de Paris* is widely credited as the first text to prompt major historical research and debate into the subject (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 233), whilst fictional works such as

to re-insert itself into the French collective consciousness, and academics have since written on the history of the massacre (House and MacMaster), and on its cultural representation (Rothberg, *Multidirectional*). The result is an extensive body of work that has enabled the Algerian Massacre to be re-established and recognised as a significant moment in the Parisian past, as well as an ongoing debate in the present.

In addition, and crucially for the purposes of this chapter, the Seine has proven a site of central importance to the memory of the Algerian Massacre. On the evening of 17 October 1961, many protesters were thrown into the capital's waterways in what was to become one of the most redolently symbolic acts of the atrocity (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 227). The intention of the police was to disappear the bodies, "transforming the iconic river into a mass gravesite in an attempt to bury evidence" (Brozgal 36); nevertheless, whilst many victims would never be recovered nor identified, others were "carried away by the current" only "to resurface further downstream", thereby testifying to the crime that had been perpetrated (House and MacMaster 296). Implicated in the suppression of the Algerian protest, then, the Seine would also be implicated in how this dark moment in Paris's past would come to be remembered: one of the first denunciations of the state crime occurred when an unknown individual graffitied "ALGERIANS ARE DROWNED HERE" ("ICI ON NOIE LES ALGERIENS") on the river bank (231–232), and the first commemorative plaque erected in 1992 was placed on the Pont Saint-Michel (296). When the events of the Massacre returned to public visibility, it was the image of the Seine that was frequently mobilised in cultural works that depicted the event³². The river is thus a heavily contested site in the remembering of the 17 October 1961; used by police officers to dispose of the dead, yet also mobilised by activists who have sought to reinscribe the event into the city's physical and cognitive landscape.

Didier Daeninckx's *Meurtres pour mémoire* and Michael Haneke's *Caché* have all similarly facilitated recognition and discussion of the atrocity.

³² It was the river's apparent silence that would inspire the title of the documentary *Le Silence du fleuve*; the acts of both throwing in bodies and of retrieving them are powerfully depicted in such bandes-dessinées as Daeninckx and Mako's *Octobre noir*, and Baru's *Le Chemin de l'Amérique*; and Médine's song, *17 Octobre*, describes the submerged protesters as "[s]trange lilies [that] float on the Seine" ("D'étranges nénuphars [qui] flottent sur la Seine").

It is in Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge*, however, that the river is portrayed to have played a particularly critical role in both the perpetration and the memory of the massacre. The novella has been studied as both one of the most celebrated works within this historical and cultural corpus, and one that consciously documents, not just the atrocity itself, but also the processes at work in its remembering (Fulton; Rothberg, *Multidirectional*; K. Jones; Amine; Lewis; Schwerdtner). Set in contemporary Paris, it interweaves two simultaneous narratives: the first follows Amel (a second-generation migrant whose parents were caught up in the protest) as she traces the events of the massacre through the capital, assisted by the Algerian Omer; the second is a fictional documentary film by Amel's French friend Louis, composed of witness testimonies to the violence of 17 October 1961 and contemporary shots of the places in which it occurred. Sebbar's writing thus chronicles the kind of committed memory work that has campaigned for recognition of the massacre, yet has also contributed substantially to this rediscovery in its own right, as one of the first popular and critically successful works to have exposed the event to the French public. Furthermore, it is a work in which sites are recognised to be of critical importance, the Seine proving the most important of those explored throughout the novella. The drowning of protestors, the loss of many to its waters, and the survival of others to tell their story is a recurrent theme in the accounts that constitute Louis's documentary, and the river proves a central, guiding site to Amel and Omer's journey across the city. Indeed, the centrality of the waterway to *La Seine* is made explicit by the novella's title, so that the eponymous river is fundamental to Sebbar's understanding of and engagement with the atrocities of 17 October 1961.

What is more, observable in Sebbar's novella is an approach to the Seine that not solely understands it as intimately connected to the Algerian Massacre, but also as a site that can only be approached through the prism of memory. Dawn Fulton writes that *La Seine* exhibits the "intricate melding of historical and geographical concerns" (25); Kathryn Jones describes Amel's endeavor as a "memory-journey" that asserts "the topographical connection between place and memory" (45); and Rothberg concludes that, "*La Seine* highlights the interaction between agents and sites of memory" (*Multidirectional* 298). It is this that distinguishes the contemporary author from the photographers of the 1910 flood and the poetry of Hugo. Beyond the obvious fact that both involved Paris's central waterway, the events of 17 October

1961 and the crises of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century flooding are remarkably connected: both saw the forces of Western modernism pitted against the undesirable legacy of the past, and both exposed the contradictions that lay at the heart of this worldview³³. As such, the “colonial modernity” (Gregory 4) evinced in the Algerian massacre’s perpetration and occlusion is inextricably tied to the urban modernity that refashioned Paris and sought to suppress its history. Nevertheless, Sebbar’s work is distinct from those studied earlier in this chapter, for she understands the past not as something surpassed by and alien to the present, but instead as persisting within and integral to the site of the now; what is more, she seeks to accord place within the memorial landscape of the city to a community that has often been excluded from it. As a result, Sebbar seeks to engage creatively and productively with the present past, rather than to relegate it to history; she is inspired rather than disquieted by its anachronism, and opens up the site of the Seine to novel narratives that develop and perpetuate its memory anew.

In *La Seine*, we observe a similar grappling with the past to that seen elsewhere in this chapter: both the desire and attempt to repress what went before, and the fact that it proves irrepressible. Multiple witnesses to the massacre testify to the suppression of details concerning the atrocity; a French student, for instance, notes that when he sought news of what had occurred, the media were silent: “I turned on the radio. Everything was calm in Paris. As if nothing had happened” (“j’ai mis la radio. Tout était calme dans Paris. Comme si rien ne s’était passé”) (Sebbar 82). They also attest to the relative silence that lasted for thirty years and that few wished to be break. One witness states that, “I forgot over the years” (“J’ai oublié au cours des années”) (79), and Louis’s mother tells him that there is no desire for the past to be known; “[n]one of these stories . . . will be of interest to anyone any more” (“Toutes ces histoires. . . elles n’intéresseront plus personne”) (18). Nevertheless, these stories are not forgotten, the past persisting and inevitably resurfacing in diverse testimonies. One

³³ Flooding prompted Parisians’ anxiety because it was a problem that they deemed to belong to another time. Believing themselves the masters of modern living, floods reminded them that the past could not be truly abandoned. Conversely, yet strikingly similarly, the Algerian Massacre so disturbed Parisians because its brutality was deemed to belong, not just to another time, but also to another place. The realities of “colonial repression” and “state terror” during the period of the Algerian War were ordinarily “circumscribed to military theatres of operation in North Africa” (House and MacMaster 15), and therefore seemed alien to a capital that claimed to be “a symbol of European enlightenment and civilization” (21).

protester affirms that he always wished to bear witness, but had previously been unable to give his account: “I wanted to testify, I didn’t have the opportunity . . . it is to you that I do so, for the first time, thirty-five years later” (“J’ai voulu témoigner, j’ai pas eu l’occasion . . . c’est à vous que je parle, pour la première fois, trente-cinq ans après”) (79). This points to the fact that what was contemporarily believed to be “a memorial no-man’s-land” (the twenty years between the massacre’s perpetration and its public recognition) was in fact underpinned by “resilient memories”, unobserved but certainly not forgotten (House and MacMaster 265). In finally testifying, the experiences of the unnamed protester are brought into view, the unspoken past given voice for the first time in decades and despite deliberate efforts to obliterate it.

Furthermore, the Seine represents the primary metaphor for understanding this process within Sebbar’s novella, with the focus placed on the disposal, disappearance and retrieval of bodies on the night of 17 October 1961. One account given is that of a protester who was victim to such an act; he relates in Louis’s film that, “I thought I was going to die, I drank in the water of the Seine” (“J’ai pensé que j’allais mourir, je buvais de l’eau de la Seine”), and describes how others were found with “their hands tied behind their back and their feet bound” (“les mains liées dans le dos et les pieds attachés”) (48). He notes the care taken by police officers, musing that “it must have taken time” (“il a fallu du temps”) to thus bind the protesters, yet he equally states that the police failed in their intended cover-up: the bodies were “carried by the Seine” (“charriés par la Seine”) (48) and another witness confirms that “the River Brigade . . . fished out the cadavers of Algerians” (“la Brigade fluviale . . . en a repêché des cadavres d’Algériens” (100). As the first witness states, “[t]he Seine rejected them” (“La Seine les a rejetés”) (48): the waterway consequently serves as an emblematic site both for efforts to suppress the past, as well as for the past’s fundamental resistance to suppression.

Importantly, however, whilst certainly exposing something of what occurred on the night of 17 October 1961, Sebbar does not attempt to establish a definitive or factual narrative of this event. The author recognises that what remains of this past is too incomplete, too mediated by intervening years, and too contested to be satisfactorily accounted for by traditional historiography. To begin with, the exact details of the event can only be estimated; indeed,

House and MacMaster state that the only certainty in studying the history of the massacre is the fact that a “definitive figure as to the number of Algerian deaths will never be arrived at” (166–67), and this opacity is reflected in Sebbar’s writing. Whilst it would become well known that bodies were thrown into the river, her narrative reflects the fact that neither their numbers nor their identities will ever be fully established. The drowned protester asks “[h]ow many?” (“Combien?”) with no answer (48), and, whilst another states that “[n]obody said anything about a woman drowned in the Seine” (“Personne n’a parlé de femme noyée dans la Seine”), he equally confesses that “possibly there were some, I don’t know” (“il y en a eu, peut-être, je ne sais pas”) (71). Indeed, central to the novella is the fact that, even when the past may be recalled, it is necessarily chaotic and imprecise by nature. Amel’s mother tells Louis, “[w]hen you tell your story, you forget, it all comes back in disorder” (“Quand on raconte, on oublie, tout vient dans le désordre”), so that she what she remembers of the 17 October 1961 is far from precise; “I can no longer say exactly the timetable of that evening” (“je ne peux plus dire exactement l’emploi du temps de ce soir-là”) (86). The record of this event, established too long afterwards with too little evidence and too many discrepancies, cannot be sufficiently relied upon in its facticity to assert a historical narrative; it is replete with gaps and ambiguities, even as its details are delineated.

The presence of the past in Sebbar’s novella proves to be similarly incomplete and uncertain, and this is particularly true of the massacre’s traces within the landscape. In their efforts to discern the sites of 17 October 1961, Amel and Omer often struggle to find its marks; seeking “the location of the bidonville named La Folie where her mother once lived” (“l’emplacement du bidonville dit La Folie où sa mère a vécu”) (23), Omer becomes frustrated with Amel, despairing that “[w]e’re looking for your bidonville with no trace, no landmark . . . blindly” (“On cherche ton bidonville sans indice, sans repère . . . à l’aveugle”) (31). Karin Schwerdtner writes that the principal characters find, not “explicit references” (“références explicites”) in the places that they visit, but instead the distinct “lack of traces” (“défaut de traces”) (13), and even those attempts to commemorate the massacre can only do so in an imprecise and vague manner. Throughout the novella, Omer graffiti tributes to the Algerians persecuted during the 1960s, which Louis then films as part of his documentary. In so doing, writes Schwerdtner, the character “accords a place, in historical representation, to the disappeared

demonstrators” (“accorde une place, dans la représentation historique, aux manifestants disparus”) (14), and his impromptu memorials are often placed next to those already inscribed in Paris’s streets. Yet, where these are often specific in their details, his own are notably imprecise. For instance, next to a plaque reading:

IN THIS PRISON
ON 11 NOVEMBER 1940
WERE INCARCERATED
LYCÉENS AND STUDENTS
WHO AT THE CALLING OF GENERAL DE GAULLE
WERE AMONGST THE FIRST TO RISE UP
AGAINST THE OCCUPIER

(EN CETTE PRISON
LE 11 NOVEMBRE 1940
FURENT INCARCÉRÉS
DES LYCÉENS ET DES ÉTUDIANTS
QUI A L’APPEL DU GÉNÉRAL DE GAULLE
SE DRESSÈRENT LES PREMIERS
CONTRE L’OCCUPANT) (20)

Omer writes:

1955-1962
IN THIS PRISON
WERE GUILLOTINED
ALGERIAN RESISTANCE FIGHTERS
WHO ROSE UP
AGAINST THE FRENCH OCCUPIER

(1954-1962
DANS CETTE PRISON
FURENT GUILLOTINÉS

DES RÉSISTANTS ALGÉRIENS
QUI SE DRESSÈRENT
CONTRE L'OCCUPANT FRANÇAIS) (21–22)

Where the original dedication is able to identify those who were imprisoned within the site's walls and the date on which this occurred, in the case of the Algerians, precisely who they were and when their executions took place is unclear. Whilst the past is made known, and inscribed into the landscape of Paris, it is a past that conceals as much as it reveals.

If traditional historiography is predicated precisely on the distinction between past and present, and on the study of the past as an objective, fixed and discernable narrative, then it cannot adequately account for the afterlives of events such as the Algerian Massacre, nor for the sites such as the Seine upon which they have left their mark. What remains of the massacre in Sebbar's novella might best be described as "a history of gaps" (Lewis 315), one that the author seeks "to fill . . . not with definitive truth", but instead "with further silence and incompleteness" (310). Indeed, Didi-Huberman writes that the fact that the past may only be engaged through the object or the site in which we encounter it, and as transformed within it, means that "there is no history except *from the actuality of the present*" ("il n'y a d'histoire que *depuis l'actualité du présent*" (*Devant* 103). He therefore concludes that, since "the 'exact past' does not exist" ("le passé exact n'existe pas") to be studied, "[h]istory is not exactly the science of the past" ("L'histoire n'est pas exactement la science du passé") (36). Olivier too writes that historians must "renounce the hope for a past that may be grasped as it is" ("renoncer à cette espérance d'un passé saisissable en tant que tel") (*Sombre* 17), for it proves simply too "floating, pluri-temporal . . . uncertain, probabilistic" ("flottante, pluri-temporelle . . . incertaine, probabiliste") to be thus accounted for (30). Whilst the past may be exposed and recognised in a site, something of it is irretrievably lost or transformed; what remains is too incomplete, too mediated by time and ultimately too complex to be comprehended through history.

Instead, it is as memory that the events of the Algerian Massacre and the Seine through which they are recalled should be conceived. Didi-Huberman writes that "[i]t is memory that the historian summons and interrogates, not exactly 'the past'" ("C'est la mémoire que l'historien convoque et interroge, non exactement 'le passé'"), and suggests that:

It is this that empties the past of its exactitude. It is this that humanises and structures time, that interweaves its threads, ensures its transmission, driving it towards a fundamental impurity.

(C'est elle [la mémoire] qui décante le passé de son exactitude. C'est elle qui humanise et configure le temps, entrelace ses fibres, assure ses transmissions, le vouant à une essentielle impureté.) (*Devant* 37)

Such an engagement with the past may be observed in Sebbar's *La Seine*, and her writing demonstrates that thus approaching it may be productive of novel meanings and narratives that a historical method precludes. Studied as memory, the fact that the full details of the massacre may never be known proves less troublesome than for historical accounts of the event. Instead, it is the fact that the atrocity continues to be remembered, and as a consequence may be creatively reimagined, that lends it significance within the consciousness of twenty-first-century Parisians. To begin with, that the 17 October 1961 may be remembered at all is itself remarkable. In spite of active efforts to repress it, and in spite of years of relative silence, something of the Algerian Massacre remained, and thus obliges us to confront it; as the final testimony of the text concludes, "we will know. You always end up knowing" ("on saura. On finit toujours par savoir") (Sebbar 100).

Sebbar's novella therefore explores how we might better approach this past through memory, and does so by identifying the events of 17 October 1961 with both the ancient and the twenty-first century oppression of the Jewish community. Such a dialogue had begun long before Sebbar's writing; one protester states that it was the famous Papon trial, the event in which the Préfet's role in both the deportation of Jews and the oppression of Algerians were first brought to public attention, that jogged his memory: "[i]t was the Papon affair that stirred all of it up" ("C'est l'affaire Papon qui a remué tout ça") (79). Nevertheless, Sebbar's writing further intertwines these two memories, and the resonances between the Algerian and the Jewish experience are continually evoked Omer, for instance, cites the two religions' common ancestry when he argues that Abraham might have sacrificed either of his two sons; "[h]e was to kill Isaac, Ishmael... He might have done so, and we wouldn't know" ("Il aurait égorgé Isaac, Ismaël... Il l'a peut-être fait et on ne l'a pas su") (51). Neither is it solely

the Jews' ancient history that Sebbar references; the aforementioned discussion occurs after a conversation about Amel's purchase of clothing that she describes as being in a "vichy BB" fabric (50). Whilst this appears superficially innocuous, the repeated use of "vichy" in the same dialogue that discusses the tenets of the Jewish faith can only remind the reader of the French regime and its implication in the Holocaust. The renewed interest in the memory of 17 October 1961, and its inextricable links to other instances of oppression, therefore point to what Rothberg terms "the constitutive force that displacement plays in the formation of collective memory" (*Multidirectional* 236). Whilst the past exposed proves far from complete, and is remembered only imperfectly, doing so nevertheless proves productive of new means of remembering that foster solidarity between distinct experiences of brutality.

Furthermore, Sebbar's novella asserts that, when the Algerian Massacre resurged into public consciousness, it did so both figuratively and materially through the site of the river, and, in so doing, reinscribed this event into the memorial landscape of Paris. The site of the Seine itself is thus reimagined through the memories perceived within it, acquiring new significance through this creative engagement. In this respect, the title of the work is significant, and multiple witnesses attest to their belief that the Seine was stained by the massacre. The drowned protester, for instance, states, "[s]urely the Seine was red that day" ("Sûrement la Seine était rouge ce jour-là") (48), and later a police officer, who wished to speak out against his colleagues (99), also claims that "[t]he Seine was red in that place, I'm sure of it" ("La Seine, à cet endroit était rouge, je suis sûr") (100). In this way, the Seine and its landmarks become what Schwerdtner describes as "witness places" ("lieux témoins") (13); just as protesters and onlookers testify to events perpetrated along its banks, so too does the river itself testify to the violence in which it has been implicated. Sebbar therefore does not see the site in which some of its worst atrocities were perpetrated as untouched by them; more than simply a metaphor for memory's effacement and re-emergence, the Seine itself is deemed to have been transformed by the events with which it is associated.

What is more, this memory is repeatedly reinscribed into Paris's landscape by the novella's protagonists. Omer inscribes his spontaneous memorials using red spray paint (21), and one of the locations in which he does so is on the Quai Saint-Michel, where he writes:

ALGERIANS FELL HERE
FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF ALGERIA
17 OCTOBER 1961

(ICI DES ALGÉRIENS SONT TOMBÉS
POUR L'INDÉPENDANCE DE L'ALGÉRIE
LE 17 OCTOBRE 1961) (90)

It is this moment that demonstrates the role that Sebbar perceives the Seine to play in transforming Paris's memorial landscape. As K. Jones comments, Omer's inscriptions deliberately "recall the blood of the murdered protesters . . . [that] turned the river Seine red" (46), and, in this instance, do so on the banks of the river that was so central to the atrocity's perpetration. Not only does such commemoration materially reinscribe the memory of the Algerian massacre into locations from which its traces were previously expunged, but it does so in a colour that points to the role played by the Seine in this remembrance. By asserting that the Seine was stained by the police's brutality, and subsequently depicting Paris's cityscape as reinscribed in precisely the same colour, Sebbar suggests both that the memory of the massacre is retained in the site of the river, and that its re-emergence takes place by means of the waterway; it is the Seine that she understands as changed, and that is consequently able to transform the landscape surrounding it.

This has significant implications for the connections that Sebbar draws between the 17 October 1961 and other traumatic memories. As the conduit through which the memory of this event resurges, the Seine becomes a nodal point through which diverse pasts are brought into connection, not emphasising one over the other, but instead drawing them together to prompt novel means of remembering. In so doing, Sebbar engages both the site of the Seine and the memories that it embodies as plastic, exposing the already existent past whilst also imagining it anew. The staining of the Seine assumes a third significance through Amel and Omer's conversations about Jewish history, for the colour of the Seine implicitly evokes the story of Exodus, in which God turns the Nile to blood. Marked by the massacre carried out upon it, and subsequently marking Paris's landscape as this memory returns to public

visibility, the symbolism of the red Seine is utilised by the author to bring the Algerian experience into dialogue with the Jewish.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that what results is not a replacement of the latter past with the former. As Rothberg points out, whilst Omer's graffitied inscriptions are often painted to directly contrast with existing memorials, at no point does he seek to paint over what is already there. The dedication written onto the prison wall, for instance, is written to one side of the original, so that the passer-by may observe "the commemorative plaque fixed to the stonework and, to the right, red, spray-painted letters" ("la plaque commémorative fixée sur la pierre et à droite, les lettres rouges bombées") (21). This means that, as Rothberg writes, "Omer's messages never cover other sites, but rather take their place alongside them"; as a result, "La Seine does not engage in competitive memory", but instead draws connections between different moments in time (*Multidirectional* 299). In exposing the memory of the massacre within Paris's landscape, Sebbar does not seek to replace those pasts already contained therein, but instead to expose how they coexist and may be thought of anew.

As a consequence, the Seine and its depiction in Sebbar's novella may be used to open up the way in which the past is perceived and understood in a site. The methodology of modernist history struggles to account for the event of the Algerian Massacre, for, as the writer demonstrates, its details are too incomplete and too transformed by the passing of time to fit neatly into a neat and comprehensive narrative. Approached through memory, however, the river serves as a "site of a 'concord' of memories", one that facilitates a "relational remembrance" that complicates the memorial landscape of Paris (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 306–07). Within its material and imagined form, different moments in time may be drawn together to render the waterway "a connective tissue between seemingly disparate histories" (228); this memory work does not supersede those narratives of the past that already define Paris's landscape, but instead lends them new depth and greater complexity. For Sebbar, this renders the river a particularly redolent site; it is one in which the memory of the Algerian Massacre is perceived to persist, yet it is also one through which this memory may be creatively reimagined, thereby complicating both the narrative of 17 October 1961 and that of the Seine itself.

In studying the past in sites, therefore, memory proves the only means by which we may account for its anachronism, for the diverse pasts that constitute its present form and associations; what is more, the sited memory produced may also only be understood as plastic, sculpted by a multiplicity of prior events as well as those ongoing in the now. What Sebbar's novella demonstrates is that approaching sites as plastic enables the cultural producer to participate creatively in these processes at work. To remember in and through a location, and indeed to study this process, is not an endeavour that leaves the site untouched: Olivier argues that, since we must "decipher [the past] in order to make it appear" ("déchiffrer [le passé] pour le faire apparaître") (*Sombre* 218), and since it is in reading its traces that we may "recognise their relations" ("reconnaître leurs relations") (219), the implication is that "the subject and the object" ("le sujet et l'objet") of memory are always and inextricably "intertwined" ("entremêlés") (15). Thus, if memory is a "process and not a result" ("La mémoire comme processus et non résultat") (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 112), our engagements with sites are implicated in this process: we add to the "the fibres of heterogeneous times" ("les fibres de temps hétérogènes") already woven therein, and contribute to the "thickness" ("épaisseur") by which it is already defined (39). Memory is not solely a means by which we may recognise the inherently present nature of the past in space, but also by which we may participate in its ongoing unfolding; as Olivier concludes, "[e]verything begins now" ("Tout commence maintenant") (*Sombre* 288).

Conclusion

In studying the Seine, what we have observed is a site that cannot be adequately accounted for by a modernist understanding of time, nor through history as its traditional temporal narrative; instead, its plastic dynamics and anachronistic nature invite a reading in terms of memory, one that embraces its present past and contributes to its unfolding. Modernity's claim to be able to leave the past behind, or to prevent it from influencing the present and future, ignores the reality of its persistence within sites. As both the photography of the 1910 flood and Hugo's "A l'Arc de Triomphe" demonstrate, its ability to do so calls into question the temporal assumptions upon which the modern is founded, and prompts profound

anxiety amongst those who believed in its narrative of progress. Instead, it is by understanding the site as plastic, and its temporality as anachronic, that a theory of time more appropriate to the dynamics observed therein may be proposed; one in which the past gives form to the present, continually evolves within it, and is defined by temporal heterogeneity. This means that the past may only be understood through the present within which it is retained, and, as elaborated in the case of Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge*, this past is better understood through memory than through history. Memory enables us to open up the past as it is encountered within the present site (ambiguous, contested and transformed), and to contribute to its complexity through our engagement.

If modernity has long perceived the present past as an unwanted, unruly and even hostile presence within the landscape, then the study of sited memory demands that we shift our perspective. The past that we witness does not unsettle, disturb, disrupt, intrude upon or undermine the landscape within which it persists and evolves: to perceive the past in such terms reflects the lingering grip that modernist time holds over our imagination, for it exposes an unconscious belief that, whilst we recognise that time is not simply chronological, and that the past is never truly distinct from the present, we nevertheless feel that it should be. Such an influence is often implied in the lexicon of memory studies: M. Silverman, for instance, writes that "the present is shown to be shadowed or haunted by a past" (*Palimpsestic* 3), and is "constantly disturbed" by such intrusion (9); K. Till similarly describes the past as a "ghostlike presence" in landscapes (10), whereby its complexity is deemed to "give a shape to felt and desires that haunt contemporary society" (9); and Eelco Runia perceives memory as "a kind of 'leak' in time through which "presence" wells up from the past into the present" (16). In each case, the imagery deployed implies that the present past is an aberration, yet if we are to truly understand the nature of sited memory, we must acknowledge that its retention and transformation are merely the result of the plastic forces that structure and dynamise materiality, and as such, have no designs upon us. We must accept that "the past does not resemble the image that we make of it for ourselves" ("Le passé ne ressemble pas à l'image que nous nous en faisons") (Olivier, *Sombre* 18), and instead seek to embrace rather than oppose its challenges, "to confront the exuberant complexity of the object . . . , the exuberant complexity of time that these objects produce and of which they are themselves

the product” (“affronter l'exubérante complexité de l'objet . . . l'exubérante complexité du temps que ces objets produisent ou dont ils sont les produits”) (174). To open up the workings and the implications of sited memory, we must therefore acknowledge the inevitability of its plastic morphology and anachronic temporality; we must examine, not how it discomfits us, but instead how to make the most of the opportunities that the present past affords us.

The Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George: the lieu de mémoire and the survivance

Introduction

Algiers's landscape lays bare a deep-rooted legacy of conquest, conflict and competing visions of the Algerian past. From the Romans to the Ottomans, from French colonial authorities to post-independence governments, each of the many regimes that have claimed dominion over the country have attempted to remake its capital in their own image, and this has resulted in a diversity of architectural forms as edifices are built and re-built, demolished and restored. Within this history, the Hôtel Aletti on Algiers's waterfront and the Hôtel Saint-George in the Mustapha Supérieur (now Sidi M'Hamed) district represent two of the French Empire's noteworthy contributions to the cityscape. More than simply places of leisure, in their architectural design may be read a story of Algeria, one that celebrated the coloniser's role in the making of the country, and that relegated the contribution of the local population to little more than a footnote or aesthetic flourish. No building may exist in a vacuum, however: both hotels were built into a cityscape that long predated the French conquest, and both would continue to be used, renovated and rebuilt long after decolonisation. The stories written into the Hôtel Aletti (today the Es-Safir) and the Saint-George could consequently never attain the hegemony nor the staying power that their designers intended; in both, the lived reality of the modern city has ensured that the memories associated with them remain both complex and ever-changing.

In this chapter, I will study the way in which sites are produced to promote a particular memory, and how such an understanding is subverted by their plasticity and anachronism. I will argue that the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George are exemplary of what Nora defines and Marc Augé expands upon as "lieux de mémoire" (Nora, "Entre" xvii), places that have been deliberately constructed to outline and project a specific account of the past, to exclude those memories that are undesirable to its producers, and to set the result in stone so that it might shape remembrance in perpetuity. In contrast, I will examine how the plastic dynamics that structure sites, and the anachronism to which they give rise, prevent such a rigid account from taking hold. It is what Didi-Huberman terms the "survivance" that proves the undoing

of the *lieu de mémoire* (Image 51), the way in which pasts endure and evolve within the present of an object and, in so doing, preclude its definition in terms of a singular, sanctioned temporal narrative. In the case studies of the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George, therefore, I will examine how the two sites have been built and rebuilt, both materially and culturally, as *lieux de mémoire*, and how the *survivance* undermines such a construction.

First outlined by Pierre Nora in 1984, the *lieu de mémoire* represents one of the most influential approaches in memory studies. First and foremost, the *lieu de mémoire* represents a place that has been consecrated for the purpose of remembrance; it represents a location whose “material, symbolic and functional” (“matériel, symbolique et fonctionnel”) (“Entre” xxxiv) dimensions have been crafted to convey a particular ‘representation of the past’ (“une représentation du passé”) (xviii). The account sanctioned by the site’s producers is emphasised, whilst those occurrences or interpretations that contradict their purposes are overlooked or suppressed, and the story thus outlined is presented to users as unalterable. As such, whilst they may appear “simple” and “natural” (“simples” and “naturels”), *lieux de mémoire* are in fact “ambiguous” and “artificial” (“ambigus” and “artificiels”) (xxxiv). Accustomed to the presence of commemorative sites in our landscape, we take them for granted, yet closer inspection reveals that they are subject to “the most abstract elaboration” (“l’élaboration la plus abstraite”) (xxxiv). Fastidiously yet surreptitiously conceived, the *lieu de mémoire* is designed precisely to make us forget how ardently it wishes us to remember: chosen for its associations with a particular event or period, or built in the absence of such a location, it is specifically designed to encourage us to remember a certain past in a certain way.

Within this context, hotels offer ideal cases through which to study the construction of the *lieu de mémoire*. Augé deems hotels to represent archetypal “non-lieux”, which he defines as “a space that can be defined neither as identitarian ... nor as historical” (“un espace qui ne peut se définir ni comme identitaire ... ni comme historique”), and thus as the precise opposite of the *lieu de mémoire*, in which narratives of the past “occupy a circumscribed and specific place” (“y occupent une place circonscrite et spécifique”) (100). This might be true to an extent of the “large hotel chains” (“grandes chaînes d’hôtels”) to which he primarily refers (102), yet it is equally true that few spaces come with as much cultural baggage as the hotel,

defined by “a series of often contradictory associations” that render it a “common icon in world culture”¹ (Sandoval-Strausz 1). Hotels might be associated with “a class-bound ethos of extravagance, beauty, and exclusiveness” (Berger 1), or perceived as “anonymous yet public spaces of marginality and transition” (Pritchard and Morgan 762); in either case, they are universally deemed a space of “freedom for fantasy, imagination and adventure” (Franklin 255). Furthermore, many such institutions both possess and cultivate a “biography”, one intended to attract tourists to fill their rooms, but that also enables us to “delve into the personalities, conflicts, and context that help us understand the culture that produced it” (Berger 8). This has resulted in an extensive literature on the hotel as both an important urban space and cultural touchstone (Franklin; Pritchard and Morgan; Sandoval-Strausz; McNeill; Berger), as well as on individual institutions and their histories (Katz; Kreuder).

This is particularly true within a colonial context, and imperial hotels are often cited and interrogated as archetypal *lieux de mémoire*. Such institutions were always implicated in the imposition of colonial authority over autochthonous communities and their heritage. Eric T. Jennings observes, for instance, that the original Lang Bian hotel, built by the French regime, was constructed to project carefully considered “visions of Indochina” (163) that balanced “an exotic, ‘primitive’ minority setting, and a familiar home base” (168). Their original construction thus rendered them “civic showcases” intended to “provide space for, and symbols of, certain visions for local and national political and public life” (Craggs 215). Built with a particular narrative of the local past in mind, hotels were intended to assert imperial authority over it, and their continued existence and usage ensures that these narratives remain.

In addition, famous colonial hotels that have been preserved in the wake of independence are regularly deemed exemplary of Nora’s term in action. Raffles in Singapore is an oft-cited case study (Henderson; Chee); Maurizio Peleggi has surveyed various such South-East Asian institutions; and Jennings describes the contemporary Dalat Palace in Vietnam as “a veritable *lieu de mémoire*” (Jennings 162). Today such institutions enable us to observe how “colonial structurings of power, including its mappings of both the physical and the social

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worlds, are still visible” in the landscapes of post-colonial cities (Dirlik 8). Colonial hotels consequently offer fertile ground for the examination of the *lieu de mémoire*, both in their original construction and in their modern-day form.

Such is the application of Nora’s term that its “popularity and usage show no sign of waning” (Legg 483). Nevertheless, the question of the *lieu de mémoire*’s efficacy, both in curating the past into a single sanctioned narrative, and in freezing this indefinitely, remains contested. Nora argues that the ultimate aim of the *lieu de mémoire* is to assemble an account of the past from “traces and sortings” (“trace et tri”) (“Entre” XVIII) and thence to “fix a state of things” (“fixer un état des choses”) (XXXV); its objective is to select those events and experiences conducive to its purposes, reject those deemed incompatible with it, and to work these into a story that, once in place, will prove immutable. That this is undertaken in a site, however, ultimately causes problems for such a selective and rigid narrative. No single account may become definitive to the exclusion of all others, since others endure within and are inscribed into the present site to call it into question. The dynamic that thus undoes the *lieu de mémoire* is what Didi-Huberman defines as the *survivance*. This denotes precisely this “indestructibility of an imprint of time - or times - upon our present life” (indestructibilité d’une empreinte du - ou des - temps sur les formes de notre vie actuelle”) (*Image* 56), yet also the “change of status, change of meaning” (“changement de statut, changement de signification”) (59) that always accompanies it. As Olivier contends, “the original identity of the past is definitively lost” (“l’identité originelle du passé est définitivement perdue”), for what persists of it is inevitably “altered, deformed, distorted” (“altéré, déformé, dénaturé”) (*Sombre* 82–83). The *survivance* thus ensures the resilience and dynamism of the present past in a site, so that it is plasticity that calls into question the *lieu de mémoire*’s pretensions to immutability and to fixity.

This conflict is particularly discernible in the city of Algiers, its reconstruction under French rule, and the renegotiation of its colonial sites following independence. The transformation of Algiers’s landscape according to the needs and ambitions of the coloniser began soon after France’s initial invasion in 1830, as “practical ambitions yielded to a more prestigious and political design” (“Les visées fonctionnelles cèdent le pas à un dessein plus prestigieux et politique”) (Lochard and Aiche 14). The capital’s planners sought to preserve the exoticism of

the indigenous whilst asserting French dominance over it, and in both instances the colony was presented as an imperial possession that would always belong to France. Observable in its urban planning was therefore what Nabila Oulebsir describes as “a fabricated nation that invented itself by creating and transforming spaces and places, and by fixing patrimonial referents” (“une nation fabriquée qui s’invente en créant et transformant des espaces et des lieux, et en fixant des référants patrimoniaux”) (11), and underlying this activity was “the desire to constitute a ‘durable work’” (“volonté de constituer une « œuvre durable »”) (7). Nevertheless, as Feydeau presciently declared in 1862, “Algiers could never become a French city” (“Alger ne pourrait jamais devenir une ville française”) (qtd. in Lochard and Aiche 22). The persistence of the pre-colonial alongside the colonial, and the city’s alteration under post-independence governments, has rendered Algiers a complex and continually evolving city “[w]ith its collages and its abundant juxtapositions” (“Avec ses collages et ses juxtapositions foisonnantes”) (Lochard and Aiche 25); one in which diverse pasts persist and jostle, and whose meanings continue to be asserted, reimagined and contested.

Within this complex material and imagined geography, the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George represent key sites, a microcosm of the wider forces and conflicts that have shaped Algiers’s memorial landscape. In their design and construction, the hotels were implicated in the French authorities’ transformation of the pre-colonial city; nevertheless, both also demonstrate the way in which the coloniser’s preferred narrative of Algeria’s past would always be contextualised by that of the local population, and both would undergo too much change for their meaning to remain fixed for long. Each is exemplary of one of two major architectural trends in Algiers: the Aletti is described by Claudine Piaton et al. as one of several “flagship edifices” (“édifices phares”) for the Art Déco movement (xx), that Oulebsir writes would be “thenceforth privileged in Algeria” (“dès lors privilégiées en Algérie”) (277); by contrast, the Saint-George is exemplary of “the Neo-Moorish style” (“le style néo-mauresque”) (Piaton, Lochard, et al. 51) and an important work in the œuvre of the Guiauchain family, who represent something of a dynasty in Algier’s colonial architecture, central to the city’s renovation (Oulebsir 331).

In both cases, the two buildings were constructed explicitly as *lieux de mémoire* imposed by the coloniser on Algiers’s landscape. Nevertheless each is equally demonstrative of how the

survivance has prevented this construction from taking root, the pre-colonial surviving within the colonial architecture, and the sites themselves renegotiated in the wake of independence. What is more, both sites have proven central to cultural production both within and about Algiers, and have been engaged by different communities seeking to reinforce, to contest or to open up the memory narratives with which they are associated². In the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George may therefore studied what Gillian Jein et al. describe as:

“tensions between governmental and planning ideals of coherence, order and continuity on the one hand, and the realities of the city as a complex assemblage of subjectivities, societies and environments in flux on the other.” (405)

The two hotels offer promising sites through which to examine the way in which both architecture and culture utilise site as a locus through which memory narratives may be produced, as well as how the dynamics of site itself influence such endeavours.

I will commence the chapter by expanding upon the *lieu de mémoire* and the *survivance*. I will elaborate how Nora’s understanding seeks to account for the inscription of memory narratives in space. Following this, I will draw on Didi-Huberman’s work to demonstrate how, through both the past’s resilience and its changeability, the *survivance* undermines the intentions behind the *lieu de mémoire*. I will then briefly explore alternative theorisations of how memory is understood to inhere in space, as well as point out some of their deficiencies: exploring in particular the “palimpsest” (Huyssen 7; M. Silverman, *Palimpsestic* 3) and “brecciation” (Bartolini, “Critical” 2), I will argue that neither satisfactorily accounts for the dynamic co-existence of temporalities observable within site. I will conclude that the only means by which we may do so is by understanding the site as plastic, and the *survivance* as a force that is integral to plasticity.

² The Aletti in particular has been portrayed in multiple literary works (Attia, *Alger La Noire*; Sansal; Caduc), in photography and film (Sedira, *Saphir*; Depardon), and is discussed on the Pied-Noir community ES’MMA’s blog; the Saint-George has been depicted in an eponymous work by Rachid Boudjedra.

The first half of the chapter will explore the design of the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George as *lieux de mémoire*, and the way in which the *survivance* troubles such a construction. Examining the architecture of the two sites, I will begin by demonstrating how their approaches to Algeria's past sought to take control of it for the purposes of the French colonial regime, integrating a selective narrative of the past into their fabric. The Aletti was alleged to embody a futuristic vision of France's colony; belying its Art Déco architecture, however, was a story of Algeria that emphasised the modern and the ancient whilst passing over the intervening years, fêting the European to the detriment of the Algerian. By contrast, whilst the Saint-George would preserve the vernacular that the Aletti was constructed to replace, it was a French vision of the Algerian that was mobilised. The architecture of the city's colonised inhabitants was presented as dominated and fetishised, so that these communities were dispossessed of a voice in their country's historiography. I will therefore argue that the two hotels reflect the way in which "the city and its architecture" were rendered "prime actors as contested terrains in the colonial confrontation" (Çelik 27). What they attempted was the foregrounding and erasure of different events and experiences to produce a single narrative, one that was deemed indefinitely frozen once in place.

Nevertheless, I will argue that, for architecture to achieve the permanency and purity of narrative to which it aspires, the sites in question would have to be divorced from their material and social contexts. I will demonstrate how the existing backdrop of the pre-colonial city and the sites' usage would unsettle the hotels' construction as *lieux de mémoire*. The Aletti reveals that the idealised antiquity and futuristic modernity to which its design points, and that seek to frame the history of Algeria in definitively European terms, prove in fact inextricable from the Arabo-Berber landscape; the indigenous past, whose occlusion was intended in the site's construction, instead persists within its form. Furthermore, the post-independence use of the Saint-George demonstrates that site exists in continual transformation, so that it is marked by a particularly complex entanglement of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. The two hotels are thus exposed to be defined by a *survivance* that has compromised their construction as *lieux de mémoire*, and are thus exemplary of the fact that the past rarely adheres to the narratives inscribed into site.

In the second half of the chapter, I will examine how cultural producers engage with site, seeking either to reinforce or reproduce it as a *lieu de mémoire*, or to account for and engage with the *survivances* within it. Focusing purely on the Aletti, I will explore two differing approaches to the site and the memories with which it is associated. The first, a community blog by the Pied-Noir organisation ES'MMA, celebrates the hotel as an anchor for nostalgic reminiscences on its members' homeland. Claiming to make the past present, however, the community in fact seeks to reinstate a vision of the former colonial site that ignores its contemporary lived reality. Its nostalgic work is thus compromised, not solely by the past's persistence, but also by its persistent changeability: the site presented is a fictional recreation that is incoherent with its contemporary existence.

My second example, by contrast, seeks to embrace the diversity of pasts that survive in its present form, and to actively engage with its continuing elaboration. A video installation by the artist Sedira, *Saphir's* depiction of the contemporary hotel and its surroundings, of both a Pied-Noir woman and an Algerian man, and thus of both the country's past and present, explicitly foregrounds the disparate memories with which the site is associated. Rather than distil these into a single narrative, Sedira uses montage to open them up in their radical heterogeneity and dynamism, and to engage with the site as a plastic work in progress. In the two chosen studies, therefore, we will identify the *survivance* both as a force that problematises an excessively rigid narrative of a site's past, yet one that also offers opportunities for novel and creative engagement. I will conclude that the plasticity of site requires that we approach its past, not as a point of origin that may be restored or lamented, but as bound up in the present in what Benjamin defines as the "eddy in the stream of becoming" (*Origin* 45). We must work with the site as it is, rather than to seek to restore what it once was.

The *lieu de mémoire*, *survivance* and plasticity

First posited by Nora in 1984, the *lieu de mémoire* represents one of the most consistently popular metaphors for how we remember in and through space; as Legg writes, it represents "a methodology and approach to memory that has been influential across the arts,

humanities, and social sciences” (482). Nora primarily defines *lieux de mémoire* as locations in which remembrance is cultivated, and he argues that their primary goal is to regulate what and how we recollect. Whilst his term is applicable to any entity that “administers the presence of the past in the present”³ (“administre la présence du passé dans le présent”) (“Entre” xxxvii), it is Nora’s “topographical” examples (“topographiques”) that have drawn particular attention (xl). They are deemed by their creators to make the past present, yet Nora contends that their ultimate aim is more subtle: presenting the past as in fact off limits to the present, the producers of such sites reestablish a sanctioned memory, one that, once in place, is understood to be irrefutable.

In the construction of the *lieu de mémoire* may therefore be perceived a three-stage process by which memory is circumscribed, curated and perpetuated. A distinction between past and present is first asserted or reinforced; were it otherwise, the consecration of the *lieu de mémoire* might prove unnecessary. As Nora writes, “[t]he less memory is lived from within, the more it requires external frameworks and tangible markers” (“Moins la mémoire est vécue de l’intérieur, plus elle a besoin de supports extérieurs et de repères tangibles”), and the *lieu de mémoire*’s producers therefore emphasise a “rupture with the past” (“rupture avec le passé”) so that it is only through the given site that a “sense of continuity” (“sentiment de la continuité”) may be attained (“Entre” xxvi). Thus reconstructed within the present, however, the past restored is not unmediated, and the next step in the production of the *lieu de mémoire* is one of curation. The memory produced is one that has been “reconstituted” (“reconstituée”) by the site’s producers (xxiii) and subjected to an “intentional and organised secretion” (“sécrétion volontaire et organisée”) (xxviii); it is an account of the past that is selective in its details and delineated to serve a particular purpose. The final act is the preservation of this account in perpetuity: the producers seek ultimately “to petrify” (“pétrifier”) (xxiv) memory, so that it may be presented as immutable and incontestable.

³ The author applies the term, not just to geographical locations, but also to commemorative rituals and objects: a *lieu de mémoire* need not be solely “le Sacré Coeur” but equally “the popular Lourdes pilgrimage” (“le pèlerinage populaire de Lourdes”) (Nora, “Entre” xl), “funeral orations” (“les éloges funèbres”) or the “national flag” (“drapeau national”) (xli).

Commemoration thus presented as urgent, its narrative is moulded to the designers' ambitions, and its final form is figuratively or literally set in stone.

The *lieu de mémoire* therefore represents a means by which to establish, legitimise and project memory narratives onto landscapes, yet the past's resilience and dynamism within site, its persistence as a *survivance*, necessarily calls into question this construction. The *lieu de mémoire* is dependent upon a past that is distinct from the present, one that may be meticulously sculpted to fit a chosen account (with all the foregrounding and erasure that this entails) and then preserved indefinitely. As such, an understanding of site as anachronic and plastic in nature, as established in the previous chapter, proves problematic in the construction of *lieux de mémoire*. The fact that what went before cannot be entirely effaced, and that what remains continues to evolve, means that they can achieve neither the hegemony nor the permanence to which their producers aspire: it is the *survivance*, as theorised by Didi-Huberman, that problematises the construction of the *lieu de mémoire*.

The author draws the *survivance* from the work of Aby Warburg's theorisation of 'Nachleben', who in turn borrowed it from Edward B. Tylor (*Image* 51–52). Warburg utilised this term, Didi-Huberman writes, to examine the way in which the motifs of earlier artistic movements recurred within its successors, how antiquity was recalled in medieval artwork and subsequently in that of the Renaissance (*Image* 82–84): he identified "a model of time particular to images" ("un modèle de temps propre aux images") defined by the "residual energy of a trace of a past life" ("énergie résiduelle d'une trace de vie passée") (82). Didi-Huberman writes that the *survivance* is that which "persists and bears witness to a departed state" ("persiste et témoigne d'un état disparu") within an object (59): it represents the "tenacity" ("ténacité") (57) of the past in its present form that "therefore disorients history, opens it and complicates it" ("désoriente donc l'histoire, l'ouvre, la complexifie") (85). It is such a persistent past that may be identified in site: be it irreparable damage done to a building, the way in which the existing landscape's contours dictate the form of new additions, or a location's habitual use that continues after redevelopment, the *survivance* represents the by means of which the present of the site is complicated by the persistence of multiple pasts within it. Didi-Huberman concludes that "the *survivance* would be the Warburgian way to name the temporal mode of this impurity" ("la *survivance* serait la façon

warburgienne de nommer le mode temporel de cette impureté”) (82); it enables us to account for how the past persists in site, and in so doing compromises the *lieu de mémoire*.

The *survivance* undoes the work of the *lieu de mémoire* in two key ways. Firstly, it ensures that multiple pasts persist within a contemporary site, undermining efforts to delineate a definitive narrative to the exclusion of others. Since no past can be wholly effaced within site, alongside the sanctioned account of the *lieu de mémoire* survive a diversity of others. Didi-Huberman writes that the *survivance* ensures that the “present bears the mark of multiple pasts” (“le présent porte la marque de multiples passés”) (*Image* 56); these serve as “[b]earers of temporal disorientation” (“Porteurs de désorientation temporelle”) (65) within site that consequently “anachronise it” (“l’anachronise”) (85). It is this anachronism that disrupts the work of the *lieu de mémoire*: if such a site was intended to convey a homogeneous memory, then anachronism exposes it to be instead defined by the heterogeneity of the present past.

Secondly, because the *survivance* itself is not definitive, its evolution prevents such a rigid account from taking root. The means by which the past endures in the present, the *survivance* also ensures that which endures also changes: its “very persistence is accompanied by an essential modification” (“persistance même s’accompagne d’une modification essentielle”) (59). Once again, the integrity of the *lieu de mémoire* is compromised: reliant upon a past that is fixed for its legitimacy, the fact that the present past continually evolves deprives it of its solid referent. The *survivance* therefore represents the means by which, through both the past’s resilience and its transformation, site eludes the efforts of those who would construct it as a *lieu de mémoire*; it ensures that the then remains inextricable from the now.

If Nora’s conception does not adequately account for site’s complexity, nor for the way in which the past survives and evolves within it, then several metaphors have been coined as alternatives to the *lieu de mémoire*. The palimpsest, for instance, is a trope often used to describe the way in which different pasts structure landscape. Huyssen deems it the ideal metaphor to describe “the material traces of the historical past in the present” (1). M. Silverman argues that it “captures most completely the superimposition and productive interaction of different inscriptions” (*Palimpsestic* 4): the author argues that it describes a

“composite structure” that combines “not simply two moments in time (past and present) but a number of different moments” (3). The palimpsest thus enables us to better comprehend the past’s multiplicity; nevertheless, it also implies a stratification of the past that is incoherent with the simultaneity observed in site. Massey deems the term to suggest an “accretion of layers in space”, moments in history sedimented on top of one another, rather than the “radical contemporaneity” of our experience (*For Space* 110). Whilst “[c]oevalness may be pointed to”, therefore, the palimpsest implies “superimposed horizontal structures rather than full contemporaneous coexistence and becoming” (110); it does not adequately account for the co-presence of different pasts within a present site.

Nadia Bartolini’s critique reaches much the same conclusion. She writes that the “layering” implied in the palimpsestic model “suggests a superimposition, a linearity of time” (“Critical” 1) that does not accurately reflect the nature of the “mingling of the past in the present” for which it is claimed to account (2). Instead, Bartolini argues for “brecciation” as a development of the palimpsestic metaphor, one that better accounts for the entangled and disordered way in which different pasts coalesce (“Critical” 6). Drawing the term from geology, in which it denotes “a rock that consists of coarse deposits of sedimentary fragments from different origins” (5), Bartolini describes the brecciated site as one in which different pasts are “enmeshed” rather than deposited in “chronological layers” (6): brecciation thus serves as a model in which “variegated times ... coexist without linearity” (12). Despite this, the metaphor’s geological roots prove problematic when accounting for the continual evolution observed in site. The author distinguishes between “[b]recciation” as “a state of possible flux and future movement” that is distinct from “[b]reccia” whose “fragments have already been consolidated and are therefore temporally frozen” (Bartolini, “Rome” 1045). Whilst Bartolini argues that brecciation “enables the site to be seen as unfinished” (9), that the product of this process is “cemented” in form (“Critical” 5) and “thus static in a present time” suggests otherwise (“Rome” 1045). Its agglomeration may bring together temporalities in a non-chronological structure, yet the result is literally set in stone. Whilst certainly an advancement upon the palimpsest, brecciation does not fully account for a site whose present consists, not just of multiple pasts, but of pasts that only persist in evolution.

To understand the peculiarly anachronic dynamics of the *survivance* in site, defined not solely by survival but also by transformation, it is inevitably to plasticity that we must turn. Such is the conclusion of Didi-Huberman: the author describes the product of the *survivance* as “a *knot of time* that is difficult to decipher because evolutionary movements and movements that resist evolution unceasingly criss-cross therein” (“un *noeud de temps* difficile à déchiffrer parce que s’y recroisent sans cesse des mouvements d’évolution et des mouvements qui résistent à l’évolution”) (*Image* 53), so that it is simultaneously defined by the “indestructibility of traces” (“l’indestructibilité des traces”) and “their perpetual transformations” (“leurs perpétuelles transformations”) (158). The site of the *survivance* is thus “a *plastic material*” (“un matériau *plastique*”) sculpted by “this *material force*” (“cette force *matérielle*”) (158), and, whilst Didi-Huberman’s understanding of plasticity is drawn primarily from Nietzsche, its conclusions coincide perfectly with those of Malabou. She similarly argues that plasticity grants the past “a form of resilience” (“une manière de résilience”) that results in a “contradictory construction ... of constitution and of effacement” (“construction contradictoire ... de constitution et d’effacement”) (*Que faire* 176); the past persists, but what persists is as transformed as the entity in which it is retained. As a consequence, the two authors’ writings are mutually informative, and enable us to better understand why the past in site proves so troublesome to the construction of the *lieu de mémoire*. It is the plasticity of site that gives rise to the *survivance*, yet the *survivance* itself that affords the past its resilience and dynamism within the plastic site.

Colonial architecture and the *lieu de mémoire*

In 1930, Algiers stood at something of a crossroads in its history: one hundred years on from colonisation, the capital’s urban planners and architects were conscious both of the French Empire’s ambitions for the country’s future, and of the legacy of its past. The building projects of this period formed part of the “Centénaire de l’Algérie” (Oulebsir 261), and were implicated in their efforts to celebrate an exclusively colonialist account of Algeria’s past. The French authorities sought to attribute the colony “a recent birth” (“une naissance récente”) that pointed to a story that had yet to unfold (261); yet they also wished to situate this modern

genesis within Algeria's history, "as classical as it was Arabic" ("tant antique qu'arabe") (19), and to stage a "conciliation between the two cultures, Arabo-Muslim and French" ("une conciliation entre les deux cultures, arabo-musulmane et française") (21). Observable in 1920s and 1930s Algiers, therefore, was a tension between forward thinking and historiography, and the period is thus defined by the same modernist ambitions and anxieties observed in the previous chapter. More specifically, it reflects a particular "colonial modernity" (Gregory 4) that was "as much about making other people's geographies as it was about making other people's histories" (11): Algeria's past, present and future were re-interpreted through a modernist ideology that was fundamentally European in nature, and the narrative constituted therein was inscribed into the material landscape of the capital.

What we read in the planning and construction of early-twentieth-century Algiers is another example of modernity's grappling with the past, and the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George enable us to examine the production of *lieux de mémoire* in this context. Jennings writes that urban design has always been a means of "perpetuating and normalizing the relationship between colonizer and colonized" (160): the reconstruction of Algiers was a far from novel initiative by the early twentieth century, and had always been motivated by a desire to impose a European vision upon the indigenous landscape⁴. Nevertheless, what distinguished the Centenary from earlier efforts was both the volume of projects⁵ and the particular narratives of Algeria's past and future promoted. On the one hand, the city's "promising future" ("avenir prometteur") (Oulebsir 268) was captured in "the new architectural modernity" ("la nouvelle modernité architecturale"), exemplified by "Art déco" styling (Piaton, Lochard, et al. 64) with its "[c]larity, geometric lines and sobriety" ("Clarté, lignes géométriques et sobriété") (Oulebsir 281). On the other, a "desire to protect and to conserve the monumental heritage of Algeria" ("volonté de sauvegarder et de conserver le patrimoine monumental de l'Algérie") (19) entailed a proliferation of the "Neo-Moorish" (21)

⁴ Rebuilding had begun in the immediate wake of the invasion of Algeria, during which "the Arabo-Berber city's edifices" ("des édifices de la ville arabo-berbère") were replaced with new buildings "in a European architectural style" ("de style architectural européen") (Oulebsir 10).

⁵ Renovation projects increased dramatically after the First World War and in the lead-up to the Centenaire: in 1916, only eleven new buildings were built in Algiers; in 1929, 697 were under construction (Lochard and Aiche 25).

with its celebration of “the popular arts, the picturesque and the neo-vernacular” (“les arts populaires, le pittoresque et le néo-vernaculaire”) (Piaton, Lochard, et al. 61).

Within this architectural proliferation, the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George hold a particular significance. Built in 1927 and 1930 respectively, the sites are exemplary of these two architectural trends, and enable us to study how they were used to delineate French narratives of the Algerian past. The Art Déco style of the Aletti elided the presence of the indigenous population in its celebration of both a modern and an ancient history, whereas the Neo-Moorish Saint-George appropriated the local past for the purposes of the imperial authorities. In the two hotels, therefore, form is interwoven with considered narratives of the colonial past, rendering them ideal examples of the *lieu de mémoire* and its construction.

Architects are consequently heavily implicated in the conception and inscription of memory in sites, their design as implicated in its reimagining as literature and artworks. Jeremy Till writes that inherent in the discipline of architecture is a conflation of “the visual with the political”, the material form of an edifice utilised to communicate particular narratives on behalf of its commissioners and designers (18). Constructed into architecture is therefore not merely “an ordered system of form”, but “an ordered body of knowledge” (30); the visible becomes the sum total of what the architect and urban planners wished to be perceived and thought. Memory is one such narrative that may be inscribed into a site; indeed, if, as Hornstein contends, “memories are always anchored in spatial frameworks” (3), then the question of “how architecture captures and triggers memory” is of paramount concern (1). Far from “an independent activity” (Till, 2009: 18), therefore, architects’ work renders them key actors in the construction of site and memory, so that their edifices represent “much more than the building materials of which they are made” (Hornstein 4). Within their designs, the boundary between sanctioned and unsanctioned narratives may be materially delineated, emphasising those pasts that are useful and occluding those that are challenging; they consequently offer a critical medium through which to interrogate sited memory.

The Hôtel Aletti is widely considered a forerunner of the Art Déco styling that would dominate Algiers during the 1930s, and in both form and function, it embodied modernity in miniature, as well as the future aspirations of the colonial regime. The ambition of the

Centenaire was to present Algeria as “barely one hundred years in age ... full of life and of prospect” (“âgée de cent ans à peine ... pleine de vie et d’avenir”) (Mercier qtd. in Oulebsir 261), and sites such as the Aletti were instrumental in promoting this project. In design, the hotel was emblematic of the Art Déco style: its interior ornamentation and exterior façades feature the characteristic zig-zag patterning and angular structure that characterise this style and its white-washed façades and flat roof were prescient of the later Art Moderne that would evolve from it (Harris 55–56). Nor were the hotel’s modern pretensions limited to the aesthetic; the hotel boasted state-of-the-art facilities and entertainment, including an air terminal, two cinemas and the new Casino Municipal (Coudon and Petit). Thus, as urban planners sought to assert “the modern character” (“le caractère moderne”) of the city at large (Oulebsir 270), the Aletti, as a “city within a city” (Berger 5), spoke of great promise for the metropolis developing around it.

Belying this modernist realignment, however, was a profound desire to re-envisage Algeria’s past and present through a French lens, and to impose this vision upon the landscape. Whilst the Art Déco style of the resort was asserted as a fusion of cultures and styles, expressing “the modern and Mediterranean character of the city and the heterogeneity of its population” (“le caractère moderne et méditerranéen de cette ville et l’hétérogénéité de sa population”) (Oulebsir 270), it is noteworthy that this “Mediterranean identity” (“méditerranéité”) was conceived of in distinctly French terms (268). As one contemporary, Mercier described it, Algeria was deemed to have been “dragged out of its barbarity by the productive work of the Mediterranean races” (“arrachée à la barbarie par le travail fécond des races méditerranéennes”), so that it was European modernity that was asserted, and not one in which the indigenous culture was perceived to play a part (qtd. in Oulebsir 261). Inscribed within the hotel’s form was therefore a conscious reinterpretation of the country’s story from the perspective of the coloniser, and to the exclusion of the colonised.

Underpinning the progressive image of the Hôtel Aletti was a carefully orchestrated historiography, one that portrayed the colonial project as simultaneously modern and ancient, and in which the presence of the local was nullified. It is noteworthy that the Aletti was most stylistically similar to establishments built in La Rochelle and Nice (Oulebsir 275); more poignant is the fact that the construction project was led by Richard and Bluysen, both

celebrated Parisian architects, and almost exclusively employed Parisian architects and decorators over local artisans⁶; even the hotel's owner was based in Vichy (Piaton, Hueber, et al. 180). The Aletti's architecture was consequently metropolitan in nature, and symbolic of what France believed it had achieved in the region; it promoted "une Algérie française" that was but a reflection of the mother country's "genius" ("génie") (Oulebsir 22).

Furthermore, it is pertinent to note the inspiration that the site's designers drew from the classical. Alongside extensive modernisation, the early 1930s saw renewed interest in Algeria's Roman archaeology⁷. This interest in the ancient is reflected in the hotel, which replicates the "symmetry, proportion, and a harmonious relationship between the elements of the building" seen in classical architecture (Conway and Roenisch 170); its rear entrance, for instance, is constructed as a colonnaded portico reminiscent of the pronaos seen in Roman temples (Harris 769). This contributed to the imperial regime's efforts to identify itself with the ancient empire: by lauding the fact that "[t]he Romans succeeded in 'intimately romanising' the natives" ("Les Romains ont réussi à 'romaniser intimement' les indigènes") (Oulebsir 283), it asserted its own presence in the region as the inheritor of this deeper European project.

Perceptible in the Hôtel Aletti, therefore, is not merely a modernist ideal; it also asserted a French vision of Algeria's modern and ancient past, and excluded the local populace from its writing. The territory was presented as a "French work" ("œuvre française"), as "a new creation whose conception began at the moment of conquest" ("une création nouvelle dont la conception a commencé au moment de la conquête") (Oulebsir 4); nevertheless, by rooting the modern regime in a Roman legacy, the colonial authorities sought to "diminish the temporal distance separating the present from the ancient past" ("diminuer la distance temporelle séparant le présent du passé antique") (282). Ultimately, by foregrounding the story of the colony in simultaneously modern and ancient terms, the local was deliberately elided; as Oulebsir writes, it was "a conception of the history of Algeria ... that sidelined the

⁶ Noteworthy exceptions included the local firms Bordure d'Alger, who produced the hotel's ironwork, and Modet & Cogniet, who provided its furniture (Piaton, Hueber, et al. 180).

⁷ Significant sums were set aside, for instance, for the renovation of museums of antiquities in Timgad and Djemila, and for the conservation of Roman ruins (Oulebsir 283).

Arab and Berber populations” (“une conception de l’histoire d’Algérie ... qui met à l’écart les populations arabes et berbères”) (22). What we see in the Aletti, therefore, is not a site in which the past has been cast aside; instead, it embodies a narrative of Algeria’s past that has been simultaneously truncated, extrapolated and purged, a *lieu de mémoire* built in support of the colonial project.

By contrast, the architecture of the Hôtel Saint-George takes a markedly different approach to the local past: in its Neo-Moorish design, it formed part of a movement that claimed to preserve and to celebrate the Arabo-Berber. Whilst the roots of the Neo-Moorish may be traced to the earliest years of Algiers’s conquest⁸, the 1920s represented a particular peak in the popularity this style (Piaton, Lochard, et al. 64), and leisure spaces such as the Saint-George commonly adopted it⁹. Indeed, that the site was initially acquired by Pierre-Auguste Guiauchain, and developed by his son Georges (Sabrina), is highly pertinent; as two figures closely associated with this architectural movement¹⁰, their involvement ensured that the Saint-George features not the erasure of pre-colonial elements, but the integration of the local into its form. The hotel’s function room (Salle des Fêtes), for instance, mimics the central courtyard around which local homes were constructed, flanked by a narrow arcade of slender pillars as was traditional in Muslim dwellings (Çelik 15), and decorated with composite panels of geometric tiling that was similarly inspired (Petersen 279). When the third Guiauchain, Jacques, first converted the building into a hotel, the Neo-Moorish continued to guide the Saint-George’s expansion¹¹. The West Wing, built in 1923

⁸ The 1860s saw some of the earliest merging of autochthonous and French architecture, first carried out by local property owners in the wake of demolitions (Piaton, Lochard, et al. 57–58).

⁹ Piaton, Lochard et al. write that, whilst “models imported from the Métropole dominated public architecture” (“les modèles importés de métropole s’imposent dans l’architecture publique”), the Neo-Moorish was more common in “recreational architecture” (“l’architecture des loisirs”) (60).

¹⁰ Pierre-Auguste Guiauchain’s 1844 design for a market for indigenous traders, described as a “caravansérail, ou fondouk” is described by Piaton, Lochard et al. as “one of the first projects developed in an ‘oriental style’” (“un des premiers projets élaborés en ‘style oriental’”) (59); Georges Guiauchain is more famous as an “architectural theorist” (“théoricien de l’architecture”) who promoted the Neo-Moorish in his 1905 text titled *Alger* (Oulebsir 333).

¹¹ It is noteworthy that this went very much against the grain of the architect’s œuvre: holding the position of Architecte des Postes et Télécommunications and Architecte de l’Assistance publique, Jacques Guiauchain was heavily implicated in the city’s modernisation (Oulebsir 333), and is most famous for his design of the Palais du Gouvernement, deemed “a landmark of modern architecture” (“un jalon de l’architecture moderne”) (Piaton, Hueber, et al. 205).

(Hamamouche), features horseshoe arches also known as “Moorish arch” (Harris 518), and its windows copied traditional *mashrabiya*, oriel windows formed of carved wooden latticework that are typical of traditional Arabic homes (Petersen 177). In the Neo-Moorish, then, the new paid homage to the old, and was perceived to redress the violence of Algeria’s colonisation. As Henri Klein, the founder of the “Committee of Old Algiers” (“Comité du Vieil Alger”), argued, “[w]e will make up for the misdeeds that we have accomplished amongst so many beautiful indigenous works, under the pretext of civilisation” (“Nous nous ferons pardonner les méfaits que nous avons accomplis parmi tant de belles œuvres indigènes, sous prétexte de civilisation”) (qtd. in Piaton, Lochard et al. 63). Observable in the Saint-George is therefore a design “founded upon the Moorish tradition” (“fondé sur la tradition mauresque”) (Oulebsir 19), the spaces, functions and aesthetics of the vernacular recreated to accord a presence to the local past.

Nevertheless, the fact that the hotel was built on the ruins of an Ottoman Palace suggests that it represented more than simply a celebration of autochthonous architecture (Oulebsir 332); whilst it claimed to fête Algeria’s identity and heritage, underpinning the site was a desire to assert control over them. Historically home to the Bey of Algiers, the palace was built in 1514 (Cabourg) and served as an important seat of local power in the upper district of the city (Çelik 14). This necessarily implicated it in the French conquest: it was one of many such sites requisitioned during the early nineteenth century, which saw “the confiscation of the Dey’s property, of the Beylik and of enterprises” belonging to locals (“les confiscations des biens du Dey, du beylik et des corporations”) (Lochard and Aiche 15), and such appropriations asserted the coloniser’s authority over the landscape. Indeed, as active as Pierre-Auguste Guiauchain was in the development of the Neo-Moorish, he was equally active in the city’s aggressive reorganisation; appointed as the first official civil architect of the city in 1832 (Oulebsir 332), he submitted “the first general plan for the realignment of the city of Algiers” (“le premier plan général d’alignement de la ville de la ville d’Alger”) approved in 1846. (Lochard and Aiche 17). Observable in the Saint-George is therefore as much an imposition of colonial order as the Modernism of the Aletti: its designers may not have eradicated the local past, but it was certainly placed under French control.

The reconstruction of the former palace may have appeared to preserve Algerian history, therefore, yet it did so for the purposes of the imperial regime, and according to its needs. Claudine Piaton, Thierry Lochard et al. argue that the Neo-Moorish was symptomatic of a desire to construct an identity for the colony that “distinguished it from the Métropole” (“la distingue de la métropole”) (61)¹², and in the particular case of the hotel, its architects sought to capitalise on the site’s heritage to attract custom from visitors to the region. Tourism had always been a factor in the preservation of the pre-colonial¹³, and the Saint-George was specifically marketed towards “English wintering tourists” (Benchérif 52), whose patronage is evident in the hotel’s name. This community frequented Algiers as “an exotic spot on the northern coast of Africa” that nevertheless offered “the amenities of a modern European city” (40), and the Saint-George was required to balance the allure of the Orient with the convenience of the modern. Beneath its neo-Moorish façade, the Saint-George boasted a similar range of facilities to the Aletti, including tennis courts, golf links, and a branch office of Thomas Cook, all “built to the highest European standards” (52). What the hotel represented was “[a]ll Modern Comfort in Attractive Oriental Building” (qtd. in Benchérif 59). Whilst the local may have been retained within the site of the Saint-George, it was little more than an aesthetic that complemented the luxurious experience on offer.

Indeed, the truly local, the indigenous community and their past, was accorded no meaningful presence within the site of the hotel, nor in the evolving city that surrounded it. This rendered sites such as the Hôtel Saint-George important instruments in the French authorities’ efforts to remould the colony in their desired image, and to assert their control over its past. The separation of the new and old city had been typical of urban planning in Algiers since 1830, and the capital was reconstructed to the “exclusion of the indigenous

¹² Indeed, Piaton, Lochard et al. argue that “[t]his desire to privilege the Neo-Moorish style naturally echoes regionalism” (“Cette volonté de privilégier le style néo-mauresque fait naturellement écho au régionalisme”), which was increasingly in vogue not just in Algeria, but also in France: “in the Algerian context, the vernacular architecture could only be Moorish” (“dans le contexte algérien, l’architecture vernaculaire ne peut être que mauresque”) (61).

¹³ Criticisms of the building of a new road in 1875 feared that “[t]o cut across the upper city with a European road would be to decapitate Algiers” (“Traverser le haut de la ville par une rue européenne, c’est décapiter Alger”), claiming that “[i]t is orientalism that attracts tourists to Algiers and not our squares or places” (“C’est l’orientalisme qui attire les touristes à Alger et non nos squares et nos places”) (cited in Lochard & Aiche 20).

population (“exclusion de la population indigène”) (Oulebsir 10). Nevertheless, elements of the pre-colonial were retained¹⁴, both as a curiosity, and as a benchmark against which the city’s modernity might be measured, both serving to “romanticize” it (Çelik 25), and as “a background that highlighted the colonizer’s ‘innovative dynamism’” (26). Presented to the European community for their consumption, the native Algerian population was kept at a distance (both metaphorically and literally), rigidly defined within the narratives of the coloniser, and thus deprived of any say in the writing of their country’s unfolding history.

Throughout, the aim was “to reserve history making for the colonizer alone” (Çelik 26), and the same processes at work may be observed in the Saint-George. Built on the hilltop of Mustapha Supérieur, the residence of European tourists was far away from those of locals; to the majority, “Arab society remained a separate, alien world” (Benchérif 56). What was preserved of this society was nevertheless divested of agency and contention, and presented to the visitor as “perfectly secure and well-behaved” (42). The local aesthetic embodied by the Neo-Moorish Saint-George is therefore one torn away from the community to which it had originally belonged, modified and then presented to the European public for their consumption. Urban planners may have sought to project “a glorified image of a metropolis that claimed to protect and to respect the identity of the indigenous” (Laggoune), yet the contemporary Lathuillière recognised the real intentions beneath this project: “[i]t was nothing more than a more or less conscious packaging, one that camouflaged the true construction” (“Il ne s’agissait en somme qu’un habillage plus ou moins savant, habillage qui camouflait la construction véritable”) (qtd. in Piaton, Lochard et al. 63). What we observe in the Hôtel Saint-George, therefore, is an effort to “connect the present to an idealised past” (“relier le présent à un passé idéalisé”) (61), the production of a *lieu de mémoire* that controlled who was permitted to participate in delineating the colony’s memory. The aesthetics of the pre-colonial may have been preserved, yet its power structures, society and culture were carefully contained, and its native population deprived of a voice in the telling of their city’s past.

¹⁴ This is most evident in the Casbah, which was both preserved and reconstructed to reflect a European image of the autochthonous population: observable in its development was “the freezing of the old town in a mythical frame” that preserved its “mystery and unfamiliarity” (Çelik 25).

Whilst representative of highly distinctive approaches, therefore, the architecture of both the Aletti and the Saint-George are exemplary of the *lieu de mémoire*, its employment in a colonial context and its implication in the assertion of power. Jein et al. write that the design of the urban landscape often involves the “packaging of the past” in a way that “neglects the experience of those who do not conveniently fit the promotional image of the city” (405). The Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George were implicated in such a project for Algiers: they sought to elaborate a French reading of Algeria’s past, to disseminate this within both landscape and image, and, in so doing, to prevent the local population from contesting the sanctioned narrative.

Beneath “the more-or-less benign cloak of aesthetic codes” employed in the two sites was thus a projection of “imperial power” that was “distinctly nonbenign” (J. Till 28). They demonstrate the way in which memory may be mobilised, manipulated and maintained for diverse purposes, chief amongst which is the reinforcing of power relations. The objectives served by the *lieu de mémoire* may be manifold; mobilised for “political uses, touristic uses, commercial uses” (“usages politiques, usages touristiques, usages commerciaux”) (Nora, “Avènement”), the past is valued only for the “the use we make of it” (“l’usage que nous en faisons”) (Augé 35). Nevertheless, Nora writes that *lieux de mémoire* are predominantly the work of a ruling group; they tend to be “spectacular and triumphal, imposing and usually imposed ... [and] always from above” (“spectaculaires et triomphants, imposants et généralement imposés ... toujours d’en haut”) (“Entre” xl), and are thus implicated in a given authority’s efforts to impose both their vision and will upon a landscape and its occupants. What we see in the design and architecture of the Aletti and Saint-George is therefore the construction of *lieux de mémoire* by and for the French colonial regime, rewriting the country’s history according to the conqueror’s preferred narrative

***Survivance* in the Aletti and Saint-George**

The intention of those who designed the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George was to construct their respective site as a *lieu de mémoire*, one that would present a French interpretation of Algeria’s past, and that would impose this narrative upon the colonial capital’s landscape in

perpetuity. For such an endeavour to prove successful, however, we must assume that the architect is successful in translating the purity of his vision into material reality, and that this may remain untouched both by the building's context and users. Such is certainly the ambition. J. Till writes that architects seek in their design to deploy "a defense system" against site's usage, erecting "barriers behind which an ordered world can be erected" and that enable "the uncertainties of the world" to be kept at bay (5). Nevertheless, just as the author ultimately concludes that only an "illusion of order" is achieved, and one whose "underlying reality is rapidly unraveling that semblance" (35), so too do the hotels fall short of their ambition. In both, the past whose exclusion was sought in fact survives within it, and both are transformed by continued usage that prevents any narrative of the past from proving definitive in the way intended by the *lieu de mémoire*.

It is noteworthy, for instance, that the form of the Hôtel Aletti reveals an influence of the very vernacular that it was intended to occlude. The semicircular arches of the building's external walkway represent an explicit borrowing from Classical styling (Harris 826), rounded and undecorated to differentiate them from the ornate horseshoe of Algerian architecture (518). It is pertinent to note, however, that the arches seen in pre-colonial buildings were themselves a direct descendant of the Roman: early examples in Islamic architecture were rounded as a borrowing from the Roman and Byzantine (Petersen 24), and were thus the form out of which the horseshoe would evolve (Harris 518). The walkway itself also intertwines the ancient and the local; ostensibly built to mimic the *stoa* of classical structures (945), the colonnade nevertheless recalls the *riwaq*, an identical feature surrounding the interior courtyards of Islamic buildings (Petersen 246). The architectural tropes presented as classically inspired within the Aletti were thus necessarily situated within a complex lineage that cannot be ignored.

Indeed, even those assertively modernist elements of the Aletti's design betray a rootedness in the local landscape, and expose the site as defined by a diversity of interwoven temporalities. Derek Gregory writes that the colonial modern's "constructions of other cultures [... also] shape its own dispositions and deployments" (4), and this may be seen in the design of the hotel. The very whiteness of its façade was as in keeping with the old city as with the new; as Piaton, Lochard et al. contend, "the analogies between the modern white

cubic volumes with flat roofs and the traditional style of the houses of Algiers's Casbah seem evident" ("Les analogies entre les volumes cubiques blancs modernes aux toits plats et le style traditionnel des maisons de la Casbah d'Alger paraissent évidents") (Piaton, Lochard, et al. 68). Observable in the Aletti and similar sites was an Art Déco unique to France's colony: "[a]longside imported models" ("Aux côtés des modèles importés") was "a truly Algerian expression of Art Déco" ("une expression proprement algéroise de l'Art déco") that combined a "Parisian influence and local referents" ("influence parisienne et des référents locaux" (67). Exposed in the Aletti are the "occluded genealogies" of modernity (Crawley Jackson 164): the claim to have constructed the modern *ex nihilo*, or to have replicated the Classical in its strict purity, is demonstrated to underplay an inspiration drawn from the vernacular. This undermines its construction as a *lieu de mémoire*; where a singular historical narrative was desired, a multiplicity of different temporalities proves inevitable as *survivances* persist therein.

Nor is it solely the pre-colonial past that survived to prevent Algiers's colonial sites from projecting uncomplicated memory narratives. In the case of the Saint-George, the legacy of the French regime continues to define the hotel, obliging subsequent renovators to negotiate this memory. Like so many of Algiers's colonial landmarks¹⁵, the Saint-George was requisitioned by the new Algerian government in the wake of independence; indeed, the hotel is somewhat prominent in this regard, as a site in which both the pre-colonial and the colonial are embodied. A French hotel built on a former Ottoman palace, it symbolised the domination of Algiers's landscape by the French imperial regime, and its redevelopment would thus enable the newly independent state to stake its ownership over both periods in Algeria's history. Nationalised in 1982 (Fisk 1312), the Saint-George has seen significant investment, both financial and symbolic, in its reconstruction as an emblem of Algeria's past and future. The institution has been awarded substantial governmental funding to facilitate its modernisation, and in 2000 began development as the flagship for Algeria's first five-star hotel chain (Hamamouche). In this light, that the hotel was renamed the El-Djazair ('Algeria'

¹⁵ Nadira Laggoune, for example, has explored the way in which the contemporary Musée public national d'art moderne et contemporain, re-opened in 2007, represents part of a 'cultural reappropriation phenomenon which today affirms itself not only in Algeria but in a number of independent countries'.

in Arabic) upon nationalisation is highly significant; as “an act of cultural sovereignty” (Laggoune), this explicitly positioned it as the embodiment of a modern and progressive Algeria, yet one that had taken control of its history. The hotel has therefore been singled out as a site in which the colonial past might be reappropriated and re-negotiated, and a new Algerian identity constructed.

Nevertheless, just as the architects of the Aletti were unable to elide the memory of the indigenous in their design, so too has the Saint-George’s post-Independence management had to deal with the persistence of the colonial legacy. The institution has more recently reinstated its original French title (Chaîne El-Djazaïr). This was done partially to distinguish it from the other four hotels in the newly formed El-Djazaïr chain, yet was also due to the fact that post-Independence Arabisation was unable to prevent people from referring to the establishment as the Saint-George; as Jean-Pierre Tuquoi writes, “the graft has not taken” (“la greffe n’a pas pris”). Such an inability to redefine the sites of the former oppressor is by no means restricted to the Algerian experience: John Western writes that, “because the colonial mold is literally set in stone’ the formerly imperial city “cannot be torn down totally to begin anew” (344); and Arif Arak Dirlik also contends that such a cityscape always bears “the marks of the world of colonial modernity ... of which it is the product” (2). Algerian developers have thus been confronted with the same reality that presented itself to the city’s French urban planners: that the past will always survive efforts to overwrite it.

This has resulted in a particularly complex interweaving of different temporalities within the Saint-George’s form, rendering the hotel’s architecture a potent example of the role of the *survivance* in site’s anachronism. Kanchana Mahadevan writes that “the predicament of colonial modernity” is the issue of precisely how post-colonial societies should respond to the Western ideologies imposed by powers to which they are no longer subject (193). Writing in the context of modern India, Mahadevan argues that a crucial question confronting its inhabitants and authorities is “[s]ince modernity was ushered in India under British colonial rule, should it be renounced?” (193). In the case of the Saint-George, responding to similar challenges has involved not seeking to efface the colonial presence within the building, but instead to balance both the pre-colonial and the colonial in its contemporary form, and the result is a particularly inextricable entanglement of different times. What served as the Salle

des Fêtes under colonial management has since been renamed the El Djazira room (Chaîne El-Djazaïr); nevertheless, comparison between recent photographs of the venue and those from the 1930s show very little change in its colonial era decoration. An imperial appropriation of indigenous architecture is thus preserved in the post-Independence site, yet beneath this already complicated interplay of different pasts lies even greater temporal depth. Oulebsir notes that the central courtyard of Arabo-Berber architecture, mimicked in the Saint-George's Salle des Fêtes, is itself an adaptation of classical design: the "*wast ed-dur*" typical of "the Arabo-Berber dwelling (palace or simple house)" ("l'habitation [palais ou simple maison] arabo-berbère"), was itself "a reinterpretation of the Roman atrium, adapted to new usages" ("une réinterprétation de l'atrium romain adapté à de nouveaux usages") (15). Observable in the Hôtel Saint-George, therefore, is a lengthy history of borrowings that stretches from the dawn of the Common Era until the present day: what we see is not an attempt at "invention *ex-nihilo*", but instead a desire to "make it again, another way." (Crawley Jackson 219). The hotel is thus a site in which multiple pasts (ancient, indigenous, colonial, and post-Independence) persist and co-exist, interwoven and inextricable, and in which appropriation cannot overwrite what went before, but only add to it.

Observable in the Hôtel Aletti and the Saint-George, therefore, is the way in which the *survivance* problematises the construction of the *lieu de mémoire*: the past survives efforts to erase, occlude or reshape it, and in so doing it renders the site and its memory anachronic. Indeed, Nora's model has been critiqued precisely for not accounting for such a diversity of memories, nor for their continually contested and evolving nature; Legg deems it closed to "counterhistories, ... alternative patrons, and knowledges that play to a different tune" (495), whilst Colon argues that it does not account for the "temporal and social instabilities" of space (70). We find ourselves confronted by what Didi-Huberman describes as a composition of "*survivances*, latencies and returns blended in the development ... of periods and styles" ("*survivances*, latences et revenances mêlées au développement ... des périodes et des styles" (*Image* 88), one that "offers us no possibility of simplifying history" ("ne nous offre aucune possibilité de simplifier l'histoire") (85). Efforts to delineate a particular narrative of the past and to impose it through the medium of site are therefore compromised by the fact that, as Olivier writes, "[t]he past does not resemble the image that we make of it" ("Le passé

ne ressemble pas à l'image que nous nous en faisons") (*Sombre* 18). The *survivance* thus precludes the construction of the *lieu de mémoire*: by enabling multiple pasts to persist and interact dynamically within site, a simplistic account of their history proves impossible to set in stone, and instead those who engage with such locations are obliged to grapple with their inherent anachronism.

Nostalgia and fiction: ES'MMA

It is important to note that it is not solely through their original physical design, nor through subsequent renovation, that the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George have been explored and elaborated in terms of memory. The sites and the pasts with which they are associated have also been represented in diverse cultural media, all of which have served to shape how we conceive of them. Jonathan Hill argues that it is something of a fallacy to argue that "only architects make buildings"; he asserts that we must also consider how the "user", as a "creative and unpredictable" force in their production, contributes to meaning-making therein (2), so that sites must be understood as "made by use and by design" (1). In addition, what Hill defines as use is not limited to physical interaction with a space¹⁶; instead, sites are defined by a wide variety of engagements, and cultural media in particular shape the production and perpetuation of sited memory. As Donald writes, space represents more than just an "already existing setting" for the stories that we tell about ourselves and our past; it is actively produced by the telling of such stories, so that what we observe is "the constitution of space ... through the act of narration" itself (123).

As such, if we are to fully examine the construction of the *lieu de mémoire*, as well as how it is unsettled by the *survivance*, then we must also account for how a site is culturally represented and reimagined. To do so, I will focus on the Hôtel Aletti and how it has been approached by two cultural producers. To begin with, I will study the writings of the Pied-Noir community group ES'MMA, who reconstruct the Aletti as a *lieu de mémoire* to anchor their contemporary

¹⁶ Indeed, Hill expresses concern that the term "user", whilst certainly more appropriate than that of "occupant", nevertheless risks implying that "using architecture is primarily a question of practicality" (26).

nostalgia; in so doing, however, they abstract it from its contemporary lived reality. I will then examine the Sedira's *Saphir*: I will argue that the artist opens up the diverse memories embodied in the hotel through the use of montage, and in so doing engages its *survivance* as integral to and productive of the Aletti as a plastic site.

ES'MMA is a Pied-Noir community group of former pupils from schools in Alger-Centre¹⁷ (a municipality in central Algiers) whose blog serves as a repository for historical materials and personal writings related to their former home. Prominent amongst the sites remembered is the Aletti: an entire section of the website is dedicated to the hotel, and Gérald Dupeyrot (a founder of the group who left Algiers with his family in 1962) describes at length his memory of being taken there by his father to see Disney's *Fantasia*. Nevertheless, the aim of the community is not merely to provide a forum for reminiscence; as the authors write, "ES'MMA! ... means 'listen'" ("ES'MMA! [...] ça veut dire 'écoute'") ("Acceuil"), and the group's contributors see their work as enabling their voice to be heard in the ongoing production of the Algerian capital. Through the writings and visual artefacts collected, ES'MMA reconstruct the Aletti as a *lieu de mémoire*, seeking not only to reinforce their own identity, but also to continue to define the modern site of the hotel in central Algiers.

Noteworthy throughout the community's commemorative work is a pervasive nostalgia, a term that has long been associated with Algeria, but that has more recently been theorised as a particular means by which groups seek to make present a past that they believe to have been lost. Originally a medical term¹⁸, nostalgia has been central to France's relationship with Algeria since the 1830s¹⁹, yet today it is with Pieds-Noirs that it is most strongly associated, their varied and extensive cultural work collectively known and studied as *Nostalgie*

¹⁷ The group's name derives from the schools that they attended in the colonial capital: "E pour 'Élèves', S pour 'Saulière', M pour 'Mustapha', encore M pour 'Michelet', et enfin A pour 'Agha'" (ES'MMA, "Nouzotres").

¹⁸ Davis writes that, formed from the compound of the Greek *nostos* (denoting the journey home) and *algia* (meaning pain), the term was originally developed in the seventeenth century for a "wasting disease" suffered by Swiss mercenaries abroad (446).

¹⁹ As an affliction, it was a critical medical concern for the expeditionary forces during the invasion (Dodman 83). As the term took on broader cultural meanings, it progressed towards an emotional attachment to a pre-colonial past (Oulebsir 19), as the European community began to "mourn the passing of what they themselves [...] transformed" (Rosaldo 108). As a result, Graebner describes it as "one of the defining tropes of the relationship between France and North Africa" (1–2).

(Hureau; Hubbell; Bourgeois; Dodman). Nostalgia's diagnostic meaning has shifted from the physiological to the psychological, denoting a generalised longing for a former time, and a parallel shift has been seen in its development from primarily an emotion to a form of action. Described by Fred Davis as a "great labour" (450), the particular act of transposing the past into the present is theorised by Svetlana Boym as "[r]estorative nostalgia", in which what is desired is "a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" (xviii). It seeks "total reconstructions of monuments of the past" (41), thereby allowing practitioners to "patch up the irreversibility of time" (16–17), and it is this ambition that defines ES'MMA's work. The Pieds-Noirs have sought to "smooth over the painful rupture with the past" by constructing "a broad but uniformly positive memory of colonial Algerian life" (Hubbell, "Wounds" 59), and within this narrative, the sites of the former home have served as material anchors for their longing. Nostalgia is thus revealed as both the motivation behind and the means by which ES'MMA and other such Pied-Noir producers have sought to "transpose the colonial past onto the present" (Hubbell, "Past" 66), reconnecting with their former home and community by seeking to reconstruct something of it.

The title page of the section dedicated to the Hôtel Aletti states that, "[w]e are going to try to bring back to life, text by text, image by image, this shrine of the Algiers of our childhood" ("Nous allons essayer de faire revivre, de texte en texte, et d'image en image, ce haut lieu de l'Alger de nos enfances") (ES'MMA, "Hôtel"). Whilst their work may take place online, ES'MMA's members therefore consider it to be restorative of the historic site of the Aletti itself, and deem this to be essential to the ongoing life of Algiers. Indeed, writing in 2001, the blog's contributors claim this intervention in the contemporary city to be a primary objective of their work. Citing amongst their aims the discussion of "the Algeria of today" ("l'Algérie de maintenant"), the community describes the modern metropolis as "still a marvelous city" ("toujours une cité merveilleuse"); nevertheless, they also deem it to be in "need of the contributions ... of those who love her" ("besoin des contributions ... de ceux qui l'aiment"), since "at the moment Algeria is coming out of a nightmare" ("Algérie en ce moment sort d'un cauchemar") ("Accueil"). Observed in their presentation of the Aletti, therefore, is the fundamental belief that not only may the remembered past be revived, but also that the present city to which it is restored is in dire need of its being so.

Presented as contributing to the life and landscape of Algiers, however, belying ES'MMA's reconstruction of the Aletti is a more pressing need to buttress a fragile sense of community. The founders of the site, former classmates at the École Clauzel from 1952-1957, stress their shared experience as the foundation of their group, writing that "we had spent five years together, longer if you count primary school" ("nous venions de passer cinq ans ensemble, davantage si on compte la maternelle") ("Rameaux"). Moreover, the communal identity that ES'MMA's members have found cannot be taken for granted, but rather must be actively nurtured. Dupeyrot, for instance, describes the visceral pain he often feels when reminded of the community life he enjoyed in Algiers, describing his "emotional thought for all those ... who in that Spring of 54 years ago were coming and going in the city" ("pensée émue pour tous ... qui en ce printemps d'il y a 54 ans allaient et venaient en ville") (Dupeyrot), and he also relates the tangible relief upon being reunited in 1998, which he considers to have been "an unforgettable moment" ("un moment inoubliable") (Dupeyrot, qtd. in ES'MMA, "Rameaux"). Revealed in ES'MMA's work are therefore the "powerful generation-delineating properties to which nostalgia lends itself" (Davis 449); it has facilitated a sense of continuity and solidarity, yet requires active participation to preserve the desired sense of belonging.

In this context, sites such as the Aletti prove essential, for they reinforce this community work by rooting it in the perceived reality of the landscape. For a nostalgic community to prove resilient, it requires "evidence of the past" that it once shared (Hutcheon); Helmut Illbruck argues that they draw their strength from the "incurable faith that the ... place of their longing was nothing less than real" (21), and ES'MMA's efforts to establish this conviction is evidenced by the meticulous attention paid to the history of the hotel and to its material form. Their collation of numerous sources, the latest of which is a newspaper account and photograph of Charlie Chaplin's visit to the Aletti in 1931 (Brua), serves to emphasise the historical importance of the site, asserted as "the only international class hotel situated in the city centre" ("le seul hôtel de classe internationale situé dans le centre de la ville") (ES'MMA, "Hôtel"), and roots their remembrance in a history that may be traced in its finest lineaments. Furthermore, their writings recount the hotel's physical aspect to an almost obsessive level of accuracy: they list its many amenities and their location within the building itself (for example, "[o]n the ground floor of the hotel: a café, a restaurant, a bar, and

the Colisée cinema” (“Au rez-de-chaussée de l’hôtel: un café, un restaurant, un bar, et le cinéma Colisée”), and specify its geographical location as “wedged between the Rue Alfred Lelluch and the Boulevard Carnot” (“coincé entre la rue Alfred Lelluch et le boulevard Carnot”) (ES’MMA, “Hôtel”). Such intimate details reinforce the authenticity of their recollections; indeed, it is pertinent that Dupeyrot writes in response to uncovering an advertisement for that film showing that he attended, reassured by its existence that “[n]othing of that which remembered was therefore false” (“Rien de ce dont je me souvenais n’était donc faux”). Demonstrated in this reconstruction is therefore the anchoring of the nostalgic community in site’s materiality and historical details, the Aletti providing a sense of permanence and immutability.

Nevertheless, whilst the ES’MMA community may have been meticulous in their collation of historical sources, it is noteworthy that the history discerned is restricted in scope, purged of contention and exclusive in its narrative. The account of the Aletti presented in ES’MMA’s archives is somewhat truncated: none of the sources listed discusses a single event prior to its construction, nor after decolonisation, so that what is related is a brief window between the 1930s and 1960s. In addition, whilst the community may claim that “on our site we speak of the past, of History” (“sur notre site parlons-nous du passé, et d’Histoire”) (“Accueil”), they nevertheless frown upon any challenge to the historical narrative established. Contested interpretations are discouraged, the blog’s editors writing that “polemics do not interest us” (“les polémiques ne nous intéressent pas”) (“Accueil”). Nor need this account be inclusive, for the group does not accord equal weight to all those concerned with Algiers’s historiography. Local residents find themselves once more occluded in a European account of their city’s history. Whilst the group does invite them to participate in their project, stating “[w]elcome too to the inhabitants of today” (“Bienvenue aussi aux habitants d’aujourd’hui”) (“Accueil”), these are not treated as equal agents, nor indeed as rooted residents within the landscape they occupy. Rather, they are described as “lucky to live on the places of our childhood” (“ont de la chance de vivre sur les lieux de notre enfance”) (“Accueil”), as opposed to in them, and this is revelatory of the “paradoxical” nature of nostalgia, for “the universality of its longing can make us more empathetic” and yet its specificity may “put an end to mutual understanding” (Boym 453). This means that the indigenous community is once again

excluded from the telling of the Aletti's story; at no point, for instance, do ES'MMA mention the re-naming of the hotel to the Safir during the 1980s, and highlighted in these observations are some of the deficiencies that surface within the nostalgic vision. ES'MMA's account represents a temporal narrative whose timeframe is limited, in which dissonant voices are unsolicited and actively discouraged, and that is reserved for an exclusive group of rememberers; it is a "richly elaborated past" (Lowenthal 3), but one that is also heavily curated.

The Hôtel Aletti thus reconstructed in ES'MMA's work is a *lieu de mémoire*; indeed, nostalgia is implied within and central to Nora's and Augé's understanding of such a site. If the nostalgic is prompted by mourning for a lost home, then Nora also contends that the *lieu de mémoire* is predicated on a past "from which we are forever cut off" ("dont nous sommes à jamais coupés") ("Entre" xxxi–xxxii), and Augé notes that such sites are constructed precisely to combat "experiences and ordeals ... of solitude" ("des expériences et des épreuves ... de solitude") (117). As in the carefully sourced account of the Aletti, the *lieu de mémoire* is one whose restoration can only be undertaken through "an operation of documentary, archival and monumental reconstruction" ("une opération de reconstruction documentaire, archivistique, monumentale") (Nora, "Avènement"), and such details serve as "bastions upon which we buttress ourselves" ("bastions sur lesquels on s'arc-boute") ("Entre" xxiv).

Nevertheless, whilst the *lieu de mémoire* may certainly be used to found and to perpetuate community, as seen in the case of ES'MMA, this need not be open or comprehensive. Observable in their construction is what Nora describes as "the defence by minorities of a memory that takes refuge in privileged and jealously guarded homes" ("la défense par les minorités d'une mémoire réfugiée sur des foyers privilégiés et jalousement gardés") (xxxiv). Implied in Nora's theorisation is therefore a perception of the past that is itself "heavily nostalgic" (Legg 493), and that represents one of the most critiqued aspects of his writing. It is Nora's celebration of an idyllic French culture, and his lament of its loss in modern society, that is deemed particularly suspect by his detractors. Legg contends that a "sentimental attachment to the French nation inserts a restorative yearning throughout his writings" (488), leading him "to mourn an age of national cohesion and power" in a way that limits the radical potential of his approach (490), and Winter too describes the project as

pervaded by an “ineffable quality called ‘Frenchness’” (10). As a consequence, if the hotel reconstructed by ES’MMA is exemplary of the *lieu de mémoire*, then equally nostalgia is integral to Nora’s theorisation of this term.

What renders ES’MMA’s construction of the Aletti as a *lieu de mémoire* particularly significant for our study, however, is the distance between the carefully crafted story that they elaborate and the site’s lived reality. Highly evident in ES’MMA’s work is a gulf between the past as a still evolving presence within the contemporary and the past as an idealised point of return, between a lost home that is idealised as “simple, pure, ordered, easy, beautiful, or harmonious” and a present situation felt to be “complicated, contaminated, anarchic, difficult, ugly, and confrontational” (Hutcheon). This may be perceived in the stark contrast between Dupeyrot’s recollections of 1950s’ Algeria and the reality of twenty-first-century Paris. Upon emerging from the cinema in the Aletti, Dupeyrot joyfully recollects that “[o]utside, it was Algiers, it was daytime” (“Dehors, c’était Alger, c’était le jour”); he describes “the soft hubbub of the crowd” (“le doux brouhaha de la foule”) and the “slightly sticky air of the sea nearby” (“l’air un peu collant de la mer toute proche”). Algiers, then, is remembered as something of an idyll, and by comparison, the Paris of today is unpleasant and dysfunctional. Describing his journey to the Bibliothèque Nationale, he relates that he was greeted upon arrival by “vile rain” (“Une sale pluie”), and the site itself is described primarily in terms of its disrepair; “the broken-down escalator immobile ... its soft rubber floor drenched with rain” (“le tapis mécanique en pente immobile ... son sol de caoutchouc mou imbibé de pluie”). This contrast is reinforced by his choice of illustrative photographs: the Rue Lelluch in Algiers is rendered in a nostalgic black and white, brightly lit, full of people and crowned by a picturesque palm tree; by contrast, the library is a distant and forbidding structure, set against a clouded sky and pictured without any human presence. The implication is clear: the past represents a harmonious memory that is preferable to a present, discomfiting reality, and Dupeyrot’s writing is consequently representative of the way in which the nostalgic community distances itself from the latter in favour of the former.

This results in an idealisation of the remembered site that necessitates both a reinvention of what was, and a rigid delineation between the now and the then. Whilst ES’MMA members make explicit their desire to restore the hotel of their childhood memories, few actually

visited the hotel whilst they lived there, the website's authors freely admitting that the Aletti was "a place in which doubtless few of us children had occasion to set foot" ("un endroit où sans doute peu d'entre nous enfants eûmes l'occasion de mettre les pieds") ("Hôtel"). For most, then, it was a site with which they had little direct contact, and, even as one of the few who could claim such experience, markedly absent in Dupeyrot's piece are material details. He is able to distinguish that "[i]t was in the Studio Aletti, the little chocolate box theatre in that hotel" ("C'était au studio Aletti, la petite salle bonbonnière dans cet hôtel") that the film was shown, and "not at the Colisée, the big cinema just next door" ("pas au Colisée, le grand cinéma juste à côté"), yet he otherwise acknowledges that "I don't remember a great deal" ("Je ne me souviens pas de grand chose"). Indeed, such is arguably the case for nostalgia in general, of which Boym writes that the "danger ... is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one" (xvi). The process undertaken by the ES'MMA community, therefore, is not the restoration of a concrete site that can be recalled perfectly and in its totality, but the reconstruction of a site imperfectly remembered and idyllically reimagined.

Furthermore, for this reconstruction to take place, a distance must be established between the hotel as recollected and the material entity still present Algiers. It is noteworthy that, in ES'MMA's reconstruction of the Aletti, no account of its contemporary form is given, nor of the changes it has undergone since Algeria's independence; instead, images depict it in a pre-Independence glory that is itself something of a fabrication. Other accounts note that, whilst its decor has changed little during the past sixty years, the Aletti has certainly aged, and bears the marks of its usage. Céline Cabourg describes the hotel as having a "filthy and threadbare finish" ("verniss craspouille et suranné") and "abandoned décor" ("décors abandonnés"), Tuquoi writes that "[p]oorly conducted renovations have made it ugly" ("Des rénovations mal conduites l'ont enlaidi"), and Philippe Lançon describes it as possessing a "faded charm" ("charme décati"). It is thus a site in which the passage of time has left its mark.

Nevertheless, this renders it insufficiently unblemished to feature in ES'MMA's writings. Indeed, that the most recent images of the hotel are taken from a brochure produced in 1954, and that these are artist's impressions of the building (Coudon and Petit), is highly significant. In these images, the hotel is emptied of occupants, and displayed in a state of

perfection; from its pristine swimming pools to its plush cinema. It was certainly an idealised vision of the hotel when first produced, yet that it serves as evidence upon which the hotel is reconstructed in ES'MMA's work is illustrative of the distinction between the idyllic past and reality of the present. For the nostalgic to achieve its object, these cannot be brought into contact; as Boym writes, "[n]ostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship" (xiii), for to seek to collapse the "dream and everyday life" into "a single image" necessarily "breaks the frame" (xiv). What the nostalgic community seeks is a restoration of the historic hotel as a discrete entity and according to a doctored narrative: what is desired is "not a duration but a perfect snapshot" (49), and the nostalgic community thus "has no use for the signs of historical time" (45), for "the past is not supposed to reveal any signs of decay" (49). Consequently, in both idealising the remembered site, and demarcating this from its present reality, ES'MMA's work is productive, not of a true reconstruction of the hotel, but of an abstraction from it.

Whilst appearing rooted in reality and claiming to serve the purposes of the contemporary, therefore, the reconstruction of the Aletti undertaken by the ES'MMA community seeks deliberately to distance the past from the present. The site of today, in which the passage of time has necessarily been registered, goes consistently unacknowledged, and ES'MMA's engagement with the hotel is thus representative of the "raison d'être" of a *lieu de mémoire*: to "stop time" ("arrêter le temps") and to freeze an idealised and unchanging vision of the past, one untouched by and untouchable within the complexity of the now (Nora, "Entre" xxxv). Nora writes that *lieux de mémoire* represent "moments of history, torn from the movement of history, but that are returned to it" ("moments d'histoire arrachés au mouvement de l'histoire, mais qui lui sont rendus"); contained within the present site, the past is nevertheless continues presented as "radically other" ("radicalement autre") ("Entre" xxxi). The site of the Aletti reproduced by ES'MMA thus serves as an anchor for an "abstracted world ... ordered, beautified, and perfected" (J. Till 25); as Nora writes, the *lieu de mémoire*:

only accommodates those facts that comfort it; it is nourished by remembrances that are fluid, telescopic, global or floating, specific or symbolic, susceptible to all kinds of transfer, screen, censure or projection.

(la mémoire ne s'accommode que des détails qui la confortent: elle se nourrit de souvenirs flous, télescopants, globaux ou flottants, particuliers ou symboliques, sensibles à tous les transferts, écrans, censure ou projections.)
("Entre" xix)

Evident in ES'MMA's work, therefore, is not the reconciliation of the past and present that is claimed, but instead its reimagining within a reductive and ineffable narrative; a static, idealised and yet ultimately impossible image of what is believed to be the past.

The construction of the *lieu de mémoire* therefore serves, not so much as an act of recollection, as one of reinvention, and its temporal narrative is so divorced from present reality as to render it something of a fiction. If what went before in site remains an ever-present and continually evolving presence therein, then any attempt to restore it so that it is untouched by the passage of time inevitably fails in its objective: as Olivier argues, "[t]he history that presents the past as different from the present ... such a history makes no sense" ("L'histoire qui pose le passé comme différent du présent [...] cette histoire-là n'a pas de sens") (*Sombre* 31). Drawing on the author's critique of archaeology, we might argue that the construction of the *lieu de mémoire* is motivated by "the dream of touching the past as closely as possible" ("le rêve de toucher le passé au plus près"), yet Olivier argues that "what we seek is inaccessible to us" ("ce que nous cherchons nous est inaccessible") (13); what we remember is always already transformed by the time we come to recall it.

Instead, such a work of restoration represents what Didi-Huberman describes as a work of fiction. Studying the modern site of Auschwitz, the author notes that it has been produced as a *lieu de mémoire*²⁰, and that this has involved a careful process of reconstruction, whereby what is real and what is not is difficult to discern²¹. As a consequence, Didi-Huberman concludes that "Auschwitz must be forgotten at its very site to be constituted as a fictional

²⁰ Didi-Huberman has written of Auschwitz that, "Auschwitz as a *camp*, this place of barbarity, has undoubtedly been transformed into a place of culture, Auschwitz as a 'state museum'" ("Auschwitz comme *Lager*, ce lieu de barbarie, a sans doute été transformé en lieu de culture, Auschwitz comme 'musée d'Etat'") (*Écorces* 19).

²¹ The author notes that "once in the blockhouse, I can no longer see that it is a blockhouse, everything having mean 'rearranged' into an exhibition space" ("une fois dans le block, je ne peux plus rien voir de ce qu'est un block, tout ayant été 'réaménagé' en espace d'exposition"), and as a consequence "the walls of Auschwitz don't always tell the truth" ("les murs d'Auschwitz ne disent pas toujours la vérité") (Didi-Huberman, *Écorces* 24).

place designed to remember Auschwitz” (“Auschwitz doit être oublié dans son lieu même pour se constituer comme un lieu fictif destiné à se souvenir d’Auschwitz”) (*Écorces* 24); the real site, and the memory that it embodies, must be reimagined in order that the desired remembrance may take its place. Central to Legg’s critique of the *lieu de mémoire* is the fact that it fêtes “an impossibly pure lived experience of a utopian origin” that is itself a fabrication (486); similarly, Illbruck describes the site of the nostalgic as a “*Zwischenreich*”, or “a realm in between dream and reality” that represents “an imaginary place grounded in the illusion of realism” (21): within such a site it is not the past as it was that is produced, but the past as the nostalgic wishes it had been. As Olivier concludes, we “invent a past that never existed” (“inventons un passé qui n’a jamais existé”) (*Sombre* 93): the resultant site is one in which the past may be pointed to, yet it is only a reimagined simulacrum of what once was.

Montage and memory: Sedira’s *Saphir*

The *lieu de mémoire* thus proves an inadequate means by which to account for and engage with the present past in site. It is to Sedira’s *Saphir* that we will now turn, as a model of how we might better account for the anachronism that *survivance* produces. Adopting the contemporary name of the hotel, Sedira’s approach is markedly different from that of the ES’MMA community. An installation piece, composed primarily of a film played simultaneously across two adjacent screens and focussing on two characters presented as a local inhabitant and an elderly Pied-Noir, it presents the hotel and the surrounding urban landscape as the artist encounters it in the modern day. Sedira thus approaches the site’s past only through its contemporary form, and what is achieved is a montage of surviving pasts that reveals it to be an ongoing plastic work.

It is pertinent to note that, as a site intimately associated with Algiers’ past, the Aletti holds a similar draw for both Sedira and members of ES’MMA. Nevertheless, the possibility of engaging the contemporary building results in a very different understanding of the site’s temporal nature in the video installation. The contexts in which both the Pied-Noir community and the artist work have much in common. Born and raised in France, Sedira’s adult relationship with her homeland is similarly mediated by childhood experiences,

formed from “stories my parents used to tell me and recollections from when I went there on holiday” (“Van Assche” 58). Much of her work also took place *in absentia*, her materials restricted to “what was in the U.K. and France” (59), and consequently she admires Pieds-Noirs’ attempts to “reconnect with their past” (“Obrist” 20), their projects echoing her own “growing closer to Algeria” (“Van Assche” 58). Nevertheless, her access to contemporary Algeria, facilitated by the “physical and mental return” (Sedira, “Obrist” 20) that her dual Algerian and French nationality allows, has resulted in a very different perception of the hotel, and one that emphasises the co-presence of the then and the now. The artist describes how, immediately after being seemingly immersed in the hotel’s colonial splendour, one is confronted with the fact that “it hasn’t been looked after and it’s rundown”, and throughout her installation she replicates this “aesthetic experience”, in which “an initial impression of splendour or perfection [is] shattered by flaws” (“Van Assche” 60). Shots of the whitewashed columns, gleaming art deco balconies and antique chandeliers are brought into direct contrast with dated interiors, dusty surfaces and a naked bulb covered in cobwebs. Thus, at the very moment that one feels oneself to be in “a typically 1950s architectural setting”, one is brought abruptly back into the present to “realise that you’re very much in 2006” (60), and this disjuncture ensures that any chance of experiencing the historical site in its purity, as the nostalgic so desires, is repeatedly prohibited. What is acknowledged instead is a site in which the past and present prove inextricable, so that any attempt to distinguish the former from the latter would inevitably prove impossible.

Indeed, Sedira foregrounds in her work not solely the co-presence of past and present, but the persistence of multiple pasts that, in spite of their apparent dissonances, prove impossible to dissociate. The contemporary site in Sedira’s work is viewed neither solely in the terms of the former coloniser, nor exclusively through the lens of the colonised; instead, the memories of the two are placed in a dynamic interaction. This is achieved by the dual filming of the Pied-Noir woman and of the Algerian man. Perceived as “emblematic figures, each symbolically representing a much wider constituency” (McGonagle 28), critics have argued that the two “inhabit parallel worlds” (Bode 31), their never meeting, and certainly never speaking cited as a boundary that divides them. Yet Sedira presents a more subtly imbricated relationship between the two pasts, most suggestively asserted through camera

movement. This creates a visual dialogue where otherwise the figures remain silent: for example, in a moment of the film where the differences in camera angle (the woman's hands providing the focus of the left-hand screen as she drinks coffee, whilst the right-hand screen focuses on a close-up of the man's face), and the settings in which the individuals are placed (the man outside the building looking over the Mediterranean, the woman inside the hotel in a wood-panelled room) seem to produce disconnected images, the gentle panning of the camera from right to left creates synchrony. This fluidity is further reinforced by movement between the screens: throughout, the characters constantly switch from side to side and fill in the gaps left by their counterpart. Consequently, whilst Sedira recognises these two remembering communities as distinct, she nevertheless asserts their individual memories as inextricable; the Aletti cannot be thought of purely in terms of the Pied-Noir or Algerian, but instead represents a site in which both survive.

This extends to the nature of the hotel as both a real and imagined site, Sedira's *Saphir* embracing a tension between reality and remediation. This can be noted in the artist's choice of actors. On the one hand, both the male Algerian and the female Pied-Noir "were chosen for who they were": their personal histories and relationship with Algeria are fundamental to Sedira's artistic decision, the former as a local "who would represent contemporary Algeria", and the latter as "the daughter of a French settler" ("Milliard"). On the other, however, Sedira does not hide the fact that both are "professional actors", and that consequently their personal experiences differ from those of the characters they play ("Milliard"). Where the figure he portrays is perceived to be longing to leave Algeria for Europe, the male actor "had the experience of living in France but had chosen to come back"; similarly, the female protagonist is not the returned Pied-Noir she evokes, for it was her father who was the emigrant, and not herself ("Milliard"). Nor do the stories that the two characters embody represent meticulously researched biographies; Sedira explains that, "I wanted the video to be poetic and full of imagery, so that it could be read in an open, universal way" ("Van Assche" 61), and consequently the figures emblemise memory narratives amalgamated from a diversity of experiences. Thus *Saphir* represents a "piece [that] occupies a space between fiction and documentary" ("Milliard"); one that makes no claims either to absolute facticity nor to unanchored fictionality, but that seeks to play creatively in the grey

areas between the two and reveal how they shape the pasts associated with the site of the modern-day Aletti.

What we see in *Saphir* is a series of highly segregated binaries (between past and present, between the Algerian and the Pied-Noir, and between remediation and reality) broken down through the use of montage, a technique that Didi-Huberman understands as not solely visual but also temporal in nature. Drawing on Benjamin, the author asserts montage as “the refusal of synthesis” (“le refus de la synthèse”) that instead represents “the foregrounding of a myriad of singular documents” (“la mise en avant d’une myriade de documents singuliers”) (*Devant* 122); focus on individual perspectives and narratives is eschewed in favour of their diversity and interconnectedness. Furthermore, the theorist understands montage not merely as an aesthetic choice, but as a means of exposing the anachronism of a present object and further complicating it: Didi-Huberman draws a connection between “*montages visuels*” and “*montages temporels*” (127), and suggests that the artwork produced achieves “the double capacity of *dismantling* history and of *mounting* together heterogeneous times” (“la double capacité de *démonter* l’histoire et de *monter* ensemble des temps hétérogènes”) (122). As a consequence, an object’s temporal narrative is deliberately exposed to the viewer in its diversity.

This use of montage opens up the site and the surrounding landscape from a diversity of perspectives, exposing a materially present past defined both by its persistence and its decay, and inviting the onlooker to interpret the hotel’s memory anew. It is pertinent to note that Sedira’s installation is not limited to the video projected, but includes a series of accompanying photographs; these depict both the coastline of the Mediterranean and the ruins of formerly European-owned buildings, isolated within the landscape and crumbling into the ocean. By contrasting the lived site of the Aletti with the abandoned edifices along the region’s coastline, Sedira invites the viewer to interrogate the legacy of imperialism for the country’s landscape. Montage is consequently used both to expose the material traces of the colonial era, and to raise questions as to their status and meaning within the present landscape.

What is more, the form of the installation creates multiple and constantly shifting perspectives, montage used to task the onlooker with the discernment of meaning. In what Joseph McGonagle describes as a “novel use of space and screens” (27), the framing of images is played with to create a constant shift in the number of points of view. The film is primarily projected across the two screens, yet this binary form is far from exclusive; at moments, one half expands into the other, whilst at others, a single screen is broken up by objects in the foreground (the grille of the hotel lift, for instance), subdividing it to produce any number of framed images. This opens up the dialogue from the already fluid relationship between the diptych to a diverse range of points of view, in which “the combinations are infinite” (“les combinaisons sont infinies”) (Verhagen 34). It ensures that each viewer engages with the piece in different ways, and consequently that “the responsibility of putting in place the bases of a narration is incumbent upon the spectator” (“c'est au spectateur qu'incombe la responsabilité de poser les bases d'une narration”) (Verhagen 49). In stark contrast to the simplistic and exclusive narratives carefully curated within both the original architecture and in the work of ES'MMA, Sedira's installation therefore obliges the onlooker to conceive their own narrative, one that will necessarily be unique to each individual and that will change with each new viewing.

These novel perceptions are not understood to stop at the viewing of Sedira's piece, however; the stories produced therein are considered to accumulate within the work itself, so that the installation changes through the individual narrative inscriptions made. It is pertinent that Sedira describes what is contained within the piece as “the germ of a narrative” (“Van Assche” 60), emphasising that it is something to be grown by the individuals who engage with the piece. This process begins with the protagonists themselves; it was important to the artist that the actors did not perform a prescribed role, stressing that that “I never asked my actors to act”, and instead invited them “to be themselves and react to the context in which I placed them” (“Milliard”), thereby directly incorporating their own understandings and experiences into the piece. This invitation is extended to the viewer, and in this context, the silence of the two individuals within the film opens up space for dialogue. Whilst we hear the ambient

noise of the hotel and its milieu²², neither character speaks at any point, and, in the absence of vocalised narratives, a void is created into which the viewer is called to project their own. This constitutes what Hill describes as a “[m]ontage of Gaps”, in which the “gaps are as important as the fragments” (3); what is unseen, unspoken or yet to be created is understood to be just as constitutive of the piece as that which is already contained. The installation is presented to us, not as a finished object over which we have no influence, but as an open work in whose continued transformation we are invited to participate.

Observable in *Saphir*, therefore, is what Didi-Huberman describes as a “*montage of heterogeneous times*” (“*montage de temps hétérogènes*”) (*Devant* 160), and central to this conception is the fact that the montage represents a work that is never fully complete. This is an understanding that the theorist draws from Benjamin: using this author’s terminology, Didi-Huberman writes that the only “authentic image” (“*L’image authentique*”) is “a *dialectical image*” (“*une image dialectique*”) (*Devant* 115), one that foregrounds the plurality of times that define and are constellated within it. What is more, the dialectical image is one that never becomes fully fixed: what we perceive therein is not a form that is solidified in perpetuity, but one that has assumed this form only temporarily in the particular moment of our viewing, and that will continue to evolve long afterwards. It represents what Benjamin describes as “the dialectic at a standstill” (qtd. in Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 218), but one that never stands still for long; instead, “upon crystallising, it diffracts, propels itself into movement” (“*en se cristallisant, elle se diffracte, se met en mouvement*”) (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 218). The dialectical image is one that is defined as much by its capacity for transformation as it is by its multiplicity, and it is this understanding that we observe in practice in Sedira’s use of montage: not only does she expose the heterogeneity of the pasts embodied by the modern-day Aletti, but her artwork invites the engagement of the viewer in such a way that its meaning is continually produced anew, as each individual assembles its strands in different ways and according to their own experience.

²² This includes the sound of ships moving in the harbour, the clinking of porcelain as the woman drinks her coffee and the calls of swallows outside the hotel’s façade (Sedira).

Nor is the understanding of the montage's unfinished nature restricted to the artwork; the site of the Aletti itself, demonstrated to be defined by the diverse pasts that survive within it, is also considered to be still in production, a process in which the artist and viewer play their part. The hotel, already demonstrated to be heterogeneous in its composition, is further complicated by the interplay between those memory narratives that already constitute the site, and those that are creatively imagined and integrated into its conceived form. In this light, a poignant shot in the film, in which the Pied-Noir woman slowly fades from view as she walks down a corridor, has to be reconsidered. McGonagle has interpreted this moment as suggestive of the colonial presence "haunting the building" (31). The author refers to the film's "spectral quality": its protagonist, she writes, is portrayed as "stalking the corridors of a building she can never leave" (31). Indeed, McGonagle notes that "the metaphor of ghosts and haunting has been commonly used to describe the traces of pied-noir presence in postcolonial Algeria" (31), and Sedira's work might consequently be read as making this spectral presence visible to us.

Nevertheless, the artist's careful mobilisation of medium throws doubt on such a conclusion. Had Sedira intended to evoke such a spectrality, she might have chosen to have the Pied-Noir woman fade out of the corridor, the presence of a long-dead past that arises from out of the building. Instead, she elects to have the figure fade into it, merging into the materiality of the site rather than emerging from it; consequently, the moment in the film is suggestive of inscription rather than haunting. The narrative embodied by the figure, both emblematic of the Pied-Noir return and an interpretive performance by an actor, is figuratively added to the site, and enters into dialogue with those narratives already contained therein. The implication is that creative and imaginative engagements with the site also contribute to the anachronism embodied therein, and this extends the hand to the viewer to participate in its ongoing production.

As a result, Sedira's artwork produces the Aletti as a site in which the surviving past is conceived, not as disruptive to the rigid and abstracted narrative of the *lieu de mémoire*, but instead as a heterogeneous, dynamic and creative presence. This renders the site itself an open work to whose continued renegotiation we are invited to contribute, and one that is therefore defined by its plasticity. Sedira's use of montage ensures that the hotel's

anachronism is exposed and then allowed to proliferate. In stark contrast to those narratives embodied within the original architecture or produced by the nostalgic community, whose attempts to define the past are akin to “weaving a tapestry to cover up the world”, her approach engenders “a way of guiding the attention of listeners or readers into it” (153), inviting them to participate in the continual unfolding of its form. It is an approach that enables us to better account for Algiers and its memory more widely. Piaton, Lochard et al. argue that it is only “by its ‘plasticity’, by the multiplicity of French references and the variety of possible associations” (“par sa ‘plasticité’, par la multiplicité des références françaises et la variété des associations possibles”) that “one better understands the profusion and eclecticism of Algiers” (“on comprend mieux la profusion de l’éclectisme algérois”) (64).

The site that Sedira engages is thus fundamentally plastic. It “preserves the imprint and in this way resists an infinite polymorphism” (“garde l’empreinte et résiste en ce sens à un polymorphisme infini”) (Malabou, *Que faire* 61), yet it also retains the “possibility of displacing or of transforming the mark or imprint” (“possibilité de déplacer ou de transformer la marque ou l’empreinte”) (62). It is a site in which the persistent past precludes efforts to define its temporal narrative too rigidly, or to extract one memory at the expense of all others; nevertheless, it also represents an entity whose capacity for transformation enables our participation in its continued transformation, and invites us to contribute to the plurality of memories contained therein. If the plastic entails “an opening-out of the meaning of time” (*Future* 13), the means by which the past may be thought of in simultaneously fixed and flexible terms, then the *survivance* similarly offers the possibility of opening out site’s anachronism, precluding the construction of the *lieu de mémoire* whilst nevertheless enabling engagements that contribute to its heterogeneity and dynamism.

Conclusion

The case studies of the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George therefore demonstrate the futility of site’s construction as a *lieu de mémoire*, and encourage us to approach it instead as fundamentally plastic in nature, defined by the *survivance* of diverse and evolving pasts that may prove either a destabilising or a productive force depending upon our approach to them.

The hotels' architecture demonstrates how the *lieu de mémoire* is attempted in the construction of site, be it through an Art Déco styling that elides the local to promote the colonial, or through the Neo-Moorish that only celebrates the vernacular in bending it to fit the coloniser's preferred image. Nevertheless, this same architecture equally demonstrates how the *lieu de mémoire* is ultimately compromised by the *survivance*: on the one hand, the irrepressibility of the past ensures that multiple times persist within the site; on the other, the site's continued transformation ensures that this account is never immune to the vicissitudes of time. How the site and its temporality is perceived therefore shapes both how it is approached in cultural production, and the result of such endeavours. In ES'MMA's online writing, we observe a nostalgic reconstruction that seeks to reaffirm the Aletti as a *lieu de mémoire*, but that only succeeds in abstracting the reimagined site from its present reality; in sharp relief, Sedira's *Saphir* engages the Aletti through the diversity and evolution of the pasts that persist in its present, and uses montage both to open up and to redefine the site. Sedira's work thus demonstrates the value of engaging the site as plastic, an approach that is ultimately required to better understand the complexity of Algiers and the post-colonial city more broadly.

Whilst the *lieu de mémoire* may certainly be attempted in the construction of memorial sites, therefore, our study demonstrates that Nora's term is insufficient to account for the relationship between memory and space, and for the resilient and dynamic presence of the past in site. Instead, we observe in site the fact that what went before is not a point of origin that may be restored; instead, it is contained only within the present, and is always implicated in its continued transformation. As Didi-Huberman concludes, "the absolute source does not exist" ("La source absolue n'existe pas") (*Devant* 59), and to better understand the temporal complexity of the now, the author turns to Benjamin, who writes that:

The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming, and in its current it swallows the material involved in the process of genesis. That which is original is never revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual; its rhythm is apparent only to a dual insight. On the one hand it

needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and reestablishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something imperfect and incomplete. (*Origin* 45)

Observable in Benjamin's theorisation is a past that is not only implicated in its present, but one whose originary form or meaning has been lost; it is only as implicated in and transformed by the present that it may be engaged, and as always contingent upon the inevitability of further transformation. It is precisely this temporality that we observe in a site that is understood as plastic and as anachronic: Didi-Huberman writes that we must approach the object, not as "closed in on its own history" ("reclos sur sa propre histoire"), but instead as "the dynamic point of encounter ... of heterogeneous and overdetermined historic instances" ("le point de rencontre dynamique ... d'instances historiques hétérogènes et surdéterminées") (*Image* 50). The past in site may consequently only be examined in the present within which it survives and evolves, and our conclusions are always conditional upon its continued unfolding. As Benjamin writes, "[o]rigin is not ... discovered by the examination of actual findings, but it is related to their history and their subsequent development" (*Origin* 46), and Didi-Huberman concludes that we must work "from the point of the current situation – the dialectical present" ("à partir de la situation actuelle – du présent dialectique") if we are to study the temporality of the object (*Devant* 94) If the *lieu de mémoire* posits the past as distinct from the present, then in site we observe a past that is always and only present, and that must be studied in full awareness of its persistence and its changeability.

The Cimetière des Saints-Innocents: absence, presence and remediation

Introduction

Georges Perec's *Espèces d'espaces* is all but exhaustive in its study of different spatialities, ranging in scale from the bedroom to the cosmos. In this work's final chapter, however, the writer turns to the troubling question of what happens when spaces are no more. Whilst Perec wishes "that there existed stable places ... untouched and almost untouchable" ("qu'il existe des lieux stables ... intouchés et presque intouchables"), he recognises that in fact "[s]uch places do not exist" ("Des tels lieux n'existent pas") (179). Instead, he contends, "spaces are fragile: time will wear them out, will destroy them" ("espaces sont fragiles: le temps va les user, va les détruire") (179), and what troubles Perec therefore is the fact that sites might not persist indefinitely. Be it the gradual passage of time or the swift act of demolition, there will come a point when what was is no longer, when the places of our past are lost to us and at risk of oblivion. Some hope is afforded, however: whilst the spaces in which we live might one day be destroyed, Perec writes that there remains a means by which they may persist. In the final paragraph of *Espèces d'espaces*, the author entreats us "[t]o write: to try meticulously to hold onto something, to cause something to survive" ("Écrire: essayer méticuleusement de retenir quelque chose, de faire survivre quelque chose") (180). In the face of erasure, it is by writing about space that Perec believes we may capture something of it and thus preventing it from being forgotten. Lost from the material landscape, the places we inhabit may be preserved in memory, mediated through their creative representation and reimagining.

The Place Joachim-du-Bellay is a paved quadrangle akin to any other in the French capital. Its only noteworthy embellishment is an elegant Renaissance fountain, yet even this appears to be typical of the many such monuments that dot its map. Nevertheless, enquiry into the name of this water feature would reveal that it is far more remarkable than its aspect would suggest: the Fontaine des Innocents directs our attention to the fact that beneath our feet once lay the largest and oldest cemetery in central Paris. The Cimetière des Saints-Innocents was cleared in 1786, ostensibly when its overcrowding had become a public health risk, but equally because it embodied a medieval past incompatible with a modernising capital. As a

result, today nothing remains of the Saints-Innocents in the Place Joachim-du-Bellay except this fountain, heavily renovated and recalling the original burial ground only in title.

This does not mean, however, that the cemetery has been entirely lost; indeed, its traces may be found beneath another square in the Place Denfert-Rochereau. Here lie the Parisian Catacombes, built in the early eighteenth century to house the remains exhumed from the Saints-Innocents: they feature an inscription that informs the visitor of this fact, as he or she gazes upon the femurs and skulls that constitute its façades. Nor has the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents ever been forgotten; in works that range from paintings to photographs, from novels to video games, the burial ground remains a redolent space within the Parisian imagination, continually re-depicted and re-imagined to this day. Scoured from the physical face of the city, therefore, the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents has survived its own erasure: in the site of the Catacombes, and in the diverse cultural production that surrounds it, something of the cemetery has been retained.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I will study the question of what happens to the memory of a site when its material form appears to no longer exist, of how the seemingly absent may nevertheless continue to shape and inform our present. To do so, I will examine the site of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents; I will study its embodiment of a pre-modern past at the heart of a city determined to modernise its environs, and the way in which it was systematically and comprehensively destroyed for these associations. What I will demonstrate, however, is the way in which this site, long gone from Paris's physiognomy, has nonetheless proven ultimately unforgettable. I will study the way in which something of its form and function was retained within the Catacombes, a space that was built to obliterate the memory of the pre-modern past yet that would in fact become the site that would most evocatively remember it. Furthermore, I will examine the way in which it has been represented in the writings of Mercier and Zola, who give form to the cemetery within their texts, yet also shape the way in which we remember it. We will ultimately demonstrate that the site as it is remembered proves as plastic and as anachronic as its now demolished counterpart, and through the video game *Assassin's Creed Unity*, I will explore the way in which cultural works may both prove a locus for a site's survival and ensure its continued evolution.

How that which is now materially absent relates to the ongoing present is a fundamental question of human existence; in few fields of scholarship has this been of such paramount concern, however, as in memory studies and its examination of place. Mikkel Bille et al. contend that “absences are important social, political and cultural phenomena that impinge on people’s lives” (7), so that that which is no more cannot be disregarded as a force in our everyday existence. Kevin Hetherington too argues that “[t]he absent can have just as much of an effect upon relations as recognisable forms of presence”, and that consequently all human activity is oriented “not only around what is there but sometimes also around the presence of what is not” (159). It is therefore indisputable that “that which, in one sense or another, is not there” nevertheless “has a bearing on everyday life” (Bille et al. 7).

This is particularly significant when studying locations and how they are remembered. Hornstein, for instance has examined the question of “[w]hat happens to the memory of an event if the site where that memory was recorded is demolished”, examining the status and significance of those locations that “we only know it through movies or photographs” (2). Berlin is a particularly important case study within this literature: Huyssen, for example, describes it as a city “marked as much, if not more, by absences as by the visible presence of its past” (52); and K. Till has studied the way in which “place making” (8) has been used to “give a shape to that which is metaphysically absent” (10). In studying locations that are no more and how they are remembered, therefore, we are confronted with the fact that the “the relationship between the present and the absent [is] more complex than simply consisting of two antonymic categories” (Bille et al. 4). Absent sites continue to shape how we think about our environment, to govern our activity therein, and to inform the cultural works that emerge from these landscapes.

The Cimetière des Saints-Innocents is a noteworthy example of this phenomenon. Founded on the outskirts of the Roman settlement Lutetia, the ancient burial ground was engulfed over time to become a key communal space in the growing city (Viré, “Préface” 12). By the late eighteenth century, it was one of the most heavily used cemeteries in the capital; nevertheless, its insalubrious and malodorous presence at the heart of Paris rendered it increasingly intolerable. In 1785, it was decided that the site should be cleared and its contents moved to a newly designated ossuary (16); located at La Tombe Issoire, this complex

would later become known as the Catacombes (Pike 108). An ancient presence at the heart of the city, therefore, the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents would be demolished after centuries of use, thereby becoming a noteworthy absence from Paris's cartography.

The modern cemetery is often cited as an archetypal commemorative site: as a space that is consecrated and maintained to accord place to those who are no longer with us, they are locations to which we return again and again to remember those who belong to our past. William Lloyd Warner describes the cemetery as "a substantial and visible symbol of the agreement among individuals that they will not let each other die" (285), and Tim Flohr Sørensen argues that it is in the space of cemeteries that relationships between living communities and their now departed forebears are maintained, rendering them "places of highly complex incorporations of presences and absences" (115). The modern cemetery thus facilitates both material symbols and commemorative acts that accord the remains of the absent individual a spatial and psychological presence within our landscape and life, and as such they are therefore the focus of extensive study (Warner; Francis; Sørensen; Vanderstraeten).

This, however, is not the memory that is to be observed in the case of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents. As a mass burial site whose inhabitants were for the most part unnamed, such a relationship with one's forebears, individualised and locatable, was rarely possible. Indeed, Philippe Ariès argues that, during the medieval period, the belief in resurrection meant that "the exact location of their burial was of little importance"¹ ("peu importait le lieu exact de leur sépulture") (53), an attitude that would only change dramatically from the seventeenth century onwards², by which time the Cimetière and its practices were already well established. This condition would only become more striking in the Catacombes; David L. Pike writes that the clearance of the Saints-Innocents submitted all remains to "anonymous equality" (113) with the express intention of ensuring that there was "nothing to

¹ The dead "were entrusted, or more accurately abandoned, to the Church" ("les morts étaient confiés ou plutôt abandonnés à l'Église"), and marked by "neither by a monument nor even by a simple inscription" ("ni par un monument ni même par une simple inscription") (Ariès 53).

² Ariès notes that it is only from this point onwards that "one observes a keener and more frequent concern about localising the gravesite" ("on observe un souci plus vif et plus fréquent de localiser la sépulture") (54).

commemorate" (125). In the face of this overwhelming anonymity, personal remembering would be almost impossible, so that to study the Saints-Innocents through the lens of the contemporary burial site would be to misinterpret its symbolism and significance.

Instead, the memory that we associate with the Cimetière des Innocents is more bound up with the site itself rather than the individuality of the remains that were contained there; it was destroyed because it symbolised a past of which the modern city wished to dispose, yet would prove ultimately indestructible both within the Parisian landscape and its inhabitants' imagination. The Cimetière was a location that throughout its centuries of existence had consistently embodied "a material Parisian link to the "other world" ... of the past" (Pike 101), one more emblematic of the city's history than of its individual inhabitants. What is more, its increasingly abhorrent nature was perceived explicitly as a "[r]evolt of the past" ("Révolte du passé") (Muray 32), as the medieval cemetery proved increasingly at odds with the capital that was being modernised around it. The closure of the Cimetière and the relocation of its contents to the Catacombes was therefore intended to make of Paris a *tabula rasa* upon which the modern city could be built, unencumbered by what had gone before. In modernity's "plot against the past" ("complot contre le passé") (Chanu 444), the moment of clearance and reinterment embodied a transition from a memory that was chaotic, distasteful and ever-present, to one that was ordered, out of sight and out of mind.

The problem posed by this action, however, is the fact that, as Pike observes, "while garbage may decompose ... it never actually disappears" (5); acutely visible in the case study of the Saints-Innocents is the simple fact that to demolish a site is not necessarily to actually get rid of it. Philippe Muray remarks the irony that, in its banishment underground, the Cimetière was relegated "*Ad catacumbas*", concluding that "the joke was prophetic, it is ancient Rome that is renewed" ("La plaisanterie est prophétique, c'est la Rome antique qui recommence") (35). Whilst the intention of the Catacombes' construction was to occlude the presence of the ancient past from the capital's face, its architectural design and fascination for Paris's population and visitors ensured that the pre-modern past continued to preoccupy the modern city, the site of the cemetery remembered in the ossuary that succeeded it. What is more, the cultural production that surrounds the Cimetière has ensured that it has never been forgotten: from pre-clearance paintings, sketches and writings to diverse works

produced throughout the past two centuries³, the site retains a redolent presence within the Parisian imaginary that continues to this day. As a consequence, the Saints-Innocents is one of the most extensively studied sites of the eighteenth-century French capital (Foisil; Chanu; Muray; Viré; Métayer; Garrioch; Pike), and represents an fruitful case study through which to study the way in which the seemingly absent site may nevertheless maintain a presence (both material and imagined) within the contemporary landscape.

To study the way in which the erased site of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents both persists and evolves, I will begin with Didi-Huberman's work on the "*lieu malgré tout*" ("*place in spite of all*") ("*Lieu*" 37). Drawing on Benjamin, Didi-Huberman contends that "nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 254): whilst we may seek to efface the material form of a site, something of it always survives, both in the landscape and in memory. It is this that Didi-Huberman defines as the *lieu malgré tout*, which he asserts as working in direct opposition to the "*lieu malgré l'homme*" ("*the place in spite of man*") (*Essayer* 11), a location that has been deliberately erased precisely in order to prevent future remembering. The author argues that the *lieu malgré tout*, seemingly invisible within the landscape, may nevertheless continue to impact upon it. He describes its continued influence as the "*symptomal*" (*Devant* 276), a term further expanded by Olivier to describe how the presence of that which is no more may nevertheless be felt.

In addition, the representation of a demolished site may also serve as a locus within which it persists; the *lieu malgré tout* survives within and is reproduced by the cultural works that depict it. Such works, Didi-Huberman contends, "will interrupt the work of destruction" ("*interrompra l'œuvre de destruction*") carried out in the physical landscape (*Essayer* 10). In the absence or dearth of material referents, it is frequently through media that such locations remain conceivable to us, and so that cultural works prove indispensable in the transmission of the *lieu malgré tout*. I will argue that cultural media ensure that a past location remains a

³ Drawings produced by the draughtsman Charles-Louis Bernier in 1786 represent the closest visual record that we possess of the cemetery's disposition shortly prior to clearance; nevertheless the site had been a popular subject for artists both before and after this event, painted by Jakob Grimer in the sixteenth century and depicted in a series of images by Payen-Appenzeller for Théodor Josef Hubert Hoffbauer's nineteenth-century tome *Paris à travers les âges*. Most recently, the cemetery's closure and the disinterment of bodies was the subject of Andrew Miller's novel *Pure*.

persistent and evolving presence as memory within the present landscape. Such a site represents what Didi-Huberman terms the “*lieu malgré soi*” (“*the place in spite of itself*”), one that has become more in memory than would have been possible within the material (*Essayer* 22).

To comprehend the role played by culture in the remembered site, I will use the term “remediation” (Bolter and Grusin 5) as developed by Erl. The author asserts that, “memorable events are usually represented again and again ... in different media” (“Literature” 392), and this results in a memory defined by an often vast network of transmedial engagements, appropriations and reimaginings:

What is known about a war, a revolution or any other event ... seems to refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the “actual events,” but instead to a canon of existent medial constructions (392).

In the context of site, the result of such a complex interaction between different cultural works is not restricted in its impact to the memory itself. If “[e]ach medium transforms social reality” (*Memory* 115), then how these shape our conception of a particular space will also shape how we interact with it; as Donald contends, “[s]tates of mind have material consequences. They make things happen” (8). Remediation is therefore actively constitutive of the site whose survival it ensures: by continually transforming the memory of that which has been erased, it ensures that the remembered site retains its plasticity. In the context of the Saints-Innocents, this has produced the cemetery as a site that is as dynamic within the present as it was in the eighteenth century.

The third chapter of this thesis will therefore examine the way in which the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents as a site long since demolished nevertheless retains its presence within the Parisian landscape. I will begin by expanding upon the theoretical framework outlined above, which will serve to structure my study of the Saints-Innocents. The first section will then proceed to examine why and how the cemetery came to be suppressed. Elaborating upon the history of the Cimetière, as well as its discussion in Mercier’s *Tableau de Paris*, I will argue that eighteenth-century reformers’ concerns regarding the insalubrity of the site in fact formed a pretext for suppressing what had become the symbol of a medieval past in a city that was undergoing increasing modernisation. I will argue that it was the site’s

associations with the past that singled it out for closure and clearance, so that, in the construction of the Catacombes, what took place was a double erasure. Not only was the site destroyed, but its contents were buried underground and indiscriminately to preclude future remembering. This, I will suggest, exemplifies what Didi-Huberman defines as the *lieu malgré l'homme*: a site whose total effacement is attempted so that the past is entirely done away with.

I will argue, however, that despite this attempt, something of the Saints-Innocents survived. That the Ossuaire Municipal would shortly become the Catacombes, a site whose name and design were inspired by ancient Rome, is indicative of the fact that the past was not in fact disposed of, but merely transformed, and in the second section of the chapter, I will examine precisely how this survival took place. I will argue that, in its form and function, far from preventing future remembering of the Cimetière, the Catacombes would become its inheritor, exposing a far more ambiguous relationship between modernity and its past. What is more, I will examine Mercier's later writings to demonstrate the way in which he perceived his *Tableau de Paris* to preserve something of the pre-Revolutionary capital, its textual depiction enabling it to endure in memory. I will argue that the site remembered, both in the Catacombes and in Mercier's *Tableau*, is what Didi-Huberman terms the *lieu malgré tout*, the site that survives its own erasure.

The third section of the chapter will examine how this persistent site continues to shape and to influence our present experience. Studying Zola's *La Fortune des Rougon*, I will argue that the novelist's Aire Saint-Mittre, a fictional cemetery whose overuse, closure and clearance deliberately echoes that of the Saints-Innocents, represents another form in which the site of the Cimetière survives as a *lieu malgré tout*. Nevertheless, I will also examine the particular vitality and pervasiveness that Zola accords the site, reflecting the anxiety that both the Cimetière and the Catacombes prompted for Parisians of the nineteenth century. I will argue that the novel becomes an expression of the symptomatic, the apparently absent past making its persistent presence felt in a way that unsettles the present in which it survives.

In the final section of the chapter, I will examine the role of remediation in the *lieu malgré tout* by studying Ubisoft's *Assassin's Creed Unity* and how it depicts the Cimetière and

Catacombes. I will briefly examine the controversy provoked by the game's interpretation of history, and will argue that this criticism misunderstands the conception of the past put forward by its designers. Within the mechanics of the game, I will demonstrate that the landscape does not represent a diligently faithful replica of eighteenth-century Paris, but instead a representation of how it is remembered today. I will illustrate how, in remediating these two locations, the game both reflects how they are contemporarily perceived, and reimagines their form to shape how we imagine them; through gameplay devices and the actions of the player, the video game landscape is transformed into a complex memory that involves through the process of play. The result is that in spite of its eighteenth-century demolition, the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents remains a fundamentally plastic presence in contemporary Paris, and I will conclude the chapter by briefly asking how plasticity might prompt us to rethink the dichotomy of presence and absence in the context of sites.

The *lieu malgré tout*, the symptom and remediation

To examine the way in which an apparently effaced site may retain a presence within the landscape, Didi-Huberman takes the Nazi extermination camps as his primary case study. Many such locations, intended by their creators as “lieux de destruction”, have themselves been “destroyed since the end of the war” (“détruits depuis la fin de la guerre”) (“Lieu” 37); from their inception to their demolition, their sole object has been that of “obliteration” (“anéantissement”) (11). Their role in the Nazi genocide was to produce “a *generalised disappearance*” (“une disparition généralisée”) (*Images* 31): they were to eradicate not just the “beings” (“êtres”) killed, but also the “tools of disappearance” (“outils de la disparition”) (the gas chambers, crematoria, burial sites, etc.), and more broadly “the memory of the disappearance” (“la mémoire de la disparition”) as an event (32–34). The object of this meticulous endeavour was to ensure that the extermination camp was so obliterated that it would never be identifiable as such in future, and Didi-Huberman defines such sites as *lieux malgré l'homme*. They represent locations concerned with oblivion: their goal is to render a site and its past immemorable.

Didi-Huberman notes, however, that whilst it may appear that “there is *nothing more to see there*” (“il n’y a *plus rien à y voir*”) (“Lieu” 37), still “*everything, here, remains, before our eyes*” (“*tout, ici, demeure, devant nous*”) (38). Whilst almost all evidence of the Nazi genocide has been destroyed, enough traces remain within the contemporary site of the extermination camp to render it identifiable. The author contends that “[n]o-one is there any longer, or nearly, nothing is there any longer, or nearly” (“Plus personne n’est là ou presque, plus rien n’est là ou presque”), and yet “in discreet vestiges” (“dans de discrets vestiges”) something of this past survives⁴ (38). Didi-Huberman defines what survives in the face of such concerted efforts as the *lieu malgré tout*, a location that, whilst “destroyed or disfigured, nevertheless *has not moved*” (“détruit ou défiguré, néanmoins *n’a pas bougé*”) (“Lieu” 37), and in which enough survives effacement to ensure that the past has not been lost.

What is more, what remains of the past in an otherwise purged location proves capable of making its presence felt. The site exhibits what Olivier and Didi-Huberman define as the *symptomal*, the way in which the apparently non-visible past may emerge within, transform and redefine the visible site of the present. Drawing initially from the medical term (Olivier, *Sombre* 276), and subsequently from Jacob Bruckhardt’s development of it (Didi-Huberman, *Image* 111), the two authors understand the symptom first and foremost in its traditional definition: as the way in which an illness, whose root cannot be immediately perceived, may nevertheless be recognised through perceptible indications within the individual’s physiognomy or experience⁵. A cut or bruise may be clearly seen upon a patient’s skin, for instance, yet the common cold’s source of infection is not so easily discerned; in this way, the symptom represents “a manifestation that expresses itself within the visible, standing for

⁴ Didi-Huberman lists such traces as “the floor of the crematorium” (“le sol du crématoire”) still locatable in woodland clearings (*Écorces* 63) and the “innumerable splinters and fragments of bone” (“innombrables esquilles et fragments d’os”) that periodically resurface (62).

⁵ It is worth noting that Didi-Huberman and Olivier arguably conflate the today medically distinct terms of ‘symptom’ and ‘sign’. The *OED* states that “in modern use”, a symptom represents a “subjective indication” of the presence of disease that is “perceptible to the patient”, if not to the attending practitioner (“Symptom”); by contrast, a sign denotes an “objective indicator” that may be quantifiably measured through “physical ... examination of a patient” (“Sign”). Such differentiation is not maintained by the two authors; in Olivier’s writing, for instance, he defines the symptom as precisely as “a sign” (“un signe”) (*Sombre* 276).

something at work within the non-visible” (“une manifestation qui s’exprime dans le visible, pour quelque chose qui agit dans le non-visible”) (Olivier, *Sombre* 276).

The theorists assert that similar dynamics to those found in the body may also be observed at work within landscapes. Whilst the crematoria of Birkenau may have been razed, for instance, so that “‘Absolutely’ speaking” (“‘Absolument’ parlant”) they may no longer be seen, Didi-Huberman writes that the “the *after* of this history” (“l’après de cette histoire”) continues to mark the site⁶ (*Écorces* 58). The past continues to “work belatedly” (“travailler à retardement”) within the site to make manifest something of the atrocities committed there (59), and the symptom thus represents the means by which the past becomes evidenced within the *lieu malgré tout*. Through unanticipated and often unrecognisable developments and occurrences in the present landscape, what has happened continues to impact upon what is happening now.

In the *lieu malgré tout*, therefore, what we observe is the fact that neither a site nor its past may ever be fully effaced; whilst its presence may be carefully suppressed, something of it will always survive, and in so doing will point to what the site once was. What remains, however, may prove difficult to discern or to interpret; perceptible only in traces that may solely be legible to those who know at what they are looking, the *lieu malgré tout* can represent an “unassignable and inappropriable place” (“lieu inassignable et inappropriable”) (Didi-Huberman, *Essayer* 28). It is not enough, therefore, for the site merely to exceed total erasure; as Didi-Huberman writes:

If all survival [*survie*] seeks an effective form into which to secrete itself, all survival [*survivance*] must create other types of forms for the transmission and thinking-through of this experience.

⁶ The “cremation pits” (“fosses de crémation”) may no longer be visible to the observer, for instance, yet their presence is indicated by “the exuberance with which the flowers grow” (“l’exubérance avec laquelle poussent les fleurs”) (Didi-Huberman, *Écorces* 59).

(Si toute survie cherche une forme efficace où se lover, toute survivance doit construire d'autres genres de formes pour la transmission et la pensée de cette expérience) (24).

The distinction between *survie* and *survivance* in this excerpt is crucial. If the *survie* represents the immediate fact of the site's not being suppressed, the fleeting moment in which it escapes erasure, then Didi-Huberman asserts that this is insufficient to ensure its long-term preservation. Instead, it is the *survivance* that ensures that the site and its significance are not ultimately lost, the recognition of its traces and the repeated rearticulation of what occurred there. It is only through remembering that the demolished extermination camp may "survive its own survival" ("survivre à sa survie") (24), that it may not merely exceed effacement, but also be recognised.

For a site to survive, therefore, it must be remembered: in this context, the cultural representation of the suppressed location proves essential in enabling its memory to be perpetuated and transmitted, the act of reimagining preventing oblivion and producing the site anew. Didi-Huberman writes that "[i]n order to remember one must imagine" ("Pour se souvenir il faut imaginer") (*Essayer* 44), and bound up in remembering is an act of creativity: this calls us to recognise how the work of cultural producers enables a site and its past to persist and to evolve in memory, and this may be understood through what David J. Bolter and Richard Grusin define, and what Erll develops, as remediation. Originally conceived as a means by which to comprehend "the double logic according to which media ... refashion prior media forms" (Grusin 17), Erll has adopted the term to describe the crucial role played by media in the conveying and constitution of memory. The author writes that "[i]t is only through media in the broadest sense that contents of cultural memory become accessible for the members of a mnemonic community" (*Memory* 104), and that they thus "play a decisive role in stabilizing the memory of historical events" ("Literature" 395). Remediation ensures that a past cannot be forgotten, and enables others to participate in its remembering; what is more, it does not merely transmit the past to us, but in so doing redefines it. Erll writes that "[m]edia are not neutral carriers or containers of memory" (*Memory* 116), but instead, "[w]hat they appear to encode ... they are in fact first creating" (114). What we observe in

remediation, therefore, is a tension between reflection and refraction, between relating the past as it was and reimagining it in the present day.

A site whose material erasure has been attempted may therefore maintain an evolving and multifaceted presence as a result of its remediation, the work of cultural producers proving critical in ensuring the continued plasticity of a site. Didi-Huberman defines this as the *lieu malgré soi*, a location that, through the act of remembering, becomes more than what it was, as it continues to be rethought within the now. Writing of the cultural production that surrounds the Holocaust, the author contends that today “the memory of the Shoah remains inseparable from the forms ... by which the *imagination* in each moment reconfigures the space and the language of our reminiscent present” (“la mémoire de la Shoah demeure inséparable des formes ... par lesquelles l'*imagination* reconfigure à chaque fois l'espace et le langage de notre présent réminiscent”) (*Essayer* 26); we cannot conceive of the Nazi genocide outside of the works that continue to reexamine it. The same is equally true of the sites of the Holocaust: locations such as Birkenau are situated not simply “on the edge of a Ukrainian forest” (“en lisière d'une forêt ukrainienne”) (*Essayer* 19), but also within “a remembering literature” (“une écriture réminiscente”) in which they are both perpetuated and reimagined (29). The *lieu malgré soi* is therefore one that retains its plasticity in spite of attempted erasure; surviving both within the material landscape and cultural memory, the “after-life” (“après-vivre”) (19) of the site continues to be defined not solely by its persistence, but by its evolution. Remediation thus expands our understanding and experience of the apparently absent site, obliging us to conceive of its presence and nature differently.

Total erasure: clearing the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents

In 1785, the Conseil du Roi ordered that the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents should be cleared and moved to the newly commissioned Ossuaire Municipal (Viré, “Préface” 16). In so doing Paris's authorities closed down an important communal space at the heart of Paris, brought to an end centuries of burial, and symbolically disposed of a viscerally present past. In the story of the Saints-Innocents may therefore be read a concerted effort to suppress the undesirable presence of that which has gone before and to ensure that it would be forgotten.

Roman in origin, what would become the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents was originally constructed beyond the settlement's boundaries (12). Nevertheless, the capital's growth enclosed the site within its walls in 1208 (Dufour 13), so that by the late 18th century it had moved gradually from the city's periphery to its very heart. This geographical centrality would be echoed in the functional and the social, the site becoming indispensable to Paris's authorities and population. By the time of its closure, the Cimetière's grounds and keepers were responsible for an average of 2,000 Parisians per year⁷ (Garrioch 213), and the site was home, not just to the dead but to the living⁸ (Métayer 190).

Nevertheless, this importance would also prove to be the site's undoing: its association with Paris's poor, and in particular its overpopulation, rendered the Cimetière an unpleasant presence at the heart of the city, so that reformers clamoured for its demolition. Madeleine Foisil notes that the majority of those buried in the Saints-Innocents came from the city's lower classes, interment costs being much lower there than in nearby sites⁹ (308). This affordability, however, also meant that most were buried in pits fifty feet in length and similar in width, whose sprinkling with lime did not prevent appalling odours from infesting the entire quarter (Garrioch 214). The sheer saturation of the ground rendered it eight feet higher than the streets surrounding it (Muray 30), and regular re-opening often caused the disinterment of bodies that had not properly decomposed (Garrioch 214). Major concerns were raised about the site's salubrity, contemporaries claiming that several residents had been asphyxiated by its miasmatic influence in nearby properties (Pike 108). The Cimetière's location in a busy central quarter was thus deemed increasingly intolerable, and the site was closed to further interment in 1780 (Chanu 443).

⁷ The cemetery would come to be responsible for sixteen parishes, the bodies of patients who died in the Hôtel-Dieu and the Hôpital Sainte-Catherine, and those found and taken to the city's morgue (Foisil 308).

⁸ Christine Métayer's research has shown that many businesses operated in the vaults beneath the site's charnel houses, and domestic dwellings were built along the burial ground's perimeter (190).

⁹ Indeed, Foisil argues that the cemetery's occupants were from more varied social strata than has often been recognised (315); nevertheless, the fact that burial costs in the Saints-Innocents ranged from six to twenty-eight livres, which was significantly cheaper than the nearby Saint-Sulpice (costing sixty livres), meant that the majority of those interred were among the city's poorest inhabitants (308).

Health was cited as the primary motivation impelling the city's authorities to act, yet Pierre Chanu notes that "[t]he pretext of salubrity invoked" ("Le prétexte de salubrité invoqué") (443) was precisely that. He argues that "the elite of the Lumières" ("l'élite des Lumières") seized upon this as a means by which "to shatter the ancient relation between the living and the dead" ("briser l'antique relation des vivants et des morts" (444), and that the rhetoric of the medical and the scientific concealed a newfound revulsion towards the presence of the past. The increased usage of the Saints-Innocents during the 1700s had certainly exacerbated the unpleasantness associated with the site, prompting calls for reform: complaints about the increasingly inhospitable character of the cemetery's environs had been registered from as early as 1737 (444), and agitation for its closure grew in the wake of high-profile scandals such as the collapse of a cellar wall on the Rue de la Lingerie (Viré, "Préface" 13). Nevertheless, the practices and incidents condemned in the late eighteenth century were far from novel, and had previously caused little upset; as Muray writes, "for hundreds of years the drama of the Saints-Innocents had seemed perfectly tolerable, that is to say livable" ("pendant des centaines d'années le théâtre des Saints-Innocents ait paru parfaitement supportable, pour ainsi dire vivable") (28). The threat perceived in the Cimetière and its contents shortly prior to its closure was therefore far more than that of medical contagion; it was the Saints-Innocents' associations with a newly maligned past that were increasingly deemed intolerable. Pike describes the medieval burial grounds of the city as symbolic of an "old Paris" ("vieux Paris") that was out of place within modernising visions for its future (113). Discernable in Parisians' newfound disgust for the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents is therefore a wider shift in the relationship between the living and the dead, and by implication between the past and the present, perceptible in the Paris of the 1780s.

The writing of Mercier and his celebration of this moment in the capital's history makes evident eighteenth-century Parisians' wish that the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents be closed and cleared, as well as the fact that this was because of the site's associations with the past. In his *Tableau de Paris*, Mercier lauds the cemetery's closure as a vital means of improving the city's health: he opens the relevant chapter with the excited news, "I hasten to publish it; the Cimetière des Innocents has finally been closed" ("Je me hâte de le publier ; le cimetière des Innocents vient d'être fermé enfin") (507). He writes of the unnamed official

who pursued the closure, “[l]et us give thanks for the magistrate’s zeal” (“Rendons grâces au zèle du magistrat”), and declares that “he has possibly stopped at its source a contagious disease” (“il a peut-être arrêté dans son origine une maladie contagieuse”) (507). The closure of the Cimetière is consequently perceived to represent an important step in rendering the capital more salubrious for its inhabitants.

The chapter reveals that Mercier’s writing is rooted firmly in the Enlightenment ideals of the period, and promotes the reformation of the city in line with increasingly modernist principles. The title of the chapter, “Improvement” (“Amélioration”), reflects the fact that the cemetery’s closure was perceived as a beneficial and necessary act, and Mercier further argues that it must be followed by continued “active and attentive inspection” (“inspection active et surveillante”), that “would correct the vice that results from such a vast population” (“corrigerait le défaut qui résulte d’une vaste population”) (*Tableau* 507). The progressive ideals to which Mercier aspired are similarly evidenced by the form of his *Tableau*. Written in a series of disparate chapters across two volumes, the work seeks, through the description of the minutiae of Parisian life, to present a totalising image of the city. In so doing, it echoes the contemporary style of the city guidebooks (Thompson 36) in their “encyclopedic and descriptive aspirations” (Stalnaker 226), conforming to a genre that was not understood as passive or disinterested, but as “participating in an overall administrative and police effort to rationalize public urban spaces” (Thompson 28). Mercier’s *Tableau* was therefore implicated in efforts to regulate the Parisian landscape, to cleanse and to rebuild it, and thereby to transform it into an environment in which modern life could flourish and prosper.

Nevertheless, belying Mercier’s concern for Paris’s salubrity and organisation is a desire to repress the cemetery precisely because of its connection to the city’s medieval past and its incompatibility with a modern metropolis. Noting with approbation that the Saints-Innocents is a place “where they have been burying the dead since the time of Philippe le Bel” (“où l’on enterrait des morts depuis Philippe le bel”) (*Tableau* 507), it is the site’s historical resonances that mark it out for criticism. That this is at odds with the ambitions for the city held by its eighteenth-century inhabitants is indicated by his comment that “there remain many others to be destroyed” (“Il en reste bien d’autres à détruire”), and Mercier therefore deemed the reformation of Paris’s cemeteries “the work of our time” (“l’ouvrage du temps”)

(508). It is as an undesirable remnant of an uncivilised past that the Cimetière is perceived and that places it in direct opposition to Enlightenment ambitions; a site governed not by reason but by “habit and stupidity” (“l’habitude et la sottise”) (960). Mercier’s *Tableau de Paris* consequently makes clear that the Saints-Innocents and the past that it symbolises have become untenable, and its removal is deemed necessary to permit the city to move forwards.

In the clearance of the Saints-Innocents may be perceived an inaugural act in the capital’s modernisation, as its residents and renovators sought to suppress the past to build the city of the future. David Garrioch argues that late-eighteenth-century capital was subject to wide ranging efforts “to ‘civilize’ the city” (9), which was “changing rapidly” as “the Enlightenment began to have a major impact” (5), and the contemporaneity of the cemetery’s closure with the Revolution was not coincidental. The forces that would overthrow the Ancien Régime in 1789 were already at work before that date, and, in a metropolis that was beginning to self-consciously style itself as modern, the cemetery was a particularly problematic site. With few comparable contemporaries, it represented a visceral link between the progressive capital and its ancient past. Its contents, anonymous, disordered and apparently hazardous, embodied a material memory of Paris’s evolution deemed too chaotic and contaminated to cohere with the newly reimagined landscape.

It is for this reason that Muray argues that “the birth of the modern age” (“la naissance de l’âge moderne”) did not in fact take place in 1789 with the upheaval of the French Revolution, but instead in 1786 with the suppression of Paris’s principal burial ground (21). If modernity is founded upon what Harvey terms “a radical break with the past” (1), then Muray deems the clearance of the Saints-Innocents to be the foundational moment in Paris’s modernisation. Seeking “[t]o propose another genesis” (“Proposer une autre genèse”) for the city of the nineteenth century (21), he argues that this is in fact locatable in the cemetery’s clearance, which he terms “the Revolution of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents or yet the great fracture of 1786” (“la Révolution du cimetière des Saints-Innocents ou encore la grande cassure de 1786”) (27). The product of ancient and outmoded practices, and an increasingly unbearable presence within a city whose governors strove towards ever greater improvement, the cemetery would be the inevitable object of reformers’ efforts to sweep away the past.

The removal of the Cimetière's contents became a pressing issue, for it was quickly decided that merely preventing further usage would be insufficient to contain the Cimetière's noxious and pervasive presence. When detailed for clearance in 1785, therefore, a site for the burial ground's abundant contents was required, and a section of the newly excavated quarries at La Tombe Issoire were identified as ideal for this purpose (Pike 108). Proposals for such a project had been drafted as early as 1792¹⁰: the quarries had provided the bulk of the stone used to build the city over nearly two millennia (Viré, "Anciennes"), yet instances of collapse in the late eighteenth century convinced officials that they represented as much of a risk to public safety as the cemetery itself¹¹ (Robb 27–29). They were consequently shored up by the Service des Carrières to prevent further risk (Viré, "Préface" 9–10), and the vacant space was consecrated as the Ossuaire Municipal in 1786 (16), receiving the first wagon loads of remains from the Saints-Innocents in the same year, and the last in 1788 (13).

The purpose of this laborious task was to efface the cemetery from both the capital's landscape and from the memories of its inhabitants, concealing the modern city's past in the obscurity of its underground. Defining this as "the physical and conceptual trash heap of the modern world", Pike argues that the underground came to prominence in nineteenth-century Paris and London as "the place to which everyone and everything posing a problem or no longer useful to it is relegated" (5). The purpose of this space was to contain, control and consequently to manage the undesirable by-products of modern society, so that life on the surface could continue unimpeded and undisturbed; the "world above ... given structure and order by what it excludes beneath it as unfit" (7). In moving the contents of the Saints-Innocents to the Ossuaire Municipal, therefore, Paris's past was both physically and metaphorically relocated from its living surface to its subterranean spaces.

It is notable that the act of transfer did not seek to preserve the dead in their corporeal integrity. Instead, Parisians were to bear witness to "the quickliming of the remains, and

¹⁰ Marc Viré details a document that proposes a "*Catacombes project for the city of Paris, by adapting the quarries that are found ... in its environs*" ("*Projet de Catacombes pour la ville de Paris, en adaptant à cet usage les carrières qui se trouvent ... dans ses environs*") (16).

¹¹ Graham Robb writes that the city's quarries had been largely forgotten about until, in 1774, a portion of the Rue d'Enfer collapsed into the caverns below, causing widespread panic (27–29).

their removal pell-mell and in the dead of night” (Pike 113), and, whilst this was hardly more irreverential than the mass graves of the original cemetery, greater attention was paid to consigning their memory to oblivion. Where individual memorials certainly existed in the Saints-Innocents¹², no such identification was given in the new ossuary. Additionally, where the cemetery was organised according to strict hierarchy, so that “status was marked by the location, size, and durability of the funerary monument”, the Catacombes were to be classified only by “a record for each district of the cemetery from which the remains had been removed” (108). The organisation of the ossuary was therefore to prove central to the task of modernisation: not only were the bodies to be disposed of, but this was to be undertaken in a way that both imposed the ideals of the future Revolution upon them, and that would preclude future remembrance. In the Ossuaire Municipal may be identified an “egalitarian resting place” (108), the new order that would define the living residents of the city simultaneously enacted upon the dead. Pike therefore writes that, “[t]he new ossuaire not only cleared the air in the world above, it also reordered the world below” (110), and observable within it is a double effacement; what went before was not solely banished from the city’s visible landscape, but, once removed, was purged of all referent.

In the suppression of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, and the relocation of its contents to the Ossuaire Municipal, may therefore be discerned what Didi-Huberman terms the *lieu malgré l’homme*, the desire to efface a site to such an extent that the past may no longer be identified. Indeed, it is noteworthy that, in addition to the extermination camps, Didi-Huberman also notes the suppression of a cemetery in Łódź as exemplary of the *lieu malgré l’homme* at work. Contemplating one of the figures in Lanzmann’s seminal documentary film *Shoah*, he writes that:

this woman says ... that the Łódź cemetery, where her grandparents were buried, is itself poised to be destroyed, razed, and thus that there, where her pre-war dead would still be “locatable”, they will soon no longer be so.

¹² Foisil notes that we have detailed records of those named individuals buried in the cemetery, as well as their profession, date of interment and the inscription on their memorials (Foisil 314–15).

(cette femme dit ... que le cimetière de Lodz, où ses grand-parents furent enterrés, est lui-même en passe d'être détruit, rasé, et donc que là où ses morts d'avant guerre seraient encore "localisables", ils ne le seront bientôt plus.) (Didi-Huberman, "Lieu" 37)

In Didi-Huberman's example, as in the Saints-Innocents, what we observe is the past's effacement: where once it was identifiable within the landscape, it will no longer serve as such a referent for the living community. What is more, it is similarly because the site was no longer deemed to be of use that the cemetery in Łódź was to be erased: the author cites Lanzmann's film when he writes that the reason for its closure is that "[t]hey no longer bury, there" ("On n'enterre plus, là-bas") (Didi-Huberman, "Lieu" 37). In the *lieu malgré l'homme* may be perceived a desire to suppress a site for its past associations, memories that are undesirable to the present in which the work of destruction takes place. Such an ambition belies the demolition of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents and construction of the Ossuaire Municipal: perceived by eighteenth-century Parisians as the unwanted by-product of the city's growth, the evidence of the past was to be disposed of and its future remembering precluded.

Site's survival: the Catacombes and Mercier

The clearance of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, and the transfer of its remains to the Ossuaire Municipal thus offer an example of an attempt to erase a site and its memory. The fact that this new location would rapidly become known as the Catacombes, however, reveals instead an anxiety at the heart of modernity: whilst its proponents long to be rid of the past, they are also desperate to cling to it. What went before ultimately proves indisposable: Berman argues that the modernist world view is characterised "a will to change – to transform both themselves and their world - and ... a terror of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart" (13). Even as "our insatiable desire for growth ... destroys both the physical and social landscapes of our past", we nevertheless "desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past" (35).

Such a contradiction may be observed in the site of the Catacombes. Viré writes that the initial construction of the Ossuaire Municipal was deemed “the reflection of the *Siècle des Lumières* with regards to the rationalisation of built space” (“la réflexion du *Siècle des Lumières* en matière de rationalisation de l’espace construit”) (“Préface” 14); nevertheless, the fact that it was soon renamed after the complex discovered under Rome a century prior points to the far more ambiguous relationship between modernity and its inherited landscape (15). The past associated with the *Cimetière* was hence not truly suppressed; effaced from the city’s visible landscape, something of it would retain an evocative presence in the site of its successor and in the memory of Parisians, continuing to frighten and to fascinate in perpetuity.

The past embodied in the *Cimetière des Saints-Innocents* survived; what is more, it did so in both the material form and function of the new ossuary, and in the cultural works that have remediated the original site. It is noteworthy, for instance, that whilst the new ossuary was intended as a rationalised and secular space, its design under Louis-Étienne-François Héricart de Thury would echo the mysterious and sacred aesthetic that characterised the cemetery. Muray writes that the new site was built to embody a “[n]ew society” (“Nouvelle société”) (40), one founded upon the belief that “the roots of evil ... are exclusively ecclesiastical” (“les racines du mal ... sont exclusivement ecclésiales” (33); its mantra was thus to be “[n]o more fantasies! The cadaver is a cadaver, that is all” (“Plus de fantasmes! Le cadavre c’est le cadavre, un point c’est tout”) (45). What is remarkable, then, is the fact that, under Héricart de Thury, the Catacombes would in fact replicate the styling of the *Saints-Innocents*. If the original churchyard was decorated with an early and renowned example of the *Dance Macabre*, then the Catacombes were similarly ornately decorated, with bones and skulls carefully arranged along its walls to produce what its designer described as “the most picturesque ensemble” (“l’ensemble le plus pittoresque”) (Héricart de Thury 171).

In addition, the Catacombes were designed to inspire religious devotion in much the same way as the *Cimetière*. Where the opening image of the *Saints-Innocents’ Dance Macabre* reads, “[a]ll is forged of matter” (“Tout est forgé d’une matière [sic]”) (Gerson, qtd. in Dufour), an inscription in the Catacombes cites Lucretius declaring that “that which came from nothing must return to nothing” (“ce qui fut tiré du néant doit retourner au néant” (qtd.

in Héricart de Thury 239). Both sites were therefore intended to expose “the theatricality of human remains” and to serve as an “object of reflection” (Viré, “Préface” 38): in both their formal disposition and their religious symbolism, the Catacombes, built to ensure the Saints-Innocents’ oblivion, would serve to remember it.

Indeed, it was the Catacombes’ continued embodiment of the city’s memory that drew Parisians to the site. When the Ossuaire Municipal was first in use, access was permitted for exclusively practical purposes¹³ (Viré, “Préface” 23). It was not long, however, before the Catacombes began to attract the interest of tourists and religious devotees, and it was this attention that prompted both its opening to the public in 1809 (25–26) and its transformation into a “monument worthy of the name” (“un monument digne de ce nom”) (27). Why people visited the site is revealed in the “Registre des Catacombes” instigated by Héricart de Thury: one addresses the “[a]shes of my ancestors who repose here” (“Cendres de mes ancêtres qui reposez ici”) (qtd. in Héricart de Thury 317), and another concludes quite simply that “[i]t is Paris returned” (“C’est Paris retourné”) (310). Indeed, such was the site’s popularity that it had to be re-closed in 1830, as “visiting its spaces had become too great an affair, too onerous for the Service des Carrières” (“la visite des lieux était devenue une trop grande affaire, trop lourde pour le service des Carrières”) (Viré, “Préface” 38–39). It was consequently the very fact that the past survived within the site that rendered the ossuary such an object of fascination: the past that so repelled the eighteenth-century city’s reformers nevertheless proved irresistible to its nineteenth-century residents.

Perhaps the most significant way in which something of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents survived in the site of the Catacombes, however, is in the fact that what was perceived as a moment of revolution was in fact embedded in a cycle as old as the city itself. In seeking to solve the problem of what to do with Paris’s dead, the new site only assumed the task of the old, the past’s persistence proving fundamentally irrepressible simply because it always had been and always would be. The issues of overuse surrounding the Saints-Innocents were not novel to the 1780s, but had plagued the capital for centuries. Chanu argues that the closure

¹³ Those seeking to inspect their property’s foundations and scientists wishing to perform experiments were allowed to enter, but otherwise the space was closed to the public (Viré 23).

of the Cimetière was presaged as early the 1650s and 1660s, when the doubling of Paris's population placed increasing pressure on its sacred soil (443). Yet we can go back even further to reveal that the position of the cemetery within the growing city was always a pressing concern: its proximity to the market of Les Halles, for instance, prompted complaints that would lead Philippe-Auguste to enclose the burial site in the early 13th century (Dufour 14). Thus, whilst the Catacombes were understood as the ultimate solution to this problem, it was one with which the Cimetière had grappled since its opening.

Indeed, this task would prove challenging far into the future. Initially the intention was simply to store the remains excavated from Paris's medieval cemeteries in the vaults of the Catacombes, yet the problem of managing the remains of a large and growing population was not solved in a single act. Instead, the new site would quickly go from storing only historical remains to interring more recent ones: it received some of the first victims of the Revolution (Pike 108), was used throughout the capital's Haussmannisation, and was last added to in 1960 (Viré, "Préface" 41). To perceive this moment in terms of "un avant" and "un après" (Muray 27), therefore, is to underestimate the extent to which the management of mortal remains was a centuries-old problem. The construction of the Catacombes was not a moment of radical overhaul, but instead just one iteration in many attempts to deal with the dead of Paris; what survived from the Cimetière was not solely the form of the site, but also its function.

Encapsulated in the demolition of the Saints-Innocents and the construction of the Catacombes is therefore the contradictory relationship between modernity and the past: the desire to be rid of what went before, the reality of its survival, and the conflicting emotions prompted by this conflict. Intended to modernise the process of interment, the Catacombes would do so in a manner that recalled the Cimetière it was built to replace. Viré thus concludes that "[t]he great ambiguity of the Catacombes was to be a modern monument in an ancient form" ("La grande ambiguïté des Catacombes est d'être un monument moderne sous une forme ancienne") ("Préface" 38); the modernist edifice enabled something of what it was built to replace to instead survive.

Nor was it solely in the site of the Catacombes that the memory of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents would be remembered: Mercier's description of the burial ground and its closure also represents a critical means by which the past persisted. Mercier was by no means the first writer to criticise the cemetery¹⁴; what distinguishes the author, however, is the fact that he subsequently laments the loss of the connection between past and present that such sites represented. The chronicler's later work, *Le Nouveau Paris*, is illuminating in this regard: written just seventeen years after his original volume, he deems attitudes to the dead under the new republic disrespectful and ignorant of the past. Where in *Tableau de Paris*, Mercier described the ground of the Cimetière as so rancid that "the adjacent cellars were infected" ("Les caves adjacentes étaient méphitisées") (507), by the time of *Le Nouveau Paris* he perceives the ground to represent "our collective mother" ("notre mère commune"), and deems the "extraction of dead bodies from the ground" ("soustraction des morts à la terre") (808) to be a "scandal" (806). What is revealed is significant concern for the status and treatment of burial sites as a material link to the past; whilst his earlier work may seek the severing of the now from what preceded it, the question of what the past should mean for the present is a preoccupation in Mercier's later writing.

That the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents had been cleared by the time that Mercier wrote *Le Nouveau Paris*, and that it is not mentioned again in this new work, might tempt us to infer that his concern comes too late. Nevertheless, in an early passage of this text, Mercier muses presciently on the importance of his previous work and what it means for the contemporary city:

"It was well that I undertook my tableau in twelve volumes. For if it had not been done, the model is so completely effaced that it resembles the discoloured portrait of an ancestor who died in hospital and was buried in a hovel."

¹⁴ Voltaire similarly decried the Cimetière's embodiment of a medieval past incompatible with the modern city in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, describing it as 'a remnant of barbarity that shames humanity' ('un reste de barbarie qui fait honte à l'humanité') (Voltaire 959).

“Bien m'a pris de faire mon tableau en douze volumes. Car s'il n'était pas fait le modèle est tellement effacé qu'il ressemble au portrait décoloré d'un aïeul mort à l'hôpital et relégué dans un galetas.” (Mercier, *Nouveau* 31)

What Mercier suggests is that something of Paris's form and nature, irredeemably lost in the material city, is captured and retained in his literary depiction thereof. Something of the past city survives through his writing, and as a consequence his work provides a medium in which sites such as the Saints-Innocents retain a presence.

Observable in the form, function and symbolism of the Catacombes and in Mercier's text is the way in which the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents survived its own effacement. Persisting both in the site constructed to replace it, and through its cultural remediation, the cemetery and its past proved impossible to obliterate entirely. It is this resilience that Didi-Huberman identifies as the *lieu malgré tout*, and, importantly, Didi-Huberman argues that it is not solely in the material that the site may survive. Instead, the *lieu malgré tout* is “everywhere brought to light in questions, in accounts and in images” (“partout mis à jour dans les questions, dans les récits et dans les images”) (“Lieu” 41), culture proving as important a locus for survival as space itself. Both the physical and the cultural dimensions of space therefore prove critical in enabling site to endure: equally present in Mercier's *Tableau de Paris* as it is in the Catacombes, the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents survives as a *lieu malgré tout*, occluded yet tangibly still there.

The symptom: Zola's *La Fortune des Rougon*

In the previous section, we observed the way in which site may survive its own erasure as a *lieu malgré tout*: suppressed in its original form, the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents would nevertheless endure in both landscape and literature. That the past thus proved impervious to suppression was unsettling to those who sought it, and would continue to ask difficult questions of the modern city and its proponents long after the cemetery was no more. The complex way in which the presence of the Saints-Innocents would continue to make itself felt may be examined in Zola's novel *La Fortune des Rougon*. Published almost a century after

the closure and clearance of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, *La Fortune* represents another work within which the ancient burial ground survives. Over the course of some eight pages, and prior to any narration of the novel's protagonists, Zola begins with a description of a "vague wasteland" ("un terrain vague") in the fictional provincial capital of Plassans, known as the "Aire Saint-Mittre" (*Fortune* 9). Formerly a cemetery, the site was used for over a century until it was cleared and repurposed (9–16), and hence the story of Saint-Mittre deliberately echoes that of the Cimetière.

What renders Zola's work remarkable, however, is the fact that the site of Saint-Mittre does not merely persist in Plassans, but in persisting remains a dynamic presence. It is the unnerving nature of the site that prompts the suppression of the fictional cemetery, yet suppression only exacerbates its apparent malevolence, as it disturbs the modern landscape that surrounds it. In this way, the author reflects in his fictional cemetery the anxieties prompted by the very real Saints-Innocents and Catacombes. If both sites have been perceived over time as a dangerous presence in central Paris, then Zola's Saint-Mittre captures and gives voice to the unease provoked.

The similarities between the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents and the Aire Saint-Mittre are striking and intentional. Like the Saints-Innocents, Saint-Mittre is rooted in antiquity, Zola describing the site as being near Plassans' "porte de Rome" (*Fortune* 9). In addition, it is described as having a "fat ground" ("sol gras"), one that "had been stuffed with cadavers for over a century" ("l'on gorgeait de cadavres depuis plus d'un siècle"), so that "the grave diggers could no longer plunge in their spades without digging up some bit of human" ("dans lequel les fossoyeurs ne pouvaient plus donner un coup de bêche sans arracher quelque lambeau humain") (10); a description, needless to say, that mimics the state of the Parisian site shortly prior to its closure. Furthermore, it is not merely the site of the Cimetière whose memory is evoked within Zola's narration, but also the moment of clearance itself. Zola writes that "a new graveyard had to be opened at the other end of the town" ("on avait dû ouvrir un nouveau champ de sépultures à l'autre bout de la ville") (10), the earth of Saint-Mittre "excavated up to several metres" ("fouillé à plusieurs mètres") and subsequently moved to a "hole dug in the new cemetery" ("un trou creusé dans le nouveau cimetière") (11). This clearly echoes the act of moving the remains contained in the Saints-Innocents to the Catacombes, and in its

ancient presence, its form after centuries of internment, and its ultimate closure, the fictional site is a direct borrowing from the factual.

Murray argues that this is far from coincidental; indeed, if the beginning of the nineteenth century finds its point of origin in the moment of the Cimetière's demolition, then the story of Saint-Mittre is intended to do the same for Zola's œuvre. The first in his twenty-novel epic cycle, the episode in the cemetery represents what Henri Mitterand describes as "the foundational tale of the entire cycle" ("le récit fondateur de l'ensemble du cycle") (173), and Murray identifies in Saint-Mittre the same "inaugural scene ... [and] necrophagous tale of origin" ("scène inaugurale ... [et] récit nécrophage d'origine") as that which he perceives in the clearance of the Saints-Innocents (50). If the former would give rise to "[t]wenty volumes of adventures and thousands of characters", ("Vingt volumes d'aventures et des milliers de personnages") (51), it is because it draws upon the latter, in which "the 19th century began" ("le 19^e siècle commence") (22). Just as the Saints-Innocents was foundational to nineteenth-century modernity, therefore, it equally proves instrumental to one of its greatest chroniclers, and what we see in Zola's Saint-Mittre is yet another form in which persist both the site of the Cimetière and the events that defined it. Materially erased from Paris's landscape, the Cimetière survives within that of the novel as a *lieu malgré tout*.

What distinguishes Zola's work, however, is the exuberance and subversiveness that he accords to the contents of the Aire Saint-Mittre, both prior to its closure and after its unsuccessful disinterment, and, in so doing, the author echoes the vitality of the past perceived in the Saints-Innocents. It was the fact that the Cimetière seemed to be possessed of a life of its own that so unsettled eighteenth-century contemporaries, who deemed it to be a hostile presence. Voltaire described it as breathing "a thick vapour, cadaverous and infected; after rains during the heat of summer it is pestilent" ("une vapeur épaisse, cadavéreuse, infectée, s'en exhale; elle est pestilentielle dans les chaleurs de l'été après les pluies") (959), and Murray similarly writes that its presence was believed to "darken houses, to leave its traces on people" ("brunir les maisons, laisser les traces sur les gens") (23) with its "[s]mog of the dead, slick of tombs" ("Smog des morts, marée noire des tombes") (24). Zola describes the Saint-Mittre in almost identical terms: he claims that it possessed a "damp compost that seethed and oozed" ("terreau humide qui bouillait et suintait"), and that the

“formidable fertility” (“fertilité formidable”) that this gives rise to is productive of “penetrating odours” (“senteurs pénétrantes”) (*Fortune* 10). These render it an “object of horror” (“un objet d’épouvante”) (11), and in both instances, real and fictional, it is the cemetery’s vital yet disruptive presence that is cited as the primary reason for suppression.

What is noteworthy, however, is that in both instances, just as the site itself survived effacement, so too did its seeming subversion of the modern landscape. This points not just to the persistence of the *lieu malgré tout*, but also to its ability to make manifest its continued presence, and this is precisely what rendered it so troubling to the nineteenth-century imagination. The Catacombes were deemed to call time on the Cimetière’s chaotic and invasive presence at the heart of the city, yet this new space would rapidly become associated with the very attributes that it was built to suppress. Pike writes that throughout the nineteenth century the “physical instability, the concealed nature, and the unknown extent of the Catacombes” would feed “both legends and facts” regarding their nefarious nature, so that they became “a vivid metaphor” for a past that continued to intrude upon and threaten the present (111). Out of sight, this underground space and its ever-increasing contents were never out of mind, so that a site built to efface the past only caused it to further unsettle the inhabitants of the city surrounding it.

The Catacombes are absent from Zola’s writing; nevertheless, the same characteristics ascribed to human remains and their apparently malevolent influence are observable in its depiction of Saint-Mittre. In *La Fortune*, the process of the removing remains from the burial ground is carried out by “a single cart” (“un seul tombereau”), and, because it “had to cross the entire length of Plassans” (“devait traverser Plassans toute sa longueur”), it lost much of its cargo; “the poor paving of the streets made it spill fragments of bone with every lurch” (“le mauvais pavé des rues lui faisait semer, a chaque cahot, de fragments d’os”) (11). Whilst the scene is somewhat farcical, it serves to suggest that the clearance of the fictional site does not take place with the same rigour and efficiency as that of the original, and this incomplete exhumation ensures that bodies remain. Zola endows these bones with an unsettling vitality, most clearly demonstrated in the relationship struck up between the bones that remain in

the fictional cemetery and the young couple Silvère and Miette¹⁵. Throughout *La Fortune* a tenderness is perceived to develop between the two parties; the author writes that the remains of the dead “longed for Miette and Silvère’s marriage” (“voulaien les noces de Miette et de Silvère”), whilst the couple came “to love the invisible beings whose light touch they often believed that they felt” (“aimer les êtres invisibles dont ils croyaient souvent sentir le frôlement”) (286). Early in this relationship, these mortal remains appear limited in their influence, the two lovers unsure of “what the dead wanted of them” (“ce que les morts voulaient d’eux”) (286). Nevertheless, as the novel progresses, the dead’s grip on the living grows to the point that, when Silvère is to be executed for his participation in rebellion, Zola writes of his final walk through the cemetery:

He believed that he heard the narrow alleyway fill with voices. The dead called him ... They were joyous, they told him to come, they promised to return Miette to him once in the ground ... The cemetery ... dreamed, at this time, of drinking the hot blood of Silvère.

(Il crut entendre l’allée étroite s’emplir de voix. Les morts l’appelaient ... Ils étaient joyeux, ils lui disaient de venir, ils promettaient de lui rendre Miette dans la terre ... Le cimetière ... rêvait, à cette heure, de boire le sang chaud de Silvère) (430).

The remains, representative of the cemetery’s past, are in this description not merely passively retained within the site; instead, they are perceived to be such a vital presence within the site that they become menacing, clamouring for the living to join them. Apparently erased from the landscape, the cemetery of Saint-Mittre continues to act upon and to shape it, unsettling those who still occupy it with the knowledge that they are not fully in control of the spaces in which they live.

What we observe in the *La Fortune* is the modernist’s realisation that not only will the past never go away, but that equally it remains capable of influencing the landscape from which

¹⁵ Much of the novel revolves around these young figures, and their love story both begins and tragically ends in the space of Saint-Mittre.

it was expunged, and it is this Didi-Huberman and Olivier deem to be the symptomal. It represents “the unexpected, unfamiliar, often intense and always disruptive sign that *visually* announces that which we do not yet recognise” (“le signe inattendu, non familier, souvent intense et toujours disruptif, qui annonce *visuellement* quelque chose que nous ne connaissons pas encore”) (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 221). As seen in Zola’s work, the symptom is profoundly unsettling in its effects; by enabling the suppressed past to impact upon the present, “it interrupts the normal course of things” (“il interrompt le cours normal des choses”) (40), and in so doing causes “temporal disorientation” (*Image* 67). By alerting us to the fact that that which we deemed over and done with in fact persists within the landscape, and additionally by doing so at times and in ways that we can neither anticipate nor comprehend, the symptom represents the way in which the past embodied in the *lieu malgré tout* may continue to shape our experience of the present.

Indeed, Zola’s novel not only gives voice to the symptomal influence of the Cimetière and Catacombes within the Parisian landscape, but is itself an expression of this influence at work. Muray perceives the critical anxiety that underpins modernity to be that of the “[c]haos of the past in a world that is beginning to unconsciously realise that its future will consist of nothing other than re-living it” (“Chaos du passé dans un monde qui commence déjà à percevoir inconsciemment que son avenir ne va plus consister qu’à le revivre”) (55). Zola’s Saint-Mittre becomes a manifestation of such chaos; it is suggestive of sites’ ability to do more than simply survive their own effacement. In reimagining this site and re-evoking it for a nineteenth-century readership, *La Fortune des Rougon* itself becomes a symptom by which the suppressed site of the Cimetière is expressed, the literary proving a space in which the *lieu malgré tout* survives and through which it continues to impact upon the imagination of the present.

Digital remediation: Ubisoft’s *Assassin’s Creed Unity*

In studying the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, what we observe is a site that has eluded diligent efforts to ensure the suppression of the past, and that has continued to unsettle Parisians’ experience of their landscape long after this past was deemed to have been dealt

with. The work of writers has been shown to play an essential role in the site's survival as a *lieu malgré tout*, ensuring its persistence long into the future and enabling it to make its continued presence felt. Nevertheless, what cultural works present in their depiction of a particular location is not simply an image of the site as it is. Erll writes that "media of memory construct versions of a past reality" (*Memory* 125); what went before is retained, and yet what results is a novel reinterpretation thereof. Consequently, the author asserts, remembering is inconceivable without remediation: "[m]edia representations already pre-form our perception and then re-shape our memories along certain paths" (130), and as Donald concludes, "[i]t is imagination that produces reality as it exists" (18). Such work of the imagination represents reproduction in the truest sense of the term: on the one hand, they replicate something of the original site in question; on the other, that which they replicate they also produce anew, and cultural remediation thus proves essential in understanding the way in which the apparently absent maintains a plastic presence within our landscapes, both persistent and evolving.

In this final section we will examine *Assassin's Creed Unity*, a far more recent reimagining of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents and Catacombes. A video game that recreates the landscape of Revolutionary Paris as its setting, the game's interpretation of eighteenth-century history has been widely criticised. Whilst much of the debate would focus on *Unity's* reading of the Revolution¹⁶, a secondary discussion has debated its status as a work of history; nevertheless, the video game and its creators are at pains to emphasise that the past presented in their game is experienced through memory. The inclusion and design of the Saints-Innocents and the Catacombes, neither of which should exist within *Unity's* alleged timeframe, therefore exemplify the role of remediation in the constitution of the remembered site. They demonstrate the way in which the work of cultural producers both preserves and reimagines, the game both capturing how the two locations are commonly perceived by contemporary Parisians, and deliberately playing with their depiction to facilitate engaging gameplay and creative narratives. What results are sites that retain their

¹⁶ Jean-Luc Mélenchon is perhaps the most famous of the game's critics, and condemned it as "a rereading of history in favour of the losers and in order to discredit the one and indivisible Republic" ("une relecture de l'histoire en faveur des perdants et pour discréditer la République une et indivisible").

plasticity as a presence within the imagined landscape, so that we must acknowledge the role of remediation in ensuring, not just site's survival, but its continued evolution.

The eighth of ten current *Assassin's Creed* titles, *Unity* belongs to a franchise famed for its use of historical periods and locations, and its depiction of Paris represents one of the most ambitious projects of its kind. Spanning the five years from 1789 to 1794, the game by Ubisoft follows the fictional account of Arno Dorian, a member of the Order of Assassins, as he seeks to find and kill the Revolution's orchestrator and Grand-Master of the Templar Order, François-Thomas Germain. The series' overarching narrative charts the fictional conflict between these two factions, and its instalments have meticulously reproduced a plethora of historic landscapes and societies¹⁷. In *Unity*, the gamer is guided through Revolutionary Paris, explorable from rooftop to sewer, and replete with contemporary historical figures such as Mirabeau, Bonaparte and Robespierre. As a result, the environment that the player explores has been celebrated as a vibrant reconstruction of Paris at this pivotal moment in French history, described by Sliva as "a marvel to walk through and admire".

Nevertheless, the accuracy of this reconstruction is disputed, and the game's designers have been accused of incorporating many historical infelicities into the world they seek to reproduce. Extensive historical research informed the game's design¹⁸, yet despite this critics have noted a catalogue of imprecisions. William Audureau, for instance, observes that "the Bastille still proudly presides, even though its demolition had begun in earnest from the 15 July 1789" ("la Bastille trône encore fièrement, alors que sa démolition a été entamée dès le 15 juillet 1789"). Indeed, whilst one of the game's producers, Vilma du Monteil, describes its map as "the city on a 1:1 scale" ("la ville à échelle 1:1"), Laurent Turcot notes that it is in fact limited to the city bounds of 1720-1730 (64), and Alexis Corbière argues that these imprecisions have the capacity to confuse "the ill-informed player" ("le joueur peu averti"). Such a concern is shared by Douglas N. Dow in the context of another *Assassin's Creed* title;

¹⁷ These titles have been depicted in such far-flung locations as Renaissance Florence, nineteenth-century London, the Caribbean during the Golden Age of Piracy, and, most recently, ancient Egypt and Greece.

¹⁸ Matthew Miller writes that, "[m]ore than any game in the franchise up to that point, *Unity* had the advantage of extensive historical data" (203), and historians Jean-Clément Martin and Turcot were employed as consultants on the project to ensure the game's fidelity to its setting, sourcing archival material and educating the design team on everyday life in eighteenth-century Paris (Turcot, qtd. in Fradin).

studying “how the inclusion of anachronistic monuments in the cityscape shapes the gamer’s experience”, he argues that what is presented is not a reconstruction, but instead “a simulacrum” that “blurs the distinction [between] the representation and the real” (218–19). It is precisely this “nonobvious anachronism” (220) that is criticised in *Unity*, and that is perceived to undermine the game’s reproduction of the historical city.

It is pertinent to note, however, that, whilst seeking to produce a compelling and verisimilar environment for the player, “an exact re-creation” (Dow 219) of eighteenth-century Paris was not the intention of *Unity*’s design team. Instead, the video game is explicitly presented as being played through memory, calling into question criticisms of its historical accuracy. The game’s design team have repeatedly defined their creation as “a mainstream game, not a history lesson” (“un jeu grand public, pas une leçon d’histoire”) (Du Monteil); as Gambouz stresses, their objective was “not to be 100 percent historically accurate” (qtd. in Webster). Indeed, whilst Dow expresses concerns regarding the digital simulation of past cities, he equally argues that “historical accuracy” is rarely the developers’ primary objective (227). Instead, game designers must weigh “accuracy to the past” with “playability in the present” (Elliott and Kapell 8), not simply reproducing a historical location or era, but ensuring that the player’s experience of it is enjoyable.

This approach is not unique to the *Assassin’s Creed* series¹⁹, yet what is noteworthy is the fact that Ubisoft make this act of remediation explicit. Whilst the game’s main story takes place in eighteenth-century Paris, it runs in parallel with an overarching narrative that spans the franchise, according to which the past is accessible in the present by means of genetic memory. The fictional technology of the Animus enables users to experience the lives of their ancestors through memories retained within their DNA, and this is used by both Assassins and Templars to retrieve information that would otherwise be lost. In playing *Unity*, therefore, the player participates in two concurrent stories: one that re-enacts Arno’s memory of pursuing Grand-Master Germain; and the other in which an unnamed figure plays as Arno in order to ascertain the whereabouts of Germain’s remains in the present-day.

¹⁹ Andrew J. Salvati and Jonathan M. Bullinger, for instance, have examined how video games set in World War II employ what they define as a “*selective authenticity*”, in which “an interactive experience of the past blends historical representation with generic conventions and audience expectations” (154)

Unity thus never claims to present history uncomplicatedly, but makes clear to the gamer that the past they experience is always mediated and reimagined.

Indeed, the fact that the game's narrative is explicitly experienced through reconstituted memories suggests that the Paris of *Assassin's Creed Unity* might itself be better understood as a representation of how the Revolutionary city is remembered than as a precise replica of it. One of *Unity's* designers describes as central to their work "the collective perception that people have of the city" (qtd. in Miller 203), and the past presented to the player is not simply intended to facilitate their enjoyment of it, but to express something about how it continues to be perceived. To subject *Assassin's Creed Unity* to the scrutiny of historical analysis, therefore, is to fail to appreciate it as a work of memory. It is how the Revolution is remembered today that is the guiding thread in *Unity's* design, and the explicit emphasis placed by the game on genetic memory therefore encourages us to approach *Unity* through the prism of memory itself.

It is in the depiction of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents and of the Catacombes that we may observe the dual dynamics of reflection and refraction that characterise the game's approach to the past, and the two sites are approached as being equally plastic and anachronic within the digital landscape as they would be in the material. *Unity's* designers continually sought to capture contemporary perceptions of the Revolutionary capital, and this can be seen in the game's depiction of the Catacombes, the game reflecting popular myths surrounding the ossuary by extending its reach far beyond both its strict spatial and temporal boundaries. Writing about the former quarries of the French capital, Viré notes that the Catacombes have come to represent far more than the actual, relatively limited space of the Ossuaire municipal; instead, "[o]ne immediately imagines a vast labyrinth of tunnels ... stretching under all of Paris" ("On imagine aussitôt, un vaste labyrinthe de galeries ... s'étendant sous tout Paris") ("Anciennes"). This reflects the fact that "the popular imagination has considerably magnified the facts" ("l'imagination populaire a grossi considérablement les faits") ("Anciennes"): the paranoia regarding an encroaching underground has shaped modern perceptions of Paris and its subterranean topography since the eighteenth century, so that beliefs held today in fact remember those formed centuries before.

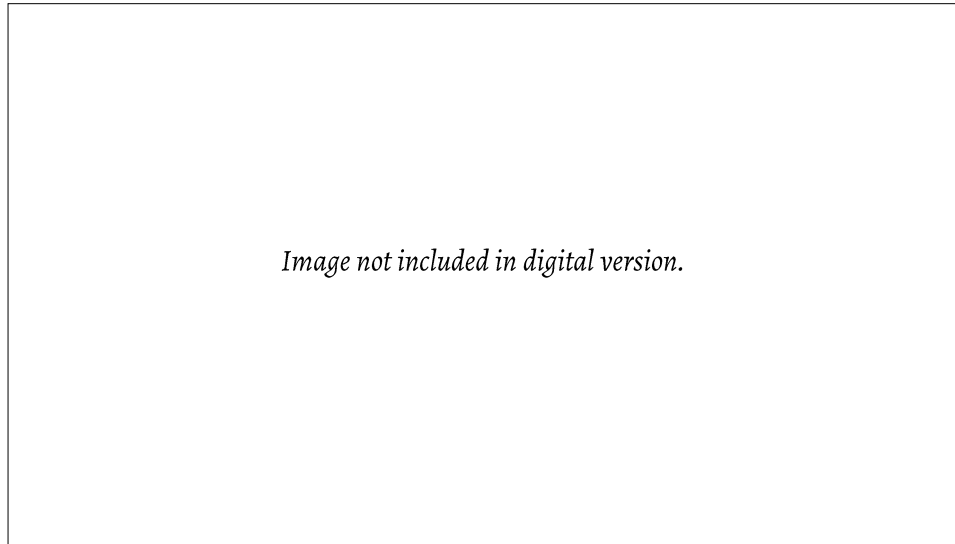


Fig. 1: View of Cimetière des Saints-Innocents from: *Assassin's Creed Unity*,
Ubisoft

What *Assassin's Creed Unity* does is take this memory and give it form within digital space. Whilst the actual location of the Ossuaire Municipal is inaccessible, located outside the playable map's boundaries, bone-lined tunnels are to be found throughout the digital replica of Paris (see fig. 3), and the Catacombes are explicitly depicted as a "vast underground network ... stretched across the city" (M. Miller 223). One mission, for instance, requires Arno to infiltrate a cult through precisely such a network of passages underneath Notre-Dame, and so expanded are these tunnels that the developers released additional content, named *Dead Kings*, whose action takes place in a series of catacombes under Saint-Denis. Whilst certainly an evocative setting for gameplay, the video game's extrapolation of the modern-day Ossuaire Municipal also gives form to the collective mythology that surrounds it. If the memory of the Catacombes is one that has extended its imagined reach beyond the strict spatial and temporal bounds of the nineteenth-century site, then what *Assassin's Creed Unity* does is reflect this within the game's virtual landscape, giving form to how this site continues to be imagined.

Whilst it may reflect how Revolutionary Paris is contemporarily perceived, however, *Unity* also contributes to these perceptions, radically reshaping the landscape of the eighteenth century. This may be observed in the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, which features some of the most extensive reimagining of a site's form within the game, the primary purpose being to facilitate and enliven gameplay. Andrew B. R. Elliott and Matthew Wilhelm Kapell write that "anachronisms and inaccuracies" are often mobilised by designers "to enhance the

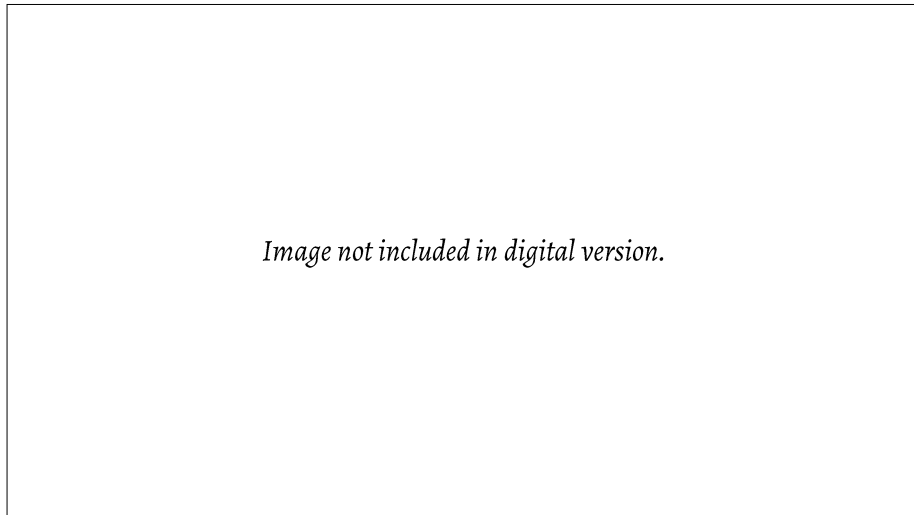


Fig. 2: Bernier, *Vue générale du Cimetière*, BNF

game mechanic” (13), and *Unity*'s production team use these to render their landscape “an active and engaging play space” (M. Miller 204). This resulted in substantial changes to the original layout of the Saints-Innocents (see fig.1) that may be discerned by comparing the game's version of the Cimetière to eighteenth-century drawings by Bernier²⁰ (see fig. 2). It is noteworthy, for instance, that the overall structure of the cemetery has been retained; in both representations, the area is bounded by charnel houses, whose eaves hold the remains of disinterred inhabitants. Nevertheless, differences are as evident as similarities; where Bernier's images show the graveyard to be an open space, in *Unity* a network of walls, gateways and miscellaneous objects, including hay wagons and curtained cabinets, render it cluttered and claustrophobic. Not merely aesthetic, such changes are intended to render the cemetery an interesting space for play; the maze of passageways enable the player to navigate the cemetery unseen, and the cabinets and hay carts serve as hiding places from which the player may assassinate his target. What we observe in *Unity*'s reconstruction of the Saints-Innocents and of the eighteenth-century city more widely, therefore, is the historical landscape made playable, elements of the past selectively retained, omitted or adapted to facilitate the gamer's enjoyment. The sites that it portrays prove fundamentally plastic in

²⁰ Produced for a governmentally commissioned report in 1786, these represent the visual record of the cemetery that is closest in time to the closure of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, and enable us to make comparisons between the original site and its video game counterpart.

nature; the past is preserved, yet what is preserved is radically changed from its original form.

Indeed, the very fact that the Cimetière and Catacombes are included in *Unity's* map both reflects their intimate association with the Revolution, and informs how we remember the eighteenth-century capital. Factually speaking, neither should be present within the city, nor in their particular form, at the time in which we encounter them in the game; the first was demolished three years prior to *Unity's* beginning, and the second was incomplete until the early nineteenth century. Thus, that the Saints-Innocents features in the game's Ventre de Paris district, and that bones line Paris's underground tunnels as they do in the Catacombes, might appear to confirm the art historian Dow's analysis: that the historic city reproduced in video games "purports to be a true representation" but is in fact "a false likeness" (218–19).

Approached as a remembered landscape, however, the cemetery and catacombes of *Unity's* Paris serve to stress how inextricable these two locations are from our conception of the Revolutionary capital. Pike writes that the process of clearing the Saints-Innocents and of storing its contents in the Catacombes is one that has become indissociable from the Revolution itself; "[t]he vivid image of the physical disinterment" of the Cimetière "fittingly reproduced the upheaval of the times" (113). What is more, the indiscriminate storage of its contents would render the Catacombes "an emblem of the demand for and cost of absolute equality" (125), so that both locations were bound up in the wider events that transformed France and its capital during this period. By presenting both the Catacombes and the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents as part of *Unity's* landscape, the video game thus emphasises the fact that we only ever remember by drawing upon diverse moments in time and space; anachronistic within the historical timeframe of the game, they demonstrate the fact that the memory of the Revolution and of the sites themselves is fundamentally anachronic. Within the digital landscape of *Assassin's Creed Unity*, both cemetery and ossuary remain simultaneously resilient and supple sites, and are always defined by their temporal complexity.

Nor does Ubisoft's intervention in how we think of Revolutionary Paris end at the boundaries of the digital Saints-Innocents and Catacombes. By mobilising narrative and gameplay

devices specific to the video game medium itself, the design team demonstrates the potency of remediation in the production of site, inviting the player to participate in the plasticity of the virtual landscape and the anachronism of its memory. *Unity* further complicates how Revolutionary Paris is recollected through its use of what the game defines as ‘anomalies’, which bring the late eighteenth-century city into connection with points in history both before and after its historical setting, and emphasise the fact that no landscape may be understood through the lens of a single moment in time. In the franchise’s backstory, the Assassins have hacked the Templar technology of the Animus, and at various points in the game the player is forced to hide Arno from technicians as they scan for him within the system. This is achieved by jumping into ‘anomalies’, points whereby the player can slip from the simulation of one memory into another. The player thus enters into different moments in Paris’s history and must navigate the landscapes and obstacles found there in order to return to the eighteenth century: in one example, Arno lands in the city under the Nazi occupation, which must be escaped by climbing the Tour Eiffel under fire from German fighter planes.

That this serves to complicate the period in which the main narrative is set is already significant, yet it is also interesting to note that the anomalies themselves are replete with anachronisms. When Arno enters the Belle Époque, for instance, he must climb the Statue of Liberty, which the player’s Assassin guide points out should already have been transported to America. The video game’s use of anomalies therefore exposes the “many historical layers” (Mohamed, qtd. in M. Miller, 224) that its designers perceive to constitute the landscape of Paris: it ensures that “the temporality of the game escapes historical time” (“le temps du jeu échappe au temps historique”) (Martin 30), as the result proves to be too defined by “intermingled temporal fibres (“fibres de temps entremêlées”) to be imagined through the prism of a single period or perspective (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 36). The anomalies deployed in *Assassin’s Creed Unity* thus stress the anachronic nature of space: they emphasise that Revolutionary Paris can never be remembered in isolation, and is always defined by its links to other moments in French history, moments that are themselves no less temporally complex.

What is more, *Unity's* designers open up Revolutionary Paris to the gamer's exploration, and in so doing invite players to produce novel memory narratives for themselves. Martin writes that the act of playing the video game affords us "the almost subversive possibility of 'fabricating' our own history" ("la possibilité quasiment subversive de 'fabriquer' notre histoire") (25), and it is precisely such personal stories that the game's designers facilitate, enabling the player to participate in site's plasticity and anachronism. The parkour system used in the *Assassin's Creed* franchise is the most obvious example of the narrative freedom afforded by the game; whilst a relatively new cultural phenomenon, Anna Washenko writes that Parkour is a common means by which "players traverse and conquer their in-game environments". Thus, if the real-world activity is capable of producing "a parallel, 'ludic' city" in which its practitioners "'remap' urban space" (Geyh), then the same is true of its video game equivalent, which only further reduces the obstacles to movement and negates any physical demand on the part of the user. As a consequence, Turcot writes that, in the hands of the player, Arno is able to exceed the "demarcations of spaces" ("délimitations des espaces") that would have constrained the 18th-century Parisian, and may "reconfigure the city as they please" ("reconfigurer la ville à sa guise") in a way only possible within the digital space of the video game (63). Each journey across eighteenth-century Paris is unique to the gamer in control, and capable of producing a uniquely memorable negotiation of its map, one that shapes how the individual remembers the Revolutionary landscape.

In addition, hundreds of missions are presented to the player alongside the main campaign, and the way in which these are played, recorded and recalled by the in-game progress tracker is constitutive of a singularly plastic and anachronic experience. Within the game, the player is no longer a "spectator, but actor" ("spectateur, mais acteur") (Martin 22); the past presented does not impose a "framework of thinking with its rationality and its context" ("cadre de pensée avec sa rationalité et son contexte"), but instead becomes "the material upon which the player may draw as they wish" ("le matériau dans lequel le joueur peut puiser à sa guise") (25). The side missions available to the player range widely in challenge and

content²¹, and, in playing out these scenarios, the gamer is encouraged to explore both Revolutionary Paris's history and the events that surround it more deeply. Furthermore, they can be played in any order, recalled within a progress tracker, and may then be re-played at will; the complex narrative produced by any particular player is consequently necessarily unique and uniquely anachronic. Rather than limit how we may read the events that constitute it, the video game hence encourages the player to creatively draw out and intertwine its different stories, subverting a fixed, historical narrative with one that is subjective and in constant evolution. By enabling the player to engage Revolutionary Paris in ways that are continuously novel, *Unity* allows the individual to form their own memory of this period and its setting in a way that is fundamentally plastic, engaging with the landscape on offer and producing it anew.

Unity thus presents us with an image of the late eighteenth-century capital that both captures and shapes how this period and its setting are remembered. It gives form to existing myths and legends, transforms the landscape for both narrative and gameplay purposes, and invites the player to participate in the production of its plastic landscape and anachronic memory narratives. In this context, the layout of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents is particularly significant; in addition to the many obstacles above ground, the player may use tunnels below in pursuit of Arno's objectives, and, like those present under Notre-Dame and Basilica of Saint-Denis, these are decorated with bones. What lies beneath the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents is portrayed as another extension of the Catacombes, and the collapse of the two separate locations within the digital space of *Unity*'s Cimetière cannot simply be read as an aesthetic or ludic decision, nor does it represent historical ignorance on the part of the game's designers. Instead, the conflated site assumes a form and symbolism within the digital that would have been impossible within the material: Cemetery and catacomb are brought together within the digital landscape, at a point in the city where historically they never intersected, and at a time when one had been already been demolished and the other not yet built.

²¹ One mission, for instance, consists of a series of murder mysteries, during which Arno investigates the death of Jean-Paul Marat; another requires the player to solve riddles based on particular locations around Paris, and the 'Leo' puzzle leads the player to the Saints-Innocents.

What is produced in *Assassin's Creed Unity* is more than simply a *lieu malgré tout*. Certainly, the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents is remembered within its virtual landscape, and with it the pasts with which it is associated. In so doing, however, the site is also radically altered, assuming a form in the imagined that exceeds that which is possible exclusively within the material. The remediation of site is consequently productive of the *lieu malgré soi*, a location that, through the sum of its reimaginings, has become more in memory than what it is in materiality. Indeed, Erll similarly writes that cultural media may create “worlds that a memory community would not know without them” (*Memory* 116), and the video game offers a unique medium through which to examine this. Laurie Taylor argues that:

video game spaces are more than simply the sum of their code – they are experiential spaces generated through code and the player's interaction with the execution of that code through the medium of the screen.

Sheila C. Murphy similarly contends that the console or computer is productive of “interactive, three-dimensional worlds” (234) in which the “virtual space of the game” becomes “an embodied space” that complicates the player's experience of the real (236).

In this way, the video game obliges us to rethink how we understand space, as well as the present past within it. *Assassin's Creed Unity* remains rooted in the material physiognomy of Paris upon which its map was based, echoing its form and emulating its physicality to afford its players an authentic and visceral experience. Nevertheless, in reimagining historical sites and enabling the player to traverse them in ways infeasible within the real world, the video game also exceeds the materiality of this landscape, enabling us to perceive it from new angles and to imagine it differently. Within this digital landscape, therefore, the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents represents both a *lieu malgré tout* and a *lieu malgré soi*: it is a site that both maintains a presence within the imagined, and that is continually produced anew, so that it remains a fundamentally plastic site within Ubisoft's creation.

Conclusion

It is no longer possible to visit the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents as it was in eighteenth-century Paris: its contents have long since been exhumed, its architecture demolished, and the once saturated ground paved over. Neither, however, can we confidently claim, as so many did then, that the site of the cemetery is no more. As our study has shown, the site and its past survives as a *lieu malgré tout*: it is locatable in the Catacombes that, intended to dispose of this memory, would in fact become its inheritor in both form and function; it remains with us through the writings of Mercier, which captured its aspect and life prior to demolition; and it continues to shape our perception of Paris through the work of Zola and the unsettling exuberance that he accords the cemetery's memory. It is ultimately the remediation of the Saints-Innocents that enables its persistence and continued evolution; in the video game *Assassin's Creed Unity*, the site is presented a *lieu malgré soi*, one that retains its plasticity within the imagined landscape, and that is creatively remembered in the imagined space of the video game.

In the study of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, the seemingly fundamental and antonymical states of presence and absence break down. A site that was razed over two hundred years ago nevertheless retains a prominent and evocative place within Paris's landscape, and continues to influence how the city is perceived and lived to this day. Indeed, Ewa Domanska argues that the categories of presence and absence are insufficient to describe how we comprehend and experience our material surroundings: she argues instead that we must account for a "non-absent past (the past whose absence is manifest)" to describe "a past that is somehow still present, that will not go away or, rather, that of which we cannot rid ourselves" (346). I believe that the way in which a site endures and evolves, even when it appears to be no more, might be illuminated using the model of the phantom limb, and that the neuroplastic processes that cause this phenomenon might be used to conceive of presence and absence differently. Phantom limb describes the visceral sensation felt by individuals who have lost a body part yet feel that it remains fully attached. It is a commonly cited metaphor both in memory studies (M. Silverman, *Palimpsestic* 152; Hubbell, "Amputated" 248) and in geography (Billé 2), and is used to describe how that which is deemed to be no more appears nevertheless to haunt the imagination and spaces of the now.

Within neuroscience, however, the phantom limb has been demonstrated to reside not “in the dark recesses of the disturbed or repressed mind, but rather in the pink, convoluted folds of the cerebral cortex” (Crawford 441). It occurs as the brain’s plasticity causes the cortical space previously linked to the now amputated limb to be reappropriated by other parts of the body; as the brain’s mapping shifts and develops, its transformation is felt where that body part once was²². It is this “neuroscientific, and indeed plastic, explanation of phantom limb syndrome” that might be used to conceive of presence and absence differently in site: it points to a resilient and dynamic presence that remains rooted in the body’s materiality, even as it exceeds it. On the one hand, the amputated limb is lost, so that as a physical appendage it is irrefutably no more; on the other, it retains its place within the structure of the brain, and as a consequence remains materially present, if not in its original form. What is more, Cassandra Crawford writes that phantom body parts “exist tenaciously and sometimes audaciously”, perceived by the amputee as “penetrating solids, objects and even the very viscera of others” (435). The lost limb is consequently capable of behaving in ways that would be impossible for its material counterpart: “phantoms have become more real than real, more substantive than the intact limbs they have at times mimicked” (444).

Crawford asserts that there exist “wider, more philosophical ramifications of studying Phantom Limb syndrome” (443); I believe that sited memory represents a context in which these might be explored. At the heart of our understanding of the phantom limb is the fact that “seemingly absent ‘raw materiality’” may regardless retain “a distinct and significant presence that is imbued with social substance and material integrity” (437). The presence maintained by the phantom limb is one that both remains rooted in materiality, and that goes beyond this materiality; it both survives and evolves, and in evolving assumes forms that were previously inconceivable. The phantom limb thus confounds the categories of presence and absence, and it is these dynamics that we have identified in the site of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents. It is a site that remained both physically and culturally present even as its historic form was obliterated, and that has acquired a dynamism and

²² Crawford summarises this phenomenon: “[c]ortical areas usually linked to one body part (i.e. the homuncular hand) did not become dormant on losing their connection to that body part, but instead were appropriated and colonised by neighbouring areas, often ones that were linked to seemingly unrelated body parts (such as, in this case, the face).” (442)

potency in memory, so that it represents a fundamentally plastic site long after its supposed suppression.

Marseille: Memory in the imagined landscape

Introduction

The question of how to best illustrate the workings of memory was one that vexed Sigmund Freud. Seeking to tackle the “problem of preservation in the sphere of the mind”, and to account for the fact that “[i]n mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish”, Freud proposes that we “try to grasp what this assumption involves by taking an analogy from another field” (*Civilization* 16). His parallel of choice is that of the urban landscape, suggesting that we “by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychological entity” (17). Were the city endowed with the same memorial capacities as the mind, he contends, those edifices long since demolished would occupy the same space as their successors, each stage in their history would be perceptible simultaneously, and it would require only the slightest shift in perspective to distinguish between them¹ (17). Ultimately, however, Freud dismisses such a metaphor as “unimaginable and even absurd”: he argues the strictures of material space mean that the city is “a priori unsuited for a comparison of this sort”, for, unlike the mind, “the same space cannot have two different contents” (17–18).

Benjamin’s conclusion is the opposite of Freud’s: similarly writing of the city and its past, the author contends that such temporal co-existence is precisely what defines it. In his *Arcades Project*, he quotes the Swiss writer Ferdinand Lion to argue that, as we “step from an eighteenth-century house into one from the sixteenth century, we tumble down the space of time”; passing into the neighbouring “Gothic church ... we sink to new depths”, so that “the most heterogeneous temporal elements thus coexist in the city” (qtd. in Benjamin, *Arcades* 435). For Benjamin, then, the experience of the city’s past is identical to that of the mind: to walk its streets is to be “caught up as in a web of dreams, where the most remote past is linked

¹ Freud writes that “[i]n the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand – without the Palazzo having to be removed – the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus”; the Temple would reveal in its composition not just “its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it” but also “its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms”; and it would require the onlooker only to “change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other” (*Civilization* 17).

to the events of today” (Lion, qtd. in Benjamin, *Arcades* 435) and “far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment” (Benjamin, *Arcades* 418–19). If Freud asserts that space’s constraints mean that it is of little help in understanding memory, therefore, then Benjamin suggests that it is the nature of memory that proves critical in comprehending space. When sites are experienced as dynamic, heterogeneous and always defined by the present past, then how we remember might tell us a great deal about site itself.

Marseille is a city whose Ancient Greek foundations mean that it can trace its roots almost as far back as Rome. What defines the landscape, however, is that few traces of this long and complex past remain. A port first and foremost, Marseille is defined by the continual movement of goods and people: since the nineteenth century, the emphasis of its urban planners has consequently been upon its modern character and its place within an ever-globalising world. The resulting near constant renovation means that few markers of even the more recent past remain, let alone those of the ancient, and Marseille’s reputation is therefore that of “a city without monuments” (Crane 13). This does not mean, however, that Marseille is without memory. Whilst many have passed through the Provençal capital on their journeys elsewhere, many have also settled in its streets and suburbs: it is home to a large migrant community, manifold in origin and memory. The pasts borne by these communities have inspired a vibrant cultural production; such works have exposed histories un-commemorated, connected stories from across the globe, and re-imagined Marseille as a landscape defined by diverse times and spaces. Roncayolo therefore concludes that “without a doubt, Marseille is richer in images and representations than architectural gestures” (Roncayolo, qtd. in Crane 13): it is a metropolis whose imaginary discloses a greater heterogeneity and vitality of memory than may be discerned in its buildings and monuments.

In this chapter, I will build on the earlier work of my thesis to reiterate that the landscape in which we live consists of more than its material form: how we imagine its places has consequences for how we inhabit, use and transform them. More specifically, however, I will explore how cultural media both reflect and produce an experience of space in which we often perceive both multiple temporalities and diverse spatialities at work within the here and now. The imagined site that co-exists with and is inextricable from the material is thus

defined, not solely by heterogeneous pasts, but also by intertwined and overlapping places. Consequently, the aim of this chapter is to further demonstrate how the study of cultural memory may open up our understanding of a site's plasticity, and how it impacts upon our perception of the material space itself. I will explore how approaching Marseille first as an imagined landscape might inform our understanding of its landmarks, and will demonstrate how the study of cultural memory opens up a site's temporality and spatiality in a way that exceeds the limits of its concrete form.

The Provençal capital offers a productive case study through which to examine the landscape as imagined. Fundamentally oriented around its waterfront, Marseille is defined more by transience than by permanence, so that it is firmly within the collective imaginary, rather than in its physical form, that the city's past resides. First and foremost places of transit, ports have historically been perceived as characterised by an absence of memory. If Jein writes that "movement has defined cities" (1), then it is in port cities in particular that this emphasis on traffic and flow achieves its zenith: as Sheila Crane writes, "nowhere are these dynamics more potent", for such landscapes "are overtly built on networks of movement and exchange" (7). Indeed, if "airports and railway stations" are deemed archetypal *non-lieux* by Augé (79), then so too is a port, a location that is rarely intended as "a destination in its own right", but rather a point of passage for all that which is "destined elsewhere" (Crane 7).

This is certainly true of Marseille: first established in circa 600 BC by Greeks from Asia Minor (Témime, *Histoire* 7), Marseille is certainly notable for retaining relatively few traces of this history. Compared to nearby towns such as Arles and Nîmes, for instance, its landscape is devoid of prominent classical architecture (Crane 12), and interest in that which does remain only took hold during the 1940s (237). The traditional perception of Marseille, write Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch, has therefore been that of a "transit-city, stop-off-city" ("ville-transit, ville-étape") (157); indeed, Albert Londres wrote in 1927 that whereas "[o]ne goes to Lyon, to Nice" ("On va à Lyon, à Nice"), "[o]ne 'passes' through Marseille" ("On 'passe' à Marseille") (90). This has resulted in the "enduring idea that Marseille lacked architectural traces adequate to its long history" (Crane 12). Indeed, such an image was celebrated, with Blaise Cendrars writing that in 1945 it is "the only one of the ancient capitals that does not crush us with monuments of its past ("la seule des capitales antiques qui ne nous écrase pas

avec les monuments de son passé”) (58). As a consequence, Marseille has been both perceived and presented as a city “definitively oriented to the future rather than shackled to the past” (Crane 181); a place of flow rather than fixity, with no place for remembering.

To suggest that Marseille is a landscape devoid of memory, however, is to ignore the recollections of the city’s inhabitants, which point to a far more complex memorial landscape. Indeed, ports in general represent the focus of a growing body of research as their interest to memory studies is acknowledged. The fact that “dock labourers and itinerant seafarers had to live near the wharves”, for instance, has been recognised as productive of a community and landscape that was not devoid of memory, but defined instead by its “complicated mix of stability and upheaval” (Balderstone et al. 480). What is more, the heritage value of historic docklands has more recently been identified, their renovation resulting in what David Atkinson calls a “maritime-kitsch” (521), and Veronica Della Dora notes that such “nostalgic revivals are spreading across the globe, from Istanbul to St Petersburg, from Saigon to Shanghai” (207).

The result is that the place of memory within the port-city is attracting mounting interest² (Atkinson; Della Dora; Julien; Balderstone et al.), and Marseille is no exception. The city’s Greek founders bequeathed the city a legacy of migration: Sophie Biass and Jean-Louis Fabiani write that Marseille is a city defined by “generations of immigrants, first Italians and Corsicans, then Greeks and Armenians, and more recently, Arabs, Africans and Comorians” (84). Each of these communities has brought its own culture and history and made its mark upon the city; over centuries of co-existence, conflict and cooperation, these have transformed Marseille into “a mosaic” (“une mosaïque”), not just of districts, cultures and languages, but also of memories (Blanchard and Boëtsch 81). Whilst the city itself may have changed dramatically, therefore, we cannot ignore “the essential role played by men and women who have come from the most diverse horizons in the formation and the development of the port” (“le rôle essentiel joué par les hommes et les femmes venus des

² Balderstone et al., for instance, have examined how the interests of seafront communities and urban developers have clashed in Liverpool; Atkinson, by contrast, has examined how memory has been mobilised to make newly renovated docklands in Hull more liveable for inhabitants; whilst authors such as Olsen Jean Julien and Dora have explored how the legacy of the colonial continues to shape port cities following independence.

horizons les plus divers dans la formation et dans le développement du port” (Témime, “Carrefour” 8). It is these communities who accord Marseille the multifaceted and continually evolving past often deemed (visually) missing from its streets and buildings.

It is therefore with Marseille’s diverse population that its memory lies, and their recollections have been captured and explored within a cultural imaginary that exposes a more complex past than the city’s concrete and stone. What unites many of these communities is the legacy of a violent past: the most significant waves of migrants to arrive in Marseille did so as a result of oppression or trauma experienced in their homelands³, and for a great many this was directly precipitated by French colonialism. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Marseille operated as “a critical fulcrum between the metropolitan center and its expanding overseas empire” (Crane 7), Marseillais authorities, businesses and workers both supporters and beneficiaries of the imperial project.⁴ This would also mean, however, that in the violence of decolonisation, Marseille would be the city most marked: less a “ville-refuge” (Témime, “Carrefour” 11), the metropolis became “the natural purgatory of exiles come from afar” (“le purgatoire naturel des exclus venus du lointain”) (Blanchard and Boëtsch 15), as those dislocated by French wars made their way to the empire’s heart. The result, Témime writes, is that “colonial conflicts have had an infinitely greater and more immediate repercussion here than in the rest of the Hexagon” (“conflits coloniaux ont ici une répercussion infiniment plus importante et immédiate que dans le reste de l’Hexagone”) (Témime, “Carrefour” 11). From those fleeing the First Indochina War during the 1950s (Témime, *Histoire* 191), to the additional 100,000 Pieds-Noirs and Algerians that the city was forced to rehome during the 1960s (193), the memories that each community retains render Marseille, like the two cities already examined in this thesis, “a space where the colonial fracture ... is still at work” (Blanchard and Boëtsch 17).

³ Émile Témime writes, for instance, that the influx of the inter-war period would be made of Russians fleeing the Revolution and the Civil War, Greeks forced to leave Asia Minor, and in particular Armenians in the wake of the Massacres of 1915 (*Histoire* 148).

⁴ It was in Marseille in 1906 that the France’s first Exposition Coloniale was held, for instance (Témime, “Carrefour” 10), and for as long as France retained its empire, the metropolis was “well and truly the colonial city of passage” (“bel et bien la ville du passage colonial”), for imports and exports, for tourists and for troops (Ruscio and Hovanessian 110).

Marseille is consequently a city defined by violence, often committed elsewhere yet nevertheless implicating the metropolis. A “[c]omplex city, contradictory city” (“Ville compliquée, ville contradictoire”) (Témime, “Carrefour” 11), it is through a rich cultural imaginary that these memories have been exposed and reimagined. To study these works, I will adopt Rothberg’s approach to memory, which he defines as “*multidirectional*” (*Multidirectional* 3). Seeking to examine the way in which different experiences of trauma are articulated within the same public sphere, Rothberg argues that we should analyse, not how these compete for recognition, but instead how their dialogue may prove productive of memory narratives that transcend history and geography. Doing so, the author contends, enables us to recognise that “‘knotted’ in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialisation” (“Introduction” 7). The result are sites defined, not solely by anachronism, but by what Rothberg terms “anatotism”, as the spaces as well as times associated with particular memories prove equally interwoven within the here and now (“Decolonizing” 225).

Remediated in cultural works, the site becomes more than the sum of its material dimensions, for within it may be perceived any number of locations and events. The effect that this has upon its inhabitants can prove deeply unsettling, the present space defamiliarised as slippages occur between the here and there, the then and now. The experience prompted may thus be profoundly “uncanny” (Vidler ix), yet to study this imaginary is also to recognise that it is inevitable. We must therefore approach such media as intervening productively in the plastic site’s unfolding: exposed and reimagined as simultaneously anachronic and anatomic in nature, it is unbounded from its physical limits, rendered “open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming” (Massey, *For Space* 59). What is more, the remediation of a site does not leave its physical dimensions untouched. Rothberg argues that “the imagination involved in acts of remembrance should not lead to assumptions of memory’s insubstantiality”, and instead asserts that “remembrance and imagination are material forces as well as fundamentally human ones” (*Multidirectional* 19).

When Donald writes that “the traffic between urban fabric, representation and imagination” serves to blur “epistemological and ontological distinctions” (10), then the same may be said

of sited memory. How we think about space shapes how we live within and rebuild it to such an extent that it proves ultimately impossible to determine precisely where the physical ends and the imagined begins; “ways of seeing and understanding the city inevitably inform ways of acting on the space of the city” that in turn produce “a modified city which is again seen, understood and acted on” (27). Cultural production and memory are thus directly implicated in site’s plasticity: as Çinar and Bender write, “the city is located and continually reproduced through ... acts of imagination, acts grounded in material space and social practice” (xii). They represent not solely a prism by means of which to examine its anachronism and anachronism, but a force that guides and sculpts its morphology within both the material and the imagined landscape.

It is through this cultural imagination that I will explore Marseille as a city space in this chapter, before examining how this might inform our reading of its sites. In literature, artwork and music, diverse producers have explored the pasts that persist in the Provençal capital’s landscape, revealing both the traumatic pasts remembered by its migrant communities and their inextricable connections to the city. Many of these recommend themselves for study⁵; nevertheless, I have elected to focus on Attia’s *Pointe Rouge* and Claudel’s *La Petite fille de Monsieur Linh*. Central to these two novels are not simply the connections between different memories of violence, but also the way in which trauma undergone elsewhere continues to shape their experience of their new surroundings. Attia and Claudel’s narratives are consequently defined by the uncanny: diverse sites and events are remembered in a way that disrupts the integrity of the present landscape of Marseille, and reveals it to be situated at the heart of a network of violent pasts. I will illustrate how approaching the sites of contemporary Marseille with an awareness of this broader cultural memory causes us to discern a more complex past within them. I will take the Fort Saint-Jean as my example: a former military installation turned heritage institution, I will seek to

⁵ Novels such as Claude McKay’s *Banjo*, Ousmane Sembène’s *Le Docker noir* and J. M. G. Le Clézio’s *Désert* all examine the way in which migrant communities live within Marseille, how they are received and how they continue to be shaped by their previous experiences of conflict or racial violence. Artist Sedira’s *Sands of Time* 2015 exhibition explored the modern-day economy of sugar production, its roots in transatlantic slavery, and the role of Marseille in these two trades. Giles Suzanne has studied the way in which rap music has been used to foster collective memory in the city’s suburbs.

expose the violent pasts in which this site is implicated, connections not foregrounded in its material renovation, but discernible after studying such works as Attia's and Claudel's.

The chapter will begin by briefly setting out Rothberg's approach to cultural memory as multidirectional, its uncanny effect on our experience of space, and the way in which this may unbound sites from their material limits. I will then turn to Attia's *Pointe Rouge* to demonstrate the role of cultural media in exposing and connecting memories, and the spatio-temporal slippages that occur in this process. A crime novel set in 1960s Marseille, the work's fictional investigation into a spate of murders in fact serves as a vehicle for the author's disclosure of the many violent pasts remembered by the city's inhabitants, drawing connections between histories as diverse as the Algerian War and the Armenian Genocide. The sites of the novel become key loci for Attia's investigations, through which he questions the extent of French complicity in the horrors described. More significant, however, is the way in which his characters cannot recall the trauma of the past without also experiencing something of the places in which it took place. The present environment is destabilised and defamiliarized as other times and spaces, believed to have been forgotten or suppressed, are instead recollected within it. Attia's characters themselves become an uncanny presence in the Provençal capital, through whom its present and the pasts that belie it may be re-examined in a new and questioning light.

Following this, I will study Claudel's *La Petite fille de Monsieur Linh* to illustrate the way in which multidirectional memory may facilitate the processing of trauma, and how it productively redefines the landscape. In the pages of Claudel's novel, the elderly Vietnamese refugee Monsieur Linh finds himself dislocated in space and time, forced to flee the conflict of his homeland. Cast adrift in a Marseille that is entirely alien to him, he is always gripped by the trauma of his past. Nevertheless, the character begins to process the violence he has witnessed through his newfound friendship with the Frenchman Monsieur Bark. A veteran of the French Indochina War, this character nevertheless aids Monsieur Linh in feeling at home, the two transcending barriers of language and individual experience and illustrating the potential of multidirectional memory for reconciliation. Throughout this process, the doll that Monsieur Linh carries with him maintains a powerful symbolism as what Olivier defines as an "memory-object" ("objet-mémoire") (*Sombre* 198): believed by the refugee to be

his dead granddaughter Sang Dâu, it embodies his deeply embedded trauma, yet also connects him to his home and attains new meaning through his friendship with Monsieur Bark. Claudel ultimately suggests that Marseille's spaces may be subject to and facilitate similar recollection and reproduction, the novel serving to open up the city's imaginary beyond the limits of its physical dimensions.

The final section of the chapter will demonstrate how an awareness of the city's cultural imagination may guide our interrogation of its landmarks, the study of multidirectional memory disclosing unanticipated pasts and connections in a way that produces the site itself anew. To do so, I will take as my case study the Fort Saint-Jean, a military installation on the port-city's waterfront and one of its oldest landmarks. Deemed a symbol of Marseille's past, this has been incorporated into the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée and renovated to cohere with its narrative of a trans-Mediterranean heritage. Approaching this site with an awareness of the violent memories constellated with Marseille's broader imaginary, however, exposes a more nuanced site at odds with the desired cosmopolitan image. Implicated in oppression at home and abroad, the memories brought to light by the works studied in this chapter lead us to draw connections across time and space that, factual or fictional, might nevertheless shape how we remember the fort itself. The chapter's conclusion will therefore suggest that the study of sited memory is itself implicated in its production, the work of the researcher serving both to extract pasts previously undisclosed within a location, and to interweave it with new ones.

Multidirectional memory, anatopism and the uncanny

It is through the work of Rothberg on multidirectional memory that we will illustrate cultural memory's critical insights into the nature and constitution of sites. Rothberg's work responds to a simple question: "[w]hat happens when different histories confront each other in the public sphere?" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 2). Tackling what he deems to be one of the most vexed questions in memory research, Rothberg examines the way in which memories of oppression and violence have been brought into contact across space and time in an increasingly globalised world. Rothberg notes a tendency to perceive remembering as

“competitive”: he writes that “the public sphere in which collective memories are articulated” is often considered “a scarce resource”, so that the articulation of individual pasts within this realm is deemed “a zero-sum struggle for pre-eminence” (3). In contrast, Rothberg argues that this might instead give rise to “negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing” between different traumatic pasts (3): such a dialogue, he writes, exposes the “‘knotted intersections’ of history and memory that cut across categories of national and ethnic identity” (8), and is productive of “new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice” (5). *Multidirectional* memory thus enables us to better recognise and give voice to interconnected experiences of past suffering, uniting rather than dividing, and always exceeding boundaries of space, time and individual experience.

Such an interest in how different pasts transect and discourse is not isolated to Rothberg’s writings. Instead, his work forms part a wider shift within memory studies towards what Assmann terms the “transnational” (546). This is positioned explicitly as a shift away from what Erll terms “national memory studies”⁶ (“Travelling” 6): the author defines this as the approach espoused by writers such as Nora, which she argues has tended to collapse “memory, ethnicity, territory, and the nation-state together” so that remembering is believed to coincide precisely “with the contours of regions, kingdoms and nation-states” (7). In contrast, Erll argues that memory is “not bound to the frame of a place, a region, a social group”, but instead as “continually moving across and beyond such territorial and social borders” (10). What results is a memory culture that is “characterised by streams of migration and dispersed and displaced populations” (Assmann 547), and M. Silverman argues that this has facilitated a dialogue between violent pasts that have previously been treated as distinct. Where “Holocaust Studies and Postcolonial Studies have tended, on the whole, to go their separate ways” (“Interconnected” 418), for instance, the study of the transnational instead exposes the way in which their recollection proves “overlapping, intertwined and inextricable” (*Palimpsestic* 16).

What distinguishes Rothberg’s approach, however, is the fact that he perceives multidirectionality to bring not only multiple times into connection, but also multiple

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spaces. It is not solely an event or an experience that is remembered, he contends, but additionally the location in which it occurred or with which it is associated, and the resulting memory connection is therefore as spatially complex as it is temporal, demonstrating what the author defines as an atopism. To illustrate this, Rothberg uses the example of Schwartz-Bart's *La Mulâtresse Solitude*. Quoting the novel's epilogue, he describes a scene in which the memory of Caribbean slavery and that of the Warsaw ghetto are evoked simultaneously amongst the ruins of a Guadeloupean plantation⁷; the site is consequently reimagined as one in which both the times and the places of the Nazi genocide intersect with those of the transatlantic slave trade.

Schwartz-Bart's novel is thus exemplary of what Rothberg describes as "anachronistic and anatomic (dis)placements" that characterise multidirectional memory ("Decolonizing" 225): if an anachronism is commonly deemed to be the presence of one temporality within another, then an atopism represents a concordant "spatial misplacement", in which one location becomes overlaid and intertwined within another⁸ (Rothberg, "Decolonizing" 225). This means that, in "the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance" (*Multidirectional* 11), the spatiality of a site itself is not left unaffected: the bringing together of different memories facilitates not just the crossing of geographical boundaries, but also the collapse of the there within the here. What Rothberg asserts is that *multidirectional* memory is inconceivable without accounting for atopism as much as anachronism. If "remembrance cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites" (*Multidirectional* 11), then atopism accounts for the way in which remembering serves to interweave spaces as much as times.

Such spatio-temporal interconnection and overlapping often proves deeply destabilising; indeed, if the uncanny describes the unsettling recollection of one or more locations within

⁷ He describes a scene in which a European tourist is guided through this site by the figure of a Black slave. The author's account describes the memory of the colonial site and the Black slaves who worked it as arising before the eyes of the visitor, writing that "his imagination will people the environing space, and human figures will rise up around him"; yet he also describes this in terms of the Warsaw ghetto and its Jewish victims, which are also "said to rise up before the eyes of other travellers" (qtd. in Rothberg, "Decolonizing" 224–225).

⁸ Rothberg is not the only author to use this term: Brian J. Williams similarly employs it to identify an entity that seems "spatially out of place", and thus "as foreign to their location as anachronisms are foreign to their times" (360).

another, then this is certainly the experience prompted by anatopism. Jo Collins and John Jervis define the uncanny as “an experience of disorientation, where the world in which we live suddenly seems strange, alienating or threatening” (1), and Trigg deems this to be fundamentally rooted in the memory of place. He argues that “[e]ach of us is held captive by a series of memories, which in their intensity and depth return us to a specific place and time”, so that the uncanny describes how “the places we inhabit and pass through come back to us in the present”, at times providing “a sense of familiarity in the midst of uncertainty”, but at others “disturbing the course of everyday existence” (xv). The uncanny is thus that which causes the rememberer to feel as if they are both out of place and out of time: as Anthony Vidler writes, it denotes “the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners, suddenly to become defamiliarized, derealized, as if in a dream” (7). The result is a disturbing blurring of past and present, of the spaces in which we once resided and those in which we now find ourselves.

Nevertheless, the defamiliarization prompted by the uncanny might also be mobilised and engaged productively. The study of space as imagined, and of memory as *multidirectional*, leads us to approach the site as a nexus of both anachronism and of anatopism, connecting not just the now and the then, but the here and the there. Such a conclusion is also reached by Massey in her theorisation of space: like Didi-Huberman, Olivier, and Rothberg, Massey writes that in our sites and landscapes may be observed “a multitude of histories whose resonances are still there” (Massey, *For Space* 118), bringing “distinct temporalities into new configurations” and facilitating a dialogue between “potentially dissonant (or concordant) narratives” of time (71). Nevertheless, whereas “the challenges and delights of temporality” (13) have been thoroughly explored, she argues that space has not been deemed “equally lively and equally challenging” (14). In contrast, Massey asserts that space too is “the product of interrelations, as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny”; a single location is defined by its connection to a multitude of others, and that ensure that it cannot be thought of in isolation (9). Massey’s theorisation has inevitable implications for our understanding of sited memory; if space represents “a simultaneity of stories-so-far”, narratives not just of what has happened but where it occurred, then these memories in fact represent “trajectories” both spatial and temporal in nature, and whose

bringing together in a single site constellates both events and places (130). Sited memory cannot be conceived of as anachronic without accounting for its anachronism too.

What is more, the spatial interconnections produced in a site's remediation mean that the space that we imagine is expanded beyond the limits of its material form. That one location may recall another or multiple others means that a site as it is imagined exists across diverse spatial frameworks, is situated within and moves between different and changing memorial topographies, and is unrestricted by the confines of concrete space. Massey writes that we retain an "imagination of space as already divided-up, of places which are already separated and bounded" (*For Space* 64), and Atkinson similarly argues that, in spite of the move towards the transnational, there still exists "a tendency for accounts of memory to focus on fixed, bounded sites" (522). Nevertheless, he suggests that, if we shift our attention to appreciate a wider memory production, we can recognise the spaces in which it occurs as far less rigidly defined: within such an understanding, remembering represents "a fluid, shifting phenomenon that is constantly reconfiguring all kinds of different places at numerous scales", rendering memory "discontinuous in some, overlapping in others, but never bounded exclusively within particular sites" (523). Massey concludes that "if time is to be open then space must be open too" (59): imagined as existing within multiple topographies, shifting continually within them, and always produced anew, the site as it is culturally remembered is unbound from its physical form and geographical location.

What we observe is that the site as imagined exceeds its material dimensions, and this points to the critical role played by the imagination and cultural media in a site's plasticity. Indeed, space as it is imagined is deemed by Roncayolo to be possessed of the same dynamics as the material with which it is intertwined; both are possessed "of inertia, of strong resistance" ("un constat d'inertie, de forte résistance"), yet also exist "ceaselessly in movement and modification" ("sans cesse en mouvement et en modification") (*Abécédaire* 148). Evident, therefore, in Roncayolo's writing is an understanding of the city as plastic: if the metropolis exists as much in "the mind of its inhabitants" ("l'esprit de ses habitants") as in "the tissue of the city" ("le tissu de la ville") itself (*Imaginaire* 38), then the imagined must be understood as

implicated in the plasticity of sites⁹. In our examination of sited memory, therefore, we can ignore neither its material form nor its cultural remediation: the two are co-constitutive of the site as a simultaneously anachronic and anatomic space.

Exposing the uncanny: Attia's *Pointe Rouge*

Attia's crime novel *Pointe Rouge* is a work concerned first and foremost with the memories that belie Marseille's landscape and society, their interconnection and dialogue, and the mingling of heterogenous spaces and times to which these give rise. The second in a trilogy of crime novels¹⁰, and set in the late 1960s, the work follows the detective Paco and his partner Khoupiguian as they investigate a series of murders within the port-city. The crimes committed point to a growing conflict between left-wing groups, emboldened in the lead-up to the events of May 68, and the SAC (Service d'Action Civique), a Gaullist militia established to suppress such activities; in exposing these machinations, however, Attia makes clear that it is the different remembering communities residing in Marseille in which he is most interested. The author mobilises the detective genre to expose French complicity in oppression and suffering both at home and abroad; what is more, he explores the way in which the violent past continues to shape the present, the city's spaces prompting the memory of sites of trauma to resurge disruptively within the here and now. What Attia describes is the uncanny at work, a sense of "being in place and being out of place *simultaneously*" (Gelder and Jacobs 171) that disturbs both the characters described and the landscape that they occupy. Diverse in time, location and details, pasts nevertheless prove to

⁹ Indeed, Malabou suggests that the inextricability of the physical brain and the consciousness it produces means that the role of the imagination in our brain's plasticity cannot be ignored. If the "mind is no longer separable from the flesh it animates" ("Foreword" 14), then how we think shapes our cerebral structure and vice versa; the result is a "perfect continuity between the neuronal and the mental" ("une parfaite continuité entre le neuronal et le mental") (*Que faire* 136).

¹⁰ *Pointe Rouge* is the second in Attia's trilogy, which follows Paco as its central protagonist. The first novel, *Alger La Noire*, depicts the violence in Algiers during the final years of the French colonial regime, and the third, *Paris Blues* examines the aftermath of May '68 in the French capital.

be entangled in the space of the city, and Attia opens this up to reveal Marseille's place within a broader topography of violence.

The task that its author undertakes is that of uncovering the many such memories that underpin Marseille's landscape and implicate it in historic atrocities, and the fact that *Pointe Rouge* is a detective novel is important in this regard. Belonging firmly within the *roman noir* tradition in its setting, political engagement and style of narrative¹¹, Attia's choice of Marseille as a backdrop is itself significant, for the Provençal capital's long associations with criminality have rendered it a particularly redolent location in French crime fiction. Edmund J. Smyth has described the city as "a kind of 'Chicago-sur-Méditerranée'" (111), and Alain Guillemin writes that "the Marseillais underworld has been one of the symbolic sites of the French underworld since the 1930s" ("la pègre marseillaise a été depuis les années 30 un des lieux emblématiques de la pègre française") (47), giving rise to a discernible sub-genre that he terms "le polar marseillais" (46). What is more, the interest of French crime fiction writers in memory is well documented, the devices of the genre used to uncover the presence of hidden pasts. Claire Gorrara argues that the "investigative structure of crime fiction" (10), in which the detective seeks to "track traces of the past ... in the present and thereby to locate the source of disorder" (13–14), has often been used to make "a polemical cultural intervention in memory debates" (10); and Sophie Watt too notes the "close links between the mechanisms of the travail de mémoire and those of detective stories" (31). Thus, if Paco describes his case notes as "a crime novel whose complexity would give you a migraine" ("un roman poicier d'une complexité à donner la migraine") (Attia, *Pointe* 361), then the same is true of the work in which his narrative is written. Self-conscious of its own genre, Attia's *Pointe Rouge* mobilises the detective method to expose and examine the web of memories that belie the city, connect within it, and that situate it within a wider topography of violence.

The investigations carried out within the novel are in fact diverse, and both expose and add to the complexity of the memory connections that the author perceives in Marseille. The main narrative begins in an inconsequential manner, establishing the circumstances behind

¹¹ Set in a city in a state of dysfunctionality and violence, the work sets out a critique of the society and politics that have produced these conditions, and follows a detective plunged into the intrigue of the narrative, rather than objectively removed from it (Gorrara 314).

a murder in a university accommodation block (Attia, *Pointe* 32); nevertheless, it becomes quickly apparent that this represents more of a catalyst for the novel's wider memory concerns. If David Platten argues that what takes place in the crime novel is therefore "a double narrative", in which the story behind the crime and story of its investigation unfold in tandem (13), then Attia's narrative proves to be multiform, interweaving fictional accounts with factual histories. Indeed, the most noteworthy investigations of *Pointe Rouge* are not in fact carried out by the novel's police officers. The Armenian locksmith Agopian is described as fighting "to ensure the recognition of the genocide" ("pour qu'on reconnaisse le génocide") that his people suffered, collecting together "hundreds of photographs, articles and documents" ("ces centaines de photos, articles et documents") that the detectives discover whilst investigating his death (63). The journalist Nessim, by contrast, seeks to expose the presence and activities of the Gaullist militia, the SAC, whose list of left-wing activists prompts a spate of murders (631). Through imaginative writing, Attia reveals the true events that inspire his novel: Nessim's notes punctuate the text with a detailed history of the evolution of the SAC¹², and Agopian's abortive work leads the author to details a "chronology of horror" ("chronologie d'horreur") (141) in which he relates the key events of this community's traumatic history¹³. Attia's characters thus expose unspoken or ignored legacies of violence, illustrating the capacity of the detective novel for unearthing the past.

Memory represents the central concern of Attia's novel, and it is the traumatic past that is continually evoked. *Pointe Rouge's* two lead characters are of Pied-Noir and Armenian origin (Paco and Khoupiguian respectively); these represent two of the migrant groups to have most significantly shaped Marseille's twentieth-century evolution, and whose arrival was precipitated by flight from conflict or oppression¹⁴. Attia's choice of character is thus highly significant; Paco and Khoupiguian are each symbolic of a significant remembering

¹² The first of these, for instance, establishes the years 1945 to 1954 as the period in which he observes the 'Development of the Gaullist network' ('Développement du réseau gaulliste') that would give rise to the SAC (Attia 173).

¹³ Beginning with the Hamidian Massacres in 1894, Khoupiguian lists the key events of the Armenians' oppression under the Ottoman Empire, concluding with the Genocide in 1915 (Attia 142–144).

¹⁴ Témime writes that, during the conflict that led to Algeria's decolonisation, Marseille would prove both a point of transit for the majority of the repatriated Pieds-Noirs, and a place of refuge for many ("Carrefour" 11); and Blanchard and Boëtsch describe the influx of Armenians, refugees from the Ottoman genocide, as the most significant migration of the inter-war period (81).

community residing in Marseille, and through their first-person narration enable us to explore how the memory of trauma continues to shape present-day existence. Paco describes both how the memory of Algeria is perpetuated amongst the Pied-Noir community with such media as food and language: they share Franco-Algerian dishes such as “[l]a kemia” and “le barbouche” (Attia, *Pointe* 414–15), and use slang that derives from the former colony’s diverse population, including Arabic borrowings such as “chlah!”, (“shit!”) (278), and Judeo-Arabic idioms such as “rayeb” (“the poor thing”) (417) and “Man, ya kafcha!” (“Mother, how embarrassing!”) (419). Nevertheless, the violence witnessed during the Algerian War continues to viscerally affect its survivors. The son of Paco’s former partner says of barbouche that “these days, eating it depresses me” (“à présent, en manger me file le cafard”), since it reminds him of his father whom he lost during these events¹⁵ (244). Indeed, the character explains in detail the way in which the Algerian War continues to influence all Pieds-Noirs’ lives: describing their fear of a “wayward bullet, squared grenade, bomb, machine gun or bazooka” (balle perdue, grenade quadrillée, bombe, mitrailleuse ou bazooka), he claims that, whilst this terror could be mastered during the day, “at night, it was another matter” (“[l]a nuit, c’était autre chose”): “it took you by surprise and it invaded your dreams to transform them into bloody nightmares, peopled by cadavers, friend or foe, sometimes your own” (“ça vous prenait par surprise et ça envahissait vos rêves pour les transformer en cauchemars sanglants, peuplés de cadavres, amis ou ennemis, parfois du sien”) (316). In Paco’s account, therefore, we may observe the way in which the memory of the Algerian War continues to shape the Pied-Noir community of Marseille, unsettling their new life in the métropole.

Nor is this the only violent past that Attia depicts in *Pointe Rouge*. Paco’s partner Khoupiguian is Armenian in origin and, whilst he was not born at the time of the genocide, he nevertheless feels that he recollects this trauma. Once more, food is presented as a key means by which Armenians hold onto something of their homeland: when Paco orders coffee, he jokes that Khoupiguian deemed it “not as good as his beloved mother’s Turkish coffee” (“ne valait pas le café turc de sa chère maman”) (36). It is the trauma of the Armenian Genocide that represents the most persistent memory amongst this community, and Khoupiguian finds

¹⁵ Indeed, this is a phrase that only attains its truest affectivity and force in the original French, translating more literally as “gives me cockroaches” to convey a sense of intrusion, contamination and abhorrence.

his sleep “[h]aunted by images, by documents, archives” (“Hanté par les images, par les documents, les archives”) of this violent event (141). This is in spite of the fact that the detective did not himself witness the atrocities perpetrated, relating that his parents “had been silent on the exodus of their people and played the integration card” (“ont fait silence sur l’exode de leur peuple et joué la carte d’intégration”), so that he and his brother were intended to be “[c]hildren of the republic” (“Enfants de la république”) instead of Armenian refugees.

The legacy of this violence proves inescapable, however, and illustrates what Marianne Hirsch defines as “postmemory” (5). This represents the memory of the “generation after” and their recollection of “experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up”; nevertheless, these “were transmitted so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right”, so that children and grandchildren continue “to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events” (5). This is certainly the experience of Khoupiguian, who asserts that, even just in “[n]aming me Tigran, our parents had imprisoned me in a culture of the past” (“Me prénommant Tigran, nos parents m’avaient enfermé dans une culture du passé”) (Attia, *Pointe* 264). Through this character, and through the memory of the Armenian Genocide, Attia therefore points to the way in which the past may persist long after its perpetration, and even amongst those who did not directly witness it.

What is more, Attia’s novel does not present memories in isolation; central to his work is the way in which these are interwoven. Indeed, the sheer diversity of traumatic histories related is remarkable, crossing boundaries of time and space and firmly situating France in a broader memory of violence. As right-wing activists plot against and murder their left-wing opponents, for instance, Khoupiguian says “I thought of the Milice, and of the Vel d’Hiv roundup” (“J’ai pensé à la milice, à la rafle du Vél d’Hiv”) (208). His Armenian heritage inevitably informs such a reflection, noting that “[o]n account of my origins, I have never liked roundups” (“En raison de mes origines, je n’ai jamais aimé les rafles”) (Attia, *Pointe* 164); when Khoupiguian views photographs of murdered Armenians, therefore, he perceives “Dachau, Auschwitz, in a Turkish draft form” (“Dachau, Auschwitz, en brouillon turc”) (144). Into this already complex entwining of the Armenian and Jewish memories of violence, Attia

introduces diverse others, and always exposed is something of the French state's complicity. Reflecting that "[t]he Turkish refute the term 'genocide'" ("Les Turcs réfutent le terme 'génocide'"), Paco observes that the same linguistic evasion took place in the Algerian War, noting that these were "for a long time called 'events'" ("longtemps nommé 'événements'") (301). Such connections only proliferate: discussion of "the Americans and the war in Vietnam" ("les Américains et la guerre en Indochine") immediately elicits reference to France's conflict in "Indochine" and "Dien Bien Phu" (54). Thus whilst, in the context of the late 1960s, it might appear that wars "took place elsewhere, Israel, Vietnam. Far from us" ("se déroulaient ailleurs, Israël, Viêt-nâm. Loin de nous") (92), the memories that *Pointe Rouge* discloses demonstrate that Marseille and France are both located and implicated within this topography of violence that transcends geography and history.

Furthermore, Attia ties this topography into the sites of Marseille, revealing the way in which its temporal and spatial connections shape the city's landscape as well as its memory. The nexus of the novel's fictional crime is a house on the 'impasse des Harkis' (446), a street whose name exposes the presence of a community and of a memory at the heart of the Provençal capital that has historically gone un-commemorate. Whilst fewer in number than the Pieds-Noirs, the Harkis represented a sizeable population resettled following Algeria's decolonisation; nevertheless, in contrast with their European compatriots, the Harki community has been hidden from view and subjected to a deliberate "sidelining"¹⁶ ("une mise à l'écart") (Blanchard and Boëtsch 167). Indeed, that the street is named the 'Impasse des Harkis' is highly significant: it implies not only the presence of a cul-de-sac in Marseille's cartography, but also that the story of the Harkis in Marseille remains a metaphorical dead-end within the memorial landscape of the city.

¹⁶ Blanchard and Boëtsch note that, whilst the Pieds-Noirs encountered initial hostility upon arrival in France, local populaces demonstrating "more incomprehension and rejection than solidarity" ("plus incompréhension et rejet que solidarité") (156), they have subsequently been integrated into the Marseillais community, and their ordeal has been formally recognised through the Mémorial des rapatriés d'Algérie, inaugurated on 14 February 1971 (165). By contrast, the majority of the 1,000 Harki families resettled were placed in camps under military control outside of Marseille itself, would remain there for many years (165), and their suffering was only officially acknowledged in 2016, when former French president François Hollande recognised "the responsibility borne by French governments in the abandonment of the Harkis" ("*les responsabilités des gouvernements français dans l'abandon des harkis*") ("Hollande")

It is this history that the novel brings to light. Paco informs the reader that “[t]hese poor Harkis” (“Ces pauvres harkis”) had been “abandoned by the French state for their good and loyal services” (“abandonnés par l’État français pour bons et loyaux services”) and that “they had thus truly merited the name of an impasse” (“ils avaient bien mérité le nom d’une impasse”) (446–447). What is more, it is a house used by the SAC that is discovered on the Impasse des Harkis, linking this community’s mistreatment to the clandestine suppression of France’s left-wing, and exposing the French state’s complicity in both. Indeed, upon shooting the head of this organisation, Khoupiguian remarks the irony that “a servant of shadows, of a state without scruples” (“un serviteur de l’ombre, d’un État sans scruples”) had been “executed by another servant of the same state” (“exécuté par un autre serviteur du même Etat, sans procès”) (590). What Attia’s novel demonstrates, therefore, is the capacity of the crime novel to expose what Watt describes as “the roots of an oppressive present” (33), facilitating a dialogue between different “traumatic periods of French history”, exposing their “multidirectional nature”, and revealing them to be situated within “a wider historical narrative” (31). In the site of the Impasse des Harkis, multiple memories of state oppression are brought into connection, and situate Marseille within a spatial and temporal web of violent memories in which it is always implicated.

In Attia’s novel is exposed the way in which violent memories persist, how they shape the present of those who retain them (even when the individual remembering did not witness the event itself), and how different pasts are brought into dialogue through their simultaneous recollection. What is poignant in *Pointe Rouge*, however, is the fact that the spaces of the past prove equally as resilient and as powerful as its events. Early in the text, Paco assumes that the places of his memories have long since been abandoned. He believes that, after his relocation to France, “Algeria was by now far away. Very far away” (“L’Algérie était désormais loin. Très loin”) (*Pointe* 74), and is similarly adamant that he has “[n]o desire to explore the Algiers or Oran communities of Marseille” (“Aucune envie d’explorer le milieu algérois ou oranais de Marseille”) (57), eager to leave the places and people of his former home in the past. Nevertheless, these spaces and the individuals associated with them prove as resilient within his new city of domicile as his memories of the Algerian War, profoundly disturbing his experience of his new environment. When Paco sits at a bar, for instance, he

notices “[o]n the wall, facing me, a poster for OM [Olympique de Marseille]” (“Sur le mur, face à moi, une affiche de l’OM”), and is immediately transported to the “Bar des Arènes in Bab-el-Oued, [where] the ASSE [Association Sportive de Saint-Étienne] squad featured in the same place” (“bar des Arènes en Bab-el-Oued, l’équipe de l’ASSE figurait en bonne place”) (134). Recalling this as the location of his last conversation with his murdered partner, he is struck by “a sense of foreboding” (“un mauvais pressentiment”), and, in this moment of “black melancholia” (“mélancolie noir”) (134), he claims that “I no longer saw the empty Rue d’Ensuès but the Rue Montaigne in Algiers” (“je ne voyais plus la rue vide d’Ensuès mais la rue Montaigne d’Alger”) (135).

Paco is not the only character who is subject to such an experience of spatial and temporal disorientation. When ordered to assist in detaining a group of students, Khoupiguian too perceives in his present landscape the places and atrocities of another, claiming that “I no longer saw policemen in képis, but Turkish soldiers” (“Je ne voyais plus des policiers en képi mais des soldats turcs”) (180). What is more, it is not simply the intrusion of one space in another that we observe in Attia’s novel; instead, multiple sites are remembered simultaneously, so that, whilst watching the police suppression of student protests in Paris, Paco recalls both his father, the “Spanish anarchist fighting in the streets of Barcelona against the fascists” (“anarchiste espagnol se battant dans les rues de Barcelone contre les fascistes”, and the “volley on the Rue d’Isly, during the Bab-el-Oued riots” (“fusillade de la rue d’Isly, aux émeutes de Bab-el-Oued”) (567). Indeed, it is noteworthy that, upon discovering the Impasse des Harkis, Paco declares “[t]o think that Algeria and its history hadn’t yet finished with me” (“A croire que l’Algérie et son histoire n’en avaient pas fini avec moi”) (*Pointe* 446): his encounter with this site reinforces the fact that Algeria is not a world that Paco has left behind, but instead one that continues to shape his present. In the pages of *Pointe Rouge* may consequently be observed frequent slippages in space as well as time, the sites of past trauma resurging, overlapping and profoundly unsettling the novel’s protagonists.

As characters recall the violent past in Attia’s *Pointe Rouge*, their recollection is therefore defined by the uncanny, and this shapes characters’ experience of Marseille in *Pointe Rouge*. Dora writes that “the uncanny ... brings to surface fragments of stories that political regimes have struggled to suppress” (213): ultimately, Attia seeks not solely to reveal memory’s

presence within Marseille's landscape, but also to show how it disrupts and complicates it. Paco may deem the places of his memories to have been "submerged between the admiralty of Algiers and the Phoccean port" ("engloutie entre l'amirauté d'Alger et le port phocéén") (74), yet, as the novel demonstrates, "[c]hase away history, it returns at a gallop" ("Chassez l'histoire, elle revient au galop") (140). It may appear that the Marseillais "urban landscape gave off an air of monotony in the image of a society without depth" ("paysage urbain dégageait une monotonie à l'image d'une société sans relief") (43), therefore, Attia in fact reveals a "Phoccean city dominated by its Dame who mostly guarded fresh corpses in the chambers of her morgue" ("cité phocéenne dominée par sa Dame qui gardait surtout au frais des corps dans les tiroirs de sa morgue") (495). M. Silverman writes that the work of cultural memory may "reveal a complex landscape of racialized violence in which traces of different histories intertwine" ("Interconnected" 420). When, early in *Pointe Rouge*, the detectives' superior asks of Paco's and Khoupiguian's discoveries, "what is this bag of knots?" ("C'est quoi ce sac de noeuds?") (111), such a question is equally applicable to the novel, its narrative and the landscape it depicts. The Marseille that Attia exposes is one defined by the memory of violence perpetrated both within its confines and beyond them, that situate its landscape within a complex topography of memory, and that disclose its place within it.

Indeed, what *Pointe Rouge* most clearly illustrates is how the memory of violence may prompt us to consider our own space and time anew. In Attia's novel, the figure of the outsider offers new perspectives upon the present landscape, certainly defamiliarising it, yet also prompting us to conceive of it differently. Vidler notes that the uncanny is prompted by "a sense of something new, foreign, and hostile invading an old, familiar, customary world" (23); that the term 'uncanny' derives from the German "*unheimlich*" means that it translates more literally as 'unhomely', the way in which the alien disturbs the space and time of home. That Attia selects Paco as a Pied-Noir as his primary mouthpiece, therefore, points to the way in which the uncanny may be used to open up the memorial landscape. Paco perceives Marseille as a hostile environment: noting that the exodus from Algeria had "induced, amongst the Marseillais, the fear of an invasion, and amongst the Pieds-Noirs, the threat of an expulsion" ("induit, chez les Marseillais, la crainte d'une invasion, chez les pieds-noirs, la

menace d'une repulsion") (*Pointe* 14), he declares that "I didn't like this city and the feeling was mutual" ("Je n'aimais pas cette ville et elle me le rendait bien") (14).

That he emphatically states that 'I was not home' ('Je n'étais pas chez moi') (13) is therefore indicative of Paco's role in the novel: as a migrant to Marseille, his account of the city, its landscape and its past both unsettles the city as he finds it, and reveals it in a new light. Examining travel writing, Jein argues that "the traveller brings into awareness ... alternative interpretive positions from which to view the modern city", the visitor to an urban landscape enabling previously unperceived perspectives to be highlighted, explored and critiqued (2). What is more, the author contends that such writings do not leave the landscape that they reimagine untouched; she writes that they "combine to weave threads of externality into the fabric of these cities' modernity", reconfiguring it in a way that diversifies how the metropolis may be conceived (2). It is this role that the Provençal capital's immigrant population play in Attia's novel: Paco as a Pied-Noir, and other communities who have relocated to metropolitan France, represent the *unheimlich* in the Marseillais landscape, yet in so doing open it up, call it into question and produce it anew. The uncanny and the *multidirectional* memory to which it gives rise consequently serve as a means by which the memorial landscape may be critically re-engaged, the disruption of the familiar offering new perspectives on that which is taken for granted.

Reconciliation and reimagining: Claudel's *La Petite fille de Monsieur Linh*

If Attia's *Pointe Rouge* reveals the different memories that continue to traumatise the inhabitants of Marseille and that locate it within a complex topography of violence, then Claudel's *La Petite fille de Monsieur Linh* enables us to examine how *multidirectional* memory may facilitate the working through of traumatic pasts, and how this reimagines the spaces in which it takes place. *La Petite fille* relates the story of an elderly refugee of the Vietnam War, Monsieur Linh, and his resettlement in Marseille with a doll that he believes to be his granddaughter, Sang Dîu. Uprooted by this conflict, Claudel depicts Monsieur Linh as fundamentally dislocated in space and time and paralysed by the trauma he has experienced. It is only upon striking up a friendship with a local resident and veteran of the First

Indochina War, Monsieur Bark, that Monsieur Linh attains a sense of belonging in this new domicile, and their relationship is illustrative of the way in which memory connections may enable the working through of past trauma. The figure of Sang Dâu is central to Claudel's novel, representing what Olivier describes as an *objet-mémoire*. The doll embodies Monsieur Linh's trauma, a visceral symbol of the granddaughter he has lost, yet it also enables him to remain connected to his former home and becomes redefined as his friendship with Monsieur Bark blossoms. What Claudel suggests is that the landscape of Marseille is similarly reworked by the remembering that occurs there: on the one hand, the uncanny blurring of the Provençal capital and Vietnam proves a disorienting experience for Monsieur Linh; yet on the other, its spaces are also transformed anew through his relationship with Monsieur Bark, and this ultimately points to the way in which multidirectional memory may shape the imagined spaces in which we live.

Claudel's *La Petite fille* begins with the forced resettlement of Monsieur Linh, uprooting him in space and time. From the stern of the ship, Monsieur Linh watches "his country slip away" ("s'éloigner son pays") (9), and his first venture into Marseille presents him with the polar opposite of the world he has left behind. He is overwhelmed by "cars that he has never seen, in incalculable numbers" ("des voitures qu'il n'a jamais vu, en nombre incalculable") and crowds amongst whom "[n]o-one takes any notice of anyone else" ("Personne ne fait attention à personne") (22), starkly contrasting with his village where "there was only one road" ("il n'y avait qu'une rue"), and "everyone knew everyone else, and would greet one another upon meeting" ("tout le monde se connaissait, et chacun en se croisant se saluait") (23). The comparison between his former home and the new city causes Monsieur Linh to feel profoundly dislocated in relation to both the landscape and his own past. Shortly after his arrival, Monsieur Linh realises that, "when he talks to himself about the village, it's in the past that he does so" ("lorsqu'il parle en lui-même du village, c'est au passé qu'il le fait") (Claudel 23–24). He therefore deems himself to be separated from his home by a spatial and temporal gulf, not only 'thousands of kilometres away from a village that no longer exists' ('des milliers de kilomètres d'un village qui n'existe plus'), but 'thousands of days away from a life that was once beautiful' ('des milliers de jours d'une vie qui fut jadis belle') (44). What is more, the new city in which he finds himself is not one in which he believes he will ever feel

at home; gazing upon the cages of a zoo, he is suddenly convinced that “that is his fate” (“c’est là son sort”), to live “in an immense cage” (“dans une immense cage”) and one “from which he will never again leave” (“qu’il ne pourra plus jamais en sortir”) (51). Monsieur Linh consequently perceives both his former home and his past as lost, and his new city as one in which he is trapped, so that he is simultaneously out of place and out of time.

What is more, Monsieur Linh is profoundly affected by the horrors that forced his departure from Vietnam, memories that continue to traumatise him in his new place of residence. The description of the conflict’s effects upon both his home and his family is stark in its brutality¹⁷, yet it is the story of Sang Dìu that proves most powerful. The survival of his granddaughter appears miraculous, the author writing that to one side could be seen “the little one, her eyes wide open, swaddled, unharmed” (“plus loin, la petite, les yeux grands ouverts, emmailloté”), whilst at her side lay “her doll, as big as she is, whose head had been torn off by shrapnel” (“sa poupée, aussi grosse qu’elle, à laquelle un éclat de la bombe avait arraché la tête”) (Claudel 13). It is at the novel’s close that the reader becomes fully aware of the depth of Monsieur Linh’s trauma: Monsieur Bark speaks of “the pretty doll from which his friend ... was never separated” (“la jolie poupée dont son ami ... ne se séparait jamais”), so that it is belatedly revealed that it was the granddaughter who was the bombing’s true victim, and not the doll (181). Rendered in sharp relief, therefore, is the extent to which Monsieur Linh has been affected by the violence inflicted upon him and his family. Forced to leave Vietnam, cast into a Marseille that is entirely unfamiliar to him, and deeply traumatised by the war that he has witnessed, Claudel’s character is dislocated in space and time, and paralysed by the memories he retains.

It is only through his friendship with Monsieur Bark that Monsieur Linh is able to connect to something within this new landscape, and begin to work through the trauma of his past, and in this way, Attia’s *La Petite fille* reveals the way in which *multidirectional* memory may facilitate new solidarities that transcend boundaries of geography and history. On first glance, the two men appear irreparably divided both by language and individual experiences.

¹⁷ Monsieur Linh’s rice paddies were reduced to nothing more than “an immense hole” (“un trou immense”), and he was forced to gaze not just upon the “carcass of a disembowelled buffalo” (“un cadavre de buffle éventré”), but also on “the body of his son, [and] that of his wife” (“le corps de son fils, [et] celui de sa femme”) (Claudel 13).

Throughout the novel, neither can understand what the other is saying: Monsieur Bark thinks that Monsieur Linh is called “Monsieur Tao-laï” (in fact a form of greeting) (27), whereas Monsieur Linh’s only French vocabulary is “*bonjour*” (56), leading to the amusing situation in which “the two men say goodbye to one another ... by saying *hello*” (“les deux hommes se disent ... au revoir en se disant *bonjour*”) (89). More problematically, the two characters are divided by their place in the First Indochina War, Monsieur Bark serving in the conflict that led to the French colony’s independence. The Frenchman claims he was sent like so many others to “sow death, with our rifles, our bombs, our grenades” (“semer la mort, avec nos fusils, nos bombes, nos grenades”); relating this story to Monsieur Linh, he laments the fact that “your country is dogged by all wars” (“sur votre pays s’acharnent toutes les guerres”) (96), yet his own involvement leads him to conclude, “I am a bastard, a real bastard” (“Je suis un salaud, un vrai salaud”) (97). Superficially, then, the gulf between Monsieur Bark and Monsieur Linh would appear insurmountable, their linguistic barriers symbolic of a more fundamental divide of perpetrator and victim.

Despite these differences, however, the two characters manage to find companionship, and in so doing to work through something of the trauma that they have both experienced. Standing in the Vieux Port of Marseille, the two characters are assailed by their memories of this violence, and find solace in one another’s company. Monsieur Bark is haunted by the crimes he was required to perpetrate: he informs Monsieur Linh that “I was forced to go there” (“On m’a forcé à y aller”), and vividly recalls “[t]he fire in these houses, the screams, the children who fled, naked, along the roads, into the night and flames” (“Le feu dans ces maisons, les hurlements, les enfants qui s’enfuyaient, nus, sur les chemins, dans la nuit et les flammes”) (98). Both, then, continue to be defined by their experiences of conflict; Monsieur Linh is overwhelmed by “a blast of images [that] come back to him, jostle inside him, terrible, odious” (“un coup d’images [qui] lui reviennent, se bousculent en lui, terribles, odieuses”) (93), and Monsieur Bark is similarly assailed by “images ... terrible, odious, inhumane” (“des images ... terribles, odieuses, inhumaines”) (94). It is in this moment that the two men find solidarity; in tears, Monsieur Bark says, “I ask your forgiveness, Monsieur Tao-laï, ... for all that I did to your country” (“Je vous demande pardon, Monsieur Tao-laï ... pour tout ce que j’ai fait à votre pays”), and in return Monsieur Linh “tries to put his arm around his friend’s

shoulder” (“essai d’entourer de son bras l’épaule de son ami”) (98) and, smiling at him, attempts to “put many things into this smile, more things than any word could ever contain” (“mettre beaucoup de choses dans ce sourire, plus de choses que n’importe quel mot ne pourra jamais contenir”) (99). This encounter points to the fact that multidirectional memory may facilitate a dialogue that transcends divisions and begins a process of healing: as Rothberg writes, “[w]hen the productive, intercultural dynamic of multidirectional memory is explicitly claimed... it has the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice” (5). Whilst seemingly antagonists in the conflicts described, the two men are united by the consequences of this violence for both the soldiers and civilians affected, finding reconciliation even across their language divide.

Throughout Monsieur Linh’s relocation, remembering and the building of his relationship with Monsieur Bark, the figure of Sang Dîu is of central importance. A visceral symbol of his profound trauma¹⁸, the doll nevertheless also embodies something of the refugee’s home in exile, and is reinscribed with the memory connections that he fosters in his new domicile. On the one hand, the doll embodies the very violence that drove the old man from Vietnam, the fact that he cares for it “as if it were a real child” (“comme s’il s’était agi d’une véritable enfant”) (Claudel 181) exposing the extent to which he remains affected by this past. Yet it is also through this doll that Monsieur Linh continues to remember his home, its spaces and its people. Perceiving in her “more than the face of a very young infant” (“davantage que le visage d’une très jeune enfant”), Monsieur Linh sees instead in her countenance “landscapes, luminous mornings” (“des paysages, des matins lumineux”) (11), as well as the eyes of “his beloved wife whose face is always present within him” (“son épouse bien-aimé dont le visage en lui est toujours présent”) (45). What is more, the doll continues to be transformed through his relationship with Monsieur Bark, a locus for the memories that they form together. The Frenchman offers his friend a gift, which is described by Claudel as “[a] dazzling dress. A dress for *Sang Dîu*” (“Une robe éblouissante. Une robe pour *Sang Dîu*”) (105). Dressed in this presumably European outfit, she is transformed into “a little girl of the dawn and the orient” (“une petite fille de l’aube et de l’orient”) (184), thereby uniting in a single object both

¹⁸ Indeed, it should be noted that Freud deemed the doll to be a particularly potent symbol of the uncanny (“Uncanny” 230).

Monsieur Linh's new life in Marseille and the memory of his former home in Vietnam. Sang Dâu might, therefore, appear to be a constant reminder of Monsieur Linh's ordeal, yet the doll also offers a means by which he may continue to commune with the past and to form new memories in the present.

The doll thus represents what Olivier terms an *objet-mémoire*, an object that bears the marks of different pasts, yet that equally remains open to new inscription. To illustrate this, Olivier describes an inherited collection of boxes containing items of family history. He writes that this "ensemble of objects constitutes a family reliquary" ("ensemble d'objets constitue un reliquaire familial"), and that "[i]n this jumble of heterogeneous objects, history is assembled" ("Dans cet enchevêtrement d'objets hétéroclites est rassemblée l'histoire") (*Sombre* 25); through this disparate collection, the events and individuals of Olivier's family are remembered. Importantly, however, the author argues that such an entity must be continually added to for remembering to occur, contending that "if I want to maintain the identity of this reliquary, I cannot do otherwise but modify it, alter it" ("si je veux maintenir l'identité de ce reliquaire, je ne peux faire autrement que le modifier, l'altérer") (30). The *objet-mémoire* therefore represents a fundamentally plastic entity through which we remember the past: it retains the trace of those places and events that constitute our past, but one that must be continually produced anew in the present. It ties us to what occurred before, but only if we record that which is occurring now.

What Claudel's novel suggests is that the processes that constitute, preserve and rework the *objet-mémoire* may equally be observed in the spaces of *La Petite fille*. The bench upon which Monsieur Linh and Monsieur Bark meet is an ideal example of such a site (25): redolent in memory for the Frenchman even before the arrival of his Vietnamese friend, through their relationship it assumes new significance. Monsieur Bark associates the seat with the memory of his wife: he tells Monsieur Linh that "I always waited for her on this bench" ("Je l'attendais toujours sur ce banc") (Claudel 29), and notes that "it is not that it's very pretty, but ... it brings back memories" ("Ce n'est pas que c'est très joli, mais ... il me rappelle des souvenirs") (26). Monsieur Linh too perceives the bench as somewhere to recall his home, noting that sitting there he is able "[t]o think about the village, even about the past" ("Penser au village, même au passé"), and that doing so "is a bit like being there still" ("c'est un peu y

être encore”) (24). As their closeness grows, however, the bench acquires new meaning, redefined by the connections they have forged with one another. Monsieur Linh deems it to have “become, in the space of just two days, a small familiar space” (“devenu, en l’espace de deux jours seulement, un petit endroit familier”), a point of stability within a present that represents “a great torrent, eddying and bizarre” (“un large torrent, tourbillonnant et bizarre”) (Claudel 46). When Monsieur Linh does not appear for several weeks, Monsieur Bark continues to wait for him, spending “whole afternoons, alone, all week, and even Sunday” (“des après-midi entières, seul, la semaine, et même le dimanche”) even though it leaves him feeling “weary, and helpless” (“las, et inutile”) (173). The simple seat therefore serves as a critical point of relation between the two characters, transformed into an *objet-mémoire*: initially conceived of only in terms of their individual experiences, through the relationship that they forge it attains new meanings that point to a novel and shared memory.

Ultimately, what *La Petite fille* demonstrates is that multidirectional memory may imagine space anew, exceeding the material limits of the landscape as multiple times and places are remembered within it. More even than in *Pointe Rouge*, Claudel’s novel is defined by its frequent and uncanny slippages in space and time. In contrast with Attia’s work, however, whilst some of those that occur in *La Petite fille* prove unsettling and disruptive, others prove productive and comforting. Late in the novel, Monsieur Linh is relocated for a second time, on this occasion to a retirement home (Claudel 119); in attempting to escape this institution and re-find his friend, the exertion required proves so disorienting that “[e]verything becomes muddled” (“Tout se mélange”) (170). He “sees his village again” (“revoit son village”), yet he also sees “the eyes of his friend” (“les yeux de son ami”) and “the crater left by the bomb ... the village on fire” (“le cratère laissé par la bombe ... le village en feu”); the experience is one of a “whirlpool into which he had begun to slip without remedy” (“tourbillon dans lequel dans lequel il s’était mis à glisser sans remède”) (170). In this instance the uncanny “elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity” (Vidler 11); it causes a sense of dislocation within the landscape that he is attempting to navigate.

Nevertheless, this does not entail that every instance of the uncanny in Claudel’s work proves equally unsettling; it frequently liberates the writer’s characters from an environment that

is stifling, and enables them to connect across space, time and barriers of language. When placed in the retirement home, a space that reminds him of “the large cages that he had seen in the park” (“les grandes cages qu’il a aperçues dans le Parc”) (Claudel 123), Monsieur Linh is able not merely to return to Vietnam, but also to meet Monsieur Bark there in his dreams. Unshackled from the confines of his material environment, Monsieur Linh “presents all the houses of the village to his friend ... [and] the ancestors as well” (“présente toutes les maisons du village à son ami ... [et] les ancêtres aussi”) (141), and “understands perfectly what his friend says and is not even surprised by it” (“comprend parfaitement ce que dit son ami et ne s’en étonne même pas”) (138). In the uncanny’s “slippage between waking and dreaming” (Vidler 11), the Vietnamese refugee is able to transcend space and time, and to commune without barriers with his newfound French friend. Indeed, it is noteworthy that, in the closing pages of the novel, Monsieur Bark “confusedly remembers a dream that he had a few nights before” (“se souvient confusément d’un rêve qu’il a fait quelques nuits plus tôt”) (181), appearing to have shared the same experience as his companion. What we observe in Claudel’s novel, therefore, is the way in which the imagination may enable multiple spatialities and temporalities to be experienced simultaneously, reproducing the imagined landscape in which this takes place.

In this regard, it is significant that, whilst the evidence of the novel points to its being set in Marseille during the 1970s, at no point in the text are the city or conflict explicitly identified as such. The geographical and historical clues given by the writer certainly lead us to assume that it portrays the French port and Vietnam War. The city in which it is set is described as possessing a “large port” (“grand port”) and a “small fishing port” (“le petit port de pêche”) (160), and this contrast, amongst other details¹⁹, enables us to recognise the two as the Grand-Port-Maritime and the Vieux-Port. The identity of the conflict that Monsieur Linh flees is implied by the description of his home in terms suggestive of South East Asia²⁰, and by the

¹⁹ The larger port is described as the one “where he disembarked, on the enormous quayside cluttered with cranes” (“où il a débarqué, sur le quai gigantesque encombré de grues”), and the smaller as “a calmer place, which formed a curve in which the water and fishing boats composed a picturesque painting” (“un endroit plus calme, qui forme une courbe dans laquelle l’eau et les bateaux de pêche composent une peinture colorée”) (Claudel 92).

²⁰ Monsieur Linh recalls, for instance, “the slow and peaceful tread of the buffalo in the rice paddies” (“la marche lente et paisible des buffles dans les rizières”) (Claudel 11).

fact that Monsieur Bark fought in a war that was “Not the current one, another” (“Pas celle qu’il y a maintenant, une autre”) (97): the location and succession of the two conflicts leads the reader to conclude that they are in fact the First Indochina War and Vietnam War. What is more, the assumptions made are reinforced by the fact that the Provençal capital played a key role in both conflicts: Blanchard and Boëtsch write that “Marseille would live to the rhythm of the Indochinese conflict” (“Marseille va vivre au rythme du conflit indochinois”) (140), profiting from the transportation of men and material (Témime, *Histoire* 189); yet Témime also notes that the port was a primary destination of the many “boat people” fleeing Vietnam during the 1970s (*Histoire* 191).

The landscape and narrative of *La Petite fille* is certainly evocative of that of Marseille; nevertheless, the fact that it goes unidentified means that it could equally be imagined as elsewhere, with important implications for our reading of its memory and space. By bringing together identifiable histories and geographies, yet never affirming that they are what we presume them to be, Claudel opens up memory’s capacity to forge new narratives irrespective of the concrete landscape. The novel thus unbounds the French port city: to quote Massey, the novel and its narrative encourages us to:

“to uproot ‘space’ from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness ... liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape.”
(*For Space* 13)

In *La Petite fille*, Marseille as it is imagined is demonstrated to exceed its material referent, and thus illustrates the role of cultural memory in exposing and expanding the openness and heterogeneity of space. The novel unbounds the city through its reimagining, prompting the reader both to reconsider its locations and past in a new light.

Opening site: The Fort Saint-Jean

In the work of Claudel and Attia, we have explored the way in which *multidirectional* memory, and the cultural works through which this takes place, may disclose unperceived pasts, forge connections between them, constellate spaces and times, and change the way in which we imagine a landscape. The final section of this chapter will demonstrate how a consciousness of this imaginary might inform our approach to sites and conceive of their memory anew, and to do so, we will examine the Fort Saint-Jean. Situated at the entrance to the Vieux-Port and separating it from the Grand Port Maritime, this military installation is described as “the most visible place in the city” (“le lieu le plus en vue de la ville”) (Pizzorni-Itié 11), and has occupied a critical role in Marseille’s evolution since its foundation. The site’s symbolism and significance has rendered it a particularly important space in the wider renovation of Marseille’s seafront, and led to its incorporation into the newly commissioned Musée des Civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée in 2013. The Fort Saint-Jean has been commandeered to legitimise this project as “a historic monument” (“un monument historique”) that is “emblématique de la ville” (Bonnefoy 3), extensively renovated to promote a carefully cultivated vision of Mediterranean culture. Approaching this site with an awareness of the diverse and traumatic memories that characterise Marseille, however, prompts us to question the extent to which a military installation may be considered “l’image de la méditerranée” (MuCEM, “Faites”). A closer examination of the fort, its environs and its history reveals it to be implicated in and shaped by the very network of violent pasts that authors such as Attia and Claudel disclose; it thus proves to be a site that does not cohere as neatly with the cosmopolitanism presented by MuCEM, but that is instead defined by the presence (both material and imagined) of multiple, complex and often conflictual pasts. An awareness of the cultural thus prompts us to conceive of the Saint-Jean differently, transforming it in a way that reveals the role of the imagined in the constitution of the plastic site.

The significance of the Fort Saint-Jean to Marseille’s history has rendered it a particularly redolent presence in its landscape, and it was upon this symbolism that MuCEM sought to draw, renovating the site to symbolically unite the ancient and the contemporary, the old and the new. A military stronghold has stood on the promontory since the Greeks’

colonisation of the region (Pizzorni-Itié 25), rendering it both one of the oldest landmarks within the city, and one of most permanently and visibly present. For this reason, the fort was integrated into the complex that today constitutes MuCEM, serving to anchor the contemporary edifice in the ancient history of Marseille. Opened in June 2013 (MuCEM, *Dossier* 6) and centred around a modern museum space built on what was formerly quay J4 of Marseille's Grand Port (12), the primary intention behind MuCEM was to offer 'an insight ... into the plurality of civilisations that have constituted the Mediterranean world from prehistory to today' ("un regard ... sur la pluralité des civilisations qui ont constitué le monde méditerranéen de la préhistoire à nos jours") (6). The project has been central to the Provençal capital's recent modernisation: the first national museum to be based outside of Paris, MuCEM was opened to coincide with Marseille-Provence's tenure as European Capital of Culture (6), and was constructed explicitly as "an iconic meeting place between Europe and the Mediterranean" ("le lieu phare de la rencontre entre Europe et Méditerranée") (10). If MuCEM was built to link continents and oceans, therefore, then the Fort Saint-Jean was to connect this transnational project back into the city itself. It represented "a true meeting point between the city and the museum" ("un véritable point de jonction entre la ville et le musée") (18) that would match the institution's mission to become a "[p]lace of dialogue between the north and south shores" ("Lieu de dialogue entre les rives nord et sud") (Bonney 9).

As a result, the Fort Saint-Jean has undergone extensive renovation, mobilising its history, yet also transforming it into a landmark symbolic of Marseille's cosmopolitanism. The site was overhauled to create a variety of exhibition spaces, but most notably to establish a publicly accessible garden what would be named the "Jardin des migrations" (Bonney 32). Taking advantage of the tiered nature of the fort's interior, it is intended to present "the terrain's irregularity as the many strata of the place's history" ("l'irrégularité du terrain comme autant de strates de l'histoire du lieu") (MuCEM, *Dossier* 20); more importantly, however, through its fifteen horticultural tableaux, it aims "to evoke the mingling of cultures, people and plantes around the Mediterrean" ("évoquer le brassage des cultures, des hommes et des plantes autour de la Méditerranée") (20). Indeed, the gardens are designed as a deliberately anachronic and anatopic space, and aim to foster a collective memory shared by

Mediterranean peoples. Its flower beds are claimed to capture something “of the first enclosure of the Almohad gardens, the courtyard orangeries of the Great Mosque of Cordoba or yet that of Seville, the Moroccan riads” (“du premier enclos des jardins almohades, la cour de orangers de la grande mosquée de Cordoue ou encore celle de Séville, les Riad marocains”), and its objective is to offer “frameworks of memory that derive from a common history” (“des supports de mémoire qui participent d’une histoire commune”) (MuCEM, “Faites”). Under the stewardship of MuCEM, therefore, the Fort Saint-Jean has been both mobilised as a key site in Marseille’s landscape, and transformed to embody the institution’s cosmopolitan vision of the Mediterranean’s past and future.

Belying this benign appearance, however, may be discerned legacies of violence that continue to mark the fort and its surroundings, legacies that might easily be overlooked were one not aware of the many traumatic pasts remembered within the city’s imaginary. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the Fort Saint-Jean itself was heavily damaged during the German occupation, damage that has dictated the form of the site and its environs today. The fort was commandeered by the German army in November 1942, and was used both as a garrison and as an artillery depot; upon surrendering the stronghold in August 1944, the 100 tonnes of munitions stored in its cellars exploded, destroying many of the buildings and façades in its central courtyard (Pizzorni-Itié 104). After the Liberation, the French Army did not seek to rebuild the battlements, only to clear the rubble and level the lower section (113). The form of the contemporary courtyard is thus the direct result of the German occupation, the destruction wrought still present in its absent or damaged stonework.

Whilst certainly a catastrophic event, the demolition was in fact an unintended yet highly symbolic extension of the occupying forces’ treatment of the wider city and its inhabitants. In January and February 1943, 20,000 residents of Marseille’s Vieux-Port were forced to leave their homes, which were subsequently demolished by German army engineers. In total, 29 acres of the city’s oldest districts were systematically destroyed (Crane 135–37). Presented as reprisals, Témime writes that the wholesale destruction of the Vieux-Port was in fact

premeditated²¹, and Crane argues that it was precisely because of its cosmopolitan character that “the Germans singled out Marseille as an exceptionally problematic city” (Crane 139). Deemed as a port city to be home to dangerous racial mixing and sexual promiscuity, 635 inhabitants of the Vieux-Port (the majority of whom were Jewish or North African) were rounded up prior to the evacuation, whilst checks at internment camps detained a further 800 “suspect” individuals (Crane 136); sent to the concentration camps of Sobibor and Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen, only 100 of these residents ever returned (136). In an operation that “blurred the lines between ‘military necessity’ ... and urban cleansing” (137), therefore, the Nazi regime set out to “‘clean’ a city considered to be ‘the cancer of Europe’” (“nettoyer’ une ville considérée comme ‘le chancre de l’Europe’”) (Témime, *Histoire* 179). The damage done to the Fort Saint-Jean was emblematic of a landscape and community purged, its contemporary courtyard a testament to a “victimised city” (“ville sinistrée”) (180).

To suggest, however, that both fort and city were simply the victims of Nazi violence is to ignore Vichy complicity in the actions of the occupying forces, and the fact that Marseille’s government and urban planners had long desired to similarly reform the Vieux-Port. MuCEM’s efforts to celebrate a contemporary cosmopolitanism is thus at odds with a history of its suppression, and in particular ignore the fort’s long-established role in policing surrounding districts. The evacuation of the Vieux-Port was carried out not just by SS soldiers, but also by Vichy police officers (Crane 137); to suggest that the eviction of communities and destruction of their homes was an exclusively German act would therefore be to ignore the “[o]perations carried out by the French police at the request of the occupier” (“Opérations faites par la police française à la demande de l’occupant”) (Témime, *Histoire* 178). What is more, the perception of the Vieux-Port as a problematic site in Marseille’s landscape, precisely because of its diverse population and associations with crime and immorality, was a concern of French authorities as much as their German counterparts. Long before the war, it was lamented that “the magnificent residences” of the old city were “occupied by Neapolitan or Arab tribes”, whilst the streets of the port were populated “by

²¹ Témime writes that attacks on the German Army by Marseillais resistors since 1942 were used as a pretext, yet the demolition had in fact been “decided well before this date in Berlin” (“décidée bien avant cette date à Berlin”) (*Histoire* 179).

Prostitutions [sic]" (Agramon, qtd. in Crane 111–112). Prior to the demolition (and in a proposal echoing many of the sentiments that accompanied the destruction of the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents), the architect Eugène Beaudouin had proposed a total reconstruction of the area, asserting that:

The old town, poorly maintained and insalubrious, dishonors the city; after a necessary purification, it could become a city-museum – a place for promenading amidst the souvenirs of Old-Marseille (qtd. in Crane 146)

Indeed, such were the similarities between Beaudouin's designs and the German demolition that "many local residents believed that this operation had been undertaken expressly to implement Beaudouin's proposals" (Crane, 137), and, whilst Crane notes that there is little evidence that it served as "a direct impetus" for the occupying force's actions (142), she nevertheless contends that both projects (planned and executed) were fundamentally motivated by "[p]otent images of Marseille as a dangerously cosmopolitan city" (10). Vichy collaboration, French xenophobia and radical urban intervention thus point to the fact that the destruction of the Vieux-Port during the Second World War cannot be adequately accounted for by a simple narrative of Nazi violence.

Instead, study of the Fort Saint-Jean reveals a far more nuanced history of Marseillais authorities' efforts to police a diverse, dynamic and seemingly troublesome population. As early as the seventeenth century, the bastion was redesigned, not simply to defend against threats from without, but also to quell those from within. The layout of the contemporary site is largely the result of the fortress' reconstruction on the orders of Louis XIV (Pizzorni-Itié 65), a project undertaken after the city was militarily suppressed in 1660 after an uprising against his rule (Témime, *Histoire* 53). The renovation of the Fort Saint-Jean was thus intended to ensure not solely that "[t]he port, the arsenal and the city are protected" ("Le port, l'arsenal et la ville sont protégés"), but also that the installation could "overcome any revolt in the city" ("maîtriser toute révolte de la ville") (Pizzorni-Itié 69). This would rapidly result in the Saint-Jean's defensive capabilities coming secondary to its policing role: during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the fort saw use as a prison (95–96); and inspection of a plan from 1715 reveals a greater concentration of embrasures on its landward-

facing ramparts than on its coastal fortifications, enabling greater gunfire on the city than on the sea (83). Combined with the legacy of the German demolition and Vichy acquiescence, a closer examination of the Fort Saint-Jean therefore reveals a complex memory of the city's relationship with its multi-ethnic port society. Whilst MuCEM may claim to celebrate the diversity of the city's inhabitants and their transnational histories, the fort is revealed to have been both damaged by and implicated in the violent suppression of the very cosmopolitanism that the museum promotes.

What is revealed is a site possessed of a far more complex past than its contemporary form suggests. The renovation of the fort, and the installation of the Jardin des migrations in particular, is positioned as a "homage to the travellers from all horizons who once disembarked here" ("hommage aux voyageurs de tous horizons qui ont naguère débarqué là") (MuCEM, *Dossier* 20) and a symbol of the "exchanges between the countries bathed in the Mediterranean" ("échanges entre les pays baignés par la Méditerranée") (Bonney 10). Blanchard and Boëtsch note that Marseillais officials and urban planners often present their city as a cosmopolitan ideal that emphasises its diversity and tolerance, that "Marseille feeds off its own legends, those of a "cosmopolitan port" possessed of an identity of openness to the world" ("Marseille se nourrit de ses propres légendes, celles d'un "port cosmopolite" détenant une identité d'ouverture sur le monde") (14). What is promoted instead is a vision of the Mediterranean in distinctly French terms; one that claims to bring together diverse memories, spaces and times, but does so only from the perspective and for the purposes of the Métropole. Crane writes that "the very idea of the Mediterranean as a coherent terrain" has always been a "distinctly European one" (8); this has led to a French vision of the sea and its bordering territories that limits it to "a remarkably narrow corridor (such as Paris-Marseille-Algiers)" (9). The renovation of the Fort Saint-Jean suggests that this mentality still shapes visions for Marseille today: Roncayolo notes that the advocates of Mediterraneanism in the contemporary city "do not say anything different from writings of 1830-1850" ("ne disent rien d'autre que les écrits de 1830-1850"), except that "Europeans no longer have the impression of propagating civilisation, but instead of organising markets and aid" ("les Européens n'ont plus l'impression d'apporter la civilisation, mais d'organiser des marchés et des aides" (*Imaginaire* 350); he therefore concludes that "the current Euromed project

continues to inherit the difficulties encountered by that which was carried out under the Second Empire” (“le projet actuel d’Euroméd continue d’hériter des difficultés rencontrées par celui engagé sous le second Empire”) (*Abécédinaire* 6)²². To integrate a military installation, one directly implicated in the suppression of the city’s diverse population, into a museum that claims to celebrate the city’s cosmopolitanism thus appears highly problematic, the memory of the site at odds with the narrative curated within its renovation.

What is more, an awareness of the memories of violence that Marseille’s diasporic communities retain, brought to light by the work of cultural producers, prompts us to approach the Fort Saint-Jean and its implication in foreign conflict with an even more critical eye. The bastion has historically played a key role in European aggression abroad²³, and the Légion Étrangère has long held a garrison in the fort. First occupying the bastion in July 1830 (Porch 458), from 1918 it would be the only branch of the French military to be permanently garrisoned there (Pizzorni-Itié 104), using it as “the staging post and the first experience of Legion life for so many men bound for Sidi-bel-Abbès” (Porch 459). The site therefore has an intimate association with one of France’s most famous fighting units, and one that represented “an army specially tailored for colonial service” (271). Nevertheless, this is not a history foregrounded in the contemporary site, in which the barracks built for the Légion has been renamed the Bâtiment Georges-Henri-Rivière²⁴ and is today used as an exhibition space, bookshop and brasserie (Pizzorni-Itié 127). Indeed, Douglas Porch writes that “the presence of a regiment of foreign mercenaries seems to have passed virtually unnoticed” in the heart of Marseille (460), so that the questions of the fort’s complicity in the violence of France’s colonial project have largely gone unasked.

²² This project, commenced in 1995, has been carried out with the mission of “developping, upon a degraded port space, a global renovation project, the New Marseille” (“développant, sur un espace portuaire dégradé, un projet d’aménagement global, le Nouveau Marseille”) (“Stratégie”).

²³ The very name of the bastion derives from the Chevaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem who used it to support their involvement in the crusades (Pizzorni-Itié 35).

²⁴ This is named after the founder of the former Musée national des Arts et Traditions populaires (whose collections were later taken over by MuCEM and formed the foundations of their current holdings (Pizzorni-Itié 127).

It is instead through the Marseillais imagination that we may interrogate the fort more closely: in particular, the legacy of French oppression in Indochina evoked in Claudel's *La Petite fille*, and the knowledge that the fort was used by the Légion Étrangère, causes us to ask what role the installation may have played in this conflict. The Légion was particularly instrumental in the region's initial subjugation and colonisation, and continued to play a key role in the colony until France's withdrawal in 1954²⁵. That Claudel's novel connects Marseille with the atrocities of these final years thus leads us to imagine a similar link between the fort itself and the French Indochina War. This is unlikely to ever be substantiated with evidence; it is unclear precisely when the Légion ceased to use the Fort Saint-Jean as a base²⁶, and Edouard Launet notes that much of the Légion's archives "cannot be consulted, and their declassification is not foreseen" ("ne peuvent être consultées, et leur déclassification n'est pas prévue"). Nevertheless, that such a connection might be drawn prompts us to imagine the fort and its past differently, its memory shaped by the pasts in which it was potentially implicated as much as in those in which it was demonstrably involved. The memory of violence evoked in Claudel's novel therefore casts new light upon an edifice that was first and foremost a military installation; whilst we may never know the extent of the Fort Saint-Jean's implication in the French Indochina conflict, the very possibility of such a connection serves to complicate the memories associated with the site.

In studying the Fort Saint-Jean, therefore, what we observe is certainly a plastic site; one whose contemporary form is constituted by diverse pasts, anachronic and anatomic in their nature. Nevertheless, it is also a site whose memory proves equally as plastic as its material form, and in which the imagination might play a key role in its ongoing elaboration. Roncayolo reminds us that the imagination does more than "simply contribute to the reproduction of an order" ("concourir simplement à la reproduction d'un ordre"), depicting that which already is without altering it; instead, he contends, the imagination "participates

²⁵ The military historian Porch writes that the first battalions were sent to Indochina in 1883 (5065), and that this would prove to be the branch's "most popular garrison" for the next seventy years (5026). What is more, he contends that "the Legion's *tour de force* in Indochina occurred at what effectively amounted to the French finale there – the battle of Dien Bien Phu" (13161).

²⁶ Porch mentions only when the Fort Saint-Jean was first used, and not when it was eventually abandoned, and Florence Pizzorni-Itié only notes that the French army reoccupied the site after the Second World War, and not which units (if any) were garrisoned there (Pizzorni-Itié 113).

even more in the invention, in the discovery” (“participe encore plus à l’invention, à la découverte”) of a space, revealing what is there and producing it anew (*Imaginaire* 33). What is more, cultural media plays a critical role in the constitution of this space: Rothberg writes that the work of writers, artists and other producers transforms the “public sphere” into “a malleable discursive space”, in which both the locations in which we recall the past and the pasts that we recall prove open to reimagining even as their memory remains resilient (*Multidirectional* 5). Through the act of remediation, we may “build new worlds out of the materials of older ones” (5), even as these older worlds persist within our present: the result is a fundamentally plastic site, located between and constituted by both its material and its imagined dimensions. The study of Marseille’s cultural memory thus demonstrates how we might open up and participate in a site’s plasticity by situating it within a broader imaginary, guiding us to perceive more clearly those pasts already entangled within it, whilst also contributing new memory narratives to them. In the case of the Fort Saint-Jean, it is only by exploring Marseille first and foremost as it has been imagined, disclosing the memories already constellated within its streets and landmarks, and then approaching the installation in a way that is mindful of this existing and evolving memorial landscape that the site’s full complexity may be disclosed and developed.

Conclusion

It is evidently erroneous to suggest that Marseille is a landscape bereft of the material traces of its past; what this chapter has sought to illustrate, however, is that the city’s memory is perpetuated and shaped by its diverse cultural production. Illustrated in the texts that I examined is a multidirectional memory whose influence upon residents’ experience of the city is profoundly uncanny. Attia’s *Pointe Rouge* utilised the devices of the detective novel to expose diverse memories of violence and draw these into dialogue; it testifies to an experience of the present landscape that is destabilised as we recall other spaces and times. In Claudel’s *La Petite fille*, the traumatic past is worked through as the novels’ characters connect across differences of culture and experience; the landscape that the author reimagines is one that exceeds the material bounds of the Provençal capital, and that unites

rather than divides. Demonstrated in these novels is the way in which our remembering within space is defined by its anachronism and its anachronism, recalling not just heterogeneous times but far-flung locations. I closed my analysis by examining the site of the Fort Saint-Jean in a way that was mindful of this cultural production. Taking the carefully crafted memory narratives inscribed into the site's form during its recent renovation, I sought to discern the more complex web of pasts belying it, stories that we might have otherwise overlooked were it not for the study of Marseille's cultural memory.

Throughout this thesis, the case studies have been examined through the cultural media in which they have been reimagined. Central to its approach is the contention that "if cities are constructed through the act of collective imagination, then we need to look for the city in such media of the collective imagination" (Çinar and Bender xv), taking the often heterogeneous works that have engaged with a particular location, studying their representation of it and using these to reflect upon the nature of the present past in sites. Additionally, however, the examination of the Fort Saint-Jean has shown that such research may itself contribute to site's production, not just exposing existing memory connections, but tracing new ones that shape how it might be remembered in future. What we undertake is a cultural excavation of site, in which the uncovering and examination of the past does not leave its object of study untouched. Rothberg describes his approach as one that seeks to "wander amidst multiple ruins and practice an archaeology of the comparative imagination" ("Decolonizing" 233); he describes this as an act of unearthing, one that discovers the many memories that already define the spaces in which we live, and facilitates a productive dialogue between them. He therefore writes that the study of *multidirectional* memory is instrumental in "uncovering hidden histories, [and] traumas", working through "existing, unresolved divisions" (272), and facilitating an "ethical reckoning with pasts that remain unprocessed" (279). What is more, Rothberg contends that such work would not necessarily occur if it were not for the efforts of the memory scholar, he argues that "such reckoning will frequently, if not always, require a multidirectional excavation of intersecting histories" (279), the process of excavation essential to the act of remembering itself.

What Rothberg suggests, therefore, is that the study of memory reproduces the memory that it studies. Such a conclusion is shared by Olivier, who writes that the archaeologist does not

leave the past that he unearths untouched. He contends that “one cannot open the memory of the past without, in the same gesture, destroying it” (“on ne peut pas ouvrir la mémoire du passé sans, dans le même geste, la détruire”) (*Sombre* 12). This does not mean that a memory, once unearthed, is destroyed, but instead that it is always transformed to the extent that it no longer is what it once was. This act is not truly destructive, however, but productive of new memory. The archaeologist “pierces and slices” (“perce et tranche”), transforming the remnants of the past that s/he discovers; s/he “brings them together with other fragments with which they had never had anything to do” (“les rapproche d’autres fragments avec lesquels ils n’ont jamais rien eu à voir”), creating novel connections between times and spaces; and, in so doing, s/he “gives them a meaning that wasn’t their own” (“leur donne un sens qui n’était pas leur”), defining their memory anew (36). The study of cultural memory in the context of sites thus has profound implications for our understanding of sites themselves. As Erll writes, it represents “not an exercise in nostalgia, but can be a method to discover and reflect the mechanisms and potentialities of cultural change and renewal” (*Memory* 174). By exposing previously hidden pasts, facilitating unanticipated connections and reimagining the site within this new understanding, the study of sited memory reproduces that which it uncovers, contributing directly to its plastic unfolding.

Conclusion

This thesis set out with the objective of using site as a prism through which to examine the relationship between memory and space. Its aim was to investigate how the past remains present within the locations in which we live, and how our memories are influenced by and impact upon them. I have argued that sites are defined by plasticity: they demonstrate both resistance to deformation and openness to transformation; their form is sculpted over time as these simultaneous yet contradictory tendencies are negotiated; and this entails a past that both persists within a site and evolves as it undergoes further change. I have posited an understanding of site as composed of its material form, how it is lived by inhabitants and users, and how these individuals and communities conceive of the space that they occupy. The study of sites therefore enables us to examine how the past subsists within and gives form to a given space, as well as how the past is recalled in the ways that we live within and conceive of this space. I have consequently proposed an approach that I term sited memory: one that understands the site itself as both an inherited form and an ongoing work; one that deems it to be composed equally of its material configuration, social usage and cultural remediation; and one that comprehends it as constituted by a resilient yet dynamic memory and a multiplicity of present pasts.

Central to my thesis were several key questions. I aimed to evaluate what we consider to be the place of the past within a given site, and what happens to this past when its material form is changed or demolished. I asked how we understand the story of a site's evolution: does it conform to a neat, chronological narrative, or must our account of it be more multifaceted and dynamic? More than this, I sought to establish how we relate and contribute to the presence of the past within a site, assessing both how it shapes our activities and how our own activities shape it in turn. At the heart of my work, then, was the goal of defining precisely what we understand as a site: does it represent merely a physical space, or is it equally an imagined one, and how do we understand its production through time?

My work began by defining the site as plastic. I argued that the morphology of matter theorised by Malabou might be utilised to describe the dynamics that sculpt a particular space, and the place that the past occupies within it and the present forms to which it gives

rise. I have used plasticity to assert that site is defined both by its resilience and its malleability; the tension between the two sculpts its form through time, and ensures that prior events are always recalled within its current configuration, even as it is added to and modified. What results is a temporality rooted in the morphology of matter: sites are subject to a “moulding by memory” (“façonnement par la mémoire”) as pasts endure within a present form that continues to be endlessly reworked (Malabou, *Que faire* 45). This I interpreted as site’s memory, persistent yet dynamic, never entirely erasable nor indefinitely preservable, and always defined by the multiplicity of present pasts.

Building on this understanding, I returned to memory studies scholarship, discovering a wealth of writings on space and remembering, but also unanswered questions regarding the nature of the spaces in which we remember. I drew upon the work of these researchers in pursuing a culture-based approach to my case studies. Nevertheless, I also identified a critical ambiguity regarding the presence of the past in space; what went before is frequently deemed to be distinct from the now, and where co-existence is acknowledged, it is often unclear whether prior events represent a material constituent of the contemporary site, or a spectral presence that haunts it. This is in part due to a limited theorisation of spatiality itself; Pierre Nora’s terminology is frequently deployed, despite the fact that the *lieu de mémoire* does not refer solely, nor even primarily, to physical locations in his original work.

It was on this basis that I turned to geography, utilising site to more clearly identify my object of study. I argued that the model put forward by Schatzki offers a spatial framework that accounts for the locatedness of phenomena whilst being flexible as to the dimensions and function of the sites examined. It encourages a case-study-based approach whilst also facilitating comparison between heterogeneous examples. His theorisation characterises site as composed of material orders and social practices, so that we must account for both in our analysis. What is more, he deems site to represent both an inherited entity and ongoing work, both preformed and still in formation; it thus embodies a present past, yet one that remains open to further elaboration. Schatzki’s site consequently enables us to comprehend memory as both the past already embodied within a location and as an unfolding dimension of site in whose production we participate.

I consequently deployed this understanding of site to refine my approach to the ways in which the past inheres in space. I argued, however, that neither memory studies nor geography offered the terminology necessary for analysing and describing the present past: if authors such as M. Silverman, K. Till and Runia describe the past as a spectral or intrusive presence within the now, Schatzki deems the influence of prior events and processes upon contemporary activity to be limited. I subsequently drew on the work of contemporary French scholars Didi-Huberman and Olivier, their overlapping readings of Benjamin, and their theorisation of “material memory” (“*mémoire matérielle*”) to enrich this critical framework (Olivier, *Sombre* 67). I argued that Didi-Huberman and Olivier’s account of matter’s morphology is akin to that of Malabou, emphasising the continual balancing of persistence and change. What they describe more clearly, however, is the way in which multiple pasts endure, evolve and intertwine within the present of an object, so that its memory is defined by what Didi-Huberman defines as anachronism. What is more, the two theorists contend that the examination of the present past demands an excavatory approach drawn from Benjamin. They stress that we may only encounter the past within the present in which it survives, and that to study it demands “a “double archaeology” (“double archéologie”) that engages both the materiality of an object and the cultural production in which it has been depicted and rethought (Didi-Huberman, *Devant* 104). The critical lexicon developed by Didi-Huberman and Olivier, and excavation as first proposed by Benjamin, have consequently inspired both my reading of my chosen case studies, and the methodology I have used throughout my thesis.

Having outlined my critical framework for the examination of site, I set out how I had chosen my case studies and how I intended to approach them. I firstly drew on Lefebvre’s theorisation of social space and the trialectic of “perceived” (“*perçu*”), “lived” (“*vécu*” and “conceived” (“*conçu*”) that he deems to constitute it, using this to identify the nature of the sites I would select and the dimensions that I would examine. Drawing on the interconnections between Lefebvre’s and Schatzki’s work, I set out to interrogate lived spaces that have become associated with a diversity of pasts through a long history of usage: I chose sites in which memory is implicated in the everyday activities of the communities that inhabit them. What is more, I used Lefebvre’s work to approach space through its

physical form, inhabitation by communities and how it has been conceived: also citing Donald and Roncayolo, I argued that sites represent simultaneously material and imagined locations, defined by their construction, usage and representation, and set out to examine how these intersect in my case studies. Finally, I asserted that the way we think about site is informed by the cultural media in which it is depicted and recast; adopting the concept of remediation from the writings of Erll, I examined these works not just as exemplary of how the past is experienced and perceived in these locations, but as fundamentally constitutive of them.

In each of my case studies, I interrogated lived sites, locations that have become significant within the landscapes that they occupy as a consequence of their associations with the past, yet only as the result of a lengthy and ongoing history of usage rather than a single event. I consequently selected examples that, whilst symbolically significant, highly contested and often problematic locations, have only become so because remembering represents but one activity that occurs there, and not the purpose for which they were built. What is more, they are sites that have been physically preserved or reconstructed, used or reused by different communities, and culturally reimagined by a diversity of producers; they have become foci for memorial acts, and it is through this activity that I have studied the nature of sited memory.

In the example of the Seine, I analysed the temporality of the site, and asserted that this was too fundamentally complex to be conceived of through the euhronic narratives traditionally espoused by modernist history. Paris's central waterway, the embodiment of an ancient past that the city's citizenry both fêted and feared, would continually unsettle the project of the city's modernisation. In the photography of the 1910 flood may be discerned the profound anxiety prompted by a past that could not be surpassed, an ancient channel whose unpredictable and uncontrollable flooding was a reminder of what the modernists believed to have been left behind. Hugo's 'A l'Arc de Triomphe' further revealed an awareness of modernity's fragility: the poet muses that the seemingly permanent edifices of the nineteenth-century capital might one day lie in ruins within a flooded landscape, along with the progressive narrative of time that they were constructed to embody.

Instead, the river is illustrative of an anachronic memory, defined by a multiplicity of moments that persist, interact and evolve within the now. Sebban's *La Seine* enabled us to observe site as defined by a plastic temporality. It revealed the political possibilities afforded by approaching memory as a present and ongoing work, exposing previously undisclosed pasts to challenge the power relations that structure our landscapes, and drawing connections between different experiences in a manner productive of new solidarities. What the Seine ultimately demonstrates is that the past is not a book that may be closed: the now in which we encounter a site cannot be deemed distinct from the then from which it arose. Rather than conceive of its presence in terms of rupture, intrusion and haunting, we must instead approach the past as an inevitable component of the present landscape, one that both underpins its current form and dynamically evolves within it. Doing so encourages us to work with memory's productive potential, rather than to suppress it as problematic.

The Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George offered case studies through which to interrogate the extent to which memory narratives may be inscribed within a site by its designers and users. The two resorts were built to embody different interpretations of the Algerian past: the Aletti was built to define the colony's history in exclusively European terms, with no regard to the indigenous population; by contrast, the Saint-George claimed to celebrate this population, but appropriated and sanitised its culture for imperial purposes. Both instances are therefore illustrative of the construction of what Nora terms a *lieu de mémoire*. The objective was to set in stone a carefully curated history that would remain uncontested in perpetuity. More than this, however, they were constructed to physically and symbolically demarcate the past from the present, and to strictly limit who was permitted to participate in the writing of its narrative.

What we observe, however, is that the past in site cannot be so easily manipulated. What went before survives to unsettle the site from which it was omitted, the Aletti's European design recalling the local architecture from which it was intended to be distinct; in addition, subsequent usage has ensured that no version of the past remains untouched for long, the Saint-George acquired and reused by the post-colonial regime. The *lieu de mémoire* is consequently undermined by the *survivance*, the past's capacity to survive and, in surviving, to evolve, thereby precluding any definitive and inflexible memory narrative. A similar

conflict was observed in the work of ES'MMA, which further illustrated that the past can never be preserved as it was. The work of this online community is defined by nostalgia, seeking to restore something of a lost past in the present through their work; nevertheless, the Aletti that they reconstruct is so idealised as to be a fiction, at odds with the now in which the site has aged. Instead, as Sedira's *Saphir* demonstrates, the past may only be exposed and engaged as it persists within the present. Depicting the contemporary Safir and juxtaposing a young Algerian and an elderly Pied-Noir, the video installation opens up the site of the hotel and the pasts that define it through the technique of montage. In so doing, Sedira facilitates the production of novel memory narratives only by situating them in relation to those already existent within the site. If the Seine showed that we may never close the book on the past, therefore, the hotels illustrate that we can equally never simply turn back its pages. The site as it was is gone: its memory does not represent a past that may be transposed untouched into our time and crafted to suit its purposes, but instead an accumulation of moments that are always already reworked, and which may only ever be engaged through the present in which they are preserved.

My third chapter turned to the question of what occurs when a site is no longer. Focusing on the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, it studied how this Parisian landmark has been remembered despite its physical erasure over two hundred years ago. Efforts to efface the burial ground from the face of Paris would not prevent its survival as a *lieu malgré tout*, a site of which something persisted even as its traces appeared to have been obliterated. The cemetery's form and function would be recalled in that of the Catacombes, the ossuary built to ensure that Paris's medieval past would be forgotten in fact serving to promote its memory. It would further be remembered in the writings of Mercier, who celebrated the site's closure yet, in so doing, ensured that it would not be forgotten by preserving its memory in the imagination. What is more, the memory of the Saints-Innocents would attain additional potency through the work of such producers. Zola's *La Fortune* reimagined the cemetery in the fictional counterpart of the Aire Saint-Mittre: the author not only enabled the original site to survive within the cultural imagination, but accorded it a vital, disruptive and malevolent character that would define how the Parisian site would be remembered thereafter. Zola's novel thus represents an expression of what Didi-Huberman terms the

symptomal, the way in which the apparently absent site continues to exert an influence on the landscape from which it has been expunged, unsettling its occupants as much in memory as it did in reality.

Cultural media thus play a critical role in remediating site and facilitating its survival, and this prompts us to challenge the traditional distinction between presence and absence. *Assassin's Creed Unity* illustrated further how remediation enables former locations to persist, and how it shapes our conception of them in the now. The video game, far from reconstructing eighteenth-century Paris as a precise replica, instead reimagines it both to facilitate entertaining gameplay and to capture twenty-first-century perceptions of the Revolutionary capital. The cemetery is both recalled and reimagined: the digital landscape both emulates the material space that inspires it, and enables activities, experiences and narratives that would be impossible within the material city. Cultural remediation thus precludes forgetting and enables a site and its past to remain a vital and dynamic presence within the now. Indeed, its survival and manifestation are akin to that of the phantom limb: it encourages us to go further than a conception of space solely in terms of material presence and absence, and to recognise that that which may no longer be physically there may nevertheless continue to be incredibly real.

The final chapter of my thesis focused more closely on the role of remediation in our conception and experience of sites. Taking Marseille as my case study, I set out to examine how a city frequently deemed to be devoid of material traces of its past is defined instead by a memory that persists and evolves in its cultural production. Furthermore, I examined how these works not only constellated diverse pasts, but also a multitude of locations, unsettling our conception of space and time in a way that is profoundly uncanny. The result is an experience of space characterised not solely by what Didi-Huberman terms anachronism, but also by what Rothberg defines as anatopism, so that site is home to a memory that is both temporally and spatially heterogeneous.

In Attia's *Pointe Rouge*, I examined how the detective novel brings different memories of trauma into dialogue: it connected both the experiences undergone by communities and the locations in which they occurred, and in so doing exposed Marseille's place within a complex

topography of violence. Claudel's *La Petite fille*, by contrast, illustrated how such trauma might be worked through, constructing a memorial landscape that exceeds the city's physical bounds and unites rather than divides its Vietnamese and French protagonists. I then illustrated how the study of site with a consciousness of this anachronic and anatomic cultural imaginary might cause us to conceive of it differently. Examining the Fort Saint-Jean, I sought to open up the more complex memory connections that belie its recent renovation, and also to show how such a research process might produce its memory anew. It is consequently my contention that the act of examining sited memory itself contributes to its production: what we uncover about a site and the connections that we draw shape how it is conceived, so that the object of study and the individual studying are co-implicated.

My thesis has aspired to be radical in its interdisciplinarity. It has not been a case of citing geographical writings in a memory studies context, or vice versa; instead, these have been discussed and deployed in tandem, using the one to illuminate deficiencies in or to contribute novel understandings of the other. Indeed, my work has looked even further afield in its conceptualisation of sited memory. From the literary to the architectural, from neuroscientific concepts to archaeological excavation, I have argued that a common understanding of the morphology of form unites the literatures upon which I have drawn, one that I have defined as plasticity. What is more, through my translations of hitherto untranslated texts, I have sought to open up contemporary French literatures to an audience to whom they remain relatively unknown, as well as to show their potential for application in novel contexts. The works of Malabou, Didi-Huberman and Olivier are inconsistent in their availability to anglophone scholars, and have seen limited development and application outside of their native fields of philosophy, art history and archaeology. In my thesis, I aimed to illustrate how they might be theorised in dialogue with other disciplines, and applied in the focused study of sited memory, and my hope is that this work might provide a foundation for further exploration.

A further originality of my thesis is that, where literature, artwork and cinema have often been the preserve of memory studies (and indeed remain at the core of this thesis), I have also attempted to look beyond these to examine new media that are nevertheless implicated in the memory debates that surround our spaces. By studying online communities and video

games, I aimed to expand the corpus upon which we draw in our examination of memory, and to illustrate that no medium should be ignored that plays some part in constructing how we conceive of the past in the present. What is more, I argued that the video game in particular offers a unique experience of space and time that obliges us to conceive of them differently. Emulating the physicality of a given space and reimagining it in ways impossible within the concrete landscape, games that reconstruct and recast past sites represent a novel platform through which to study how we remember locations and events, as well as how our experience of their real-world spatiality is influenced by their digital form.

I believe that my work has significant implications both for the disciplinary fields drawn upon in this thesis and beyond them. My research has furthered the spatial turn within cultural studies more broadly and memory studies more specifically; I believe that the understanding of site drawn from Schatzki and elaborated throughout this thesis offers a critical framework that might facilitate new readings of remembering and space. Clarity might be afforded, for instance, to the examination of how we recall the past when its locations have been destroyed. If Hornstein is concerned with “[w]hat happens to the memory of an event if the site where that memory was recorded is demolished” (2), then a conception of site as simultaneously material, social and imagined, and thus as always capable of surviving effacement, might enable us to better comprehend the memorial “after-life” (“après-vivre”) of such spaces (Didi-Huberman, *Essayer* 19).

My thesis’ emphasis on how sites are imagined similarly advances the cultural turn ongoing in geographical scholarship; my analysis of literature, artworks and digital media both contributes to and expands work within literary geography and geohumanities. What is more, an understanding of site as plastic might make a substantial contribution to fields such as that of regional resilience. Gillian Bristow and Adrian Healey contend that work in this area examines “how both natural and social systems ... cope with and respond to the array of changes they are now facing” (6), and the “highly complex, non-linear and path-dependent system dynamics” that characterise a region’s development as it experiences both human crises and natural disasters (7). In seeking to comprehend what occurs when such landscapes and their inhabitants undergo upheaval, plasticity offers a metaphor for how

these adapt to radical change, how they overcome it, and how the existing system both endures and evolves as a result.

My research asserts that the past always persists within the present of a site, whilst remaining a dynamic constituent of it; the plasticity of space and time identified is consequently of interest to all those involved in managing landscapes and locations in which memory is of concern. My research therefore has implications for spatial policy and urban planning, particularly with regard to dealing with the legacy of problematic pasts. My study of both the Seine and the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents illustrates that what went before can never simply be got rid of: the memory of violent events or now regrettable activities cannot be expunged from landscapes, so that we must instead ask how we may better deal with what occurred. Similarly, my work is potentially relevant to the work of heritage management and questions of how we conserve the past. As my work on the Hôtels Aletti and Saint-George and on the Fort Saint-Jean indicates, if the past cannot be got rid of, nor can it be made to conform to a preferred narrative. The preservation of sites must thus take into account that these are still evolving, and must seek to work with its dynamism rather than to prevent its unfolding.

The approach taken to this thesis has proven a risky endeavour, for it is founded upon the simultaneous development of a theoretical framework and the working through of case studies. Preliminary conceptions were tested and rethought by utilising them to open up the individual sites and selected cultural artefacts. This continual back and forth between the object of study and the lens through which it was understood resulted in a continually shifting interpretation of precisely what sited memory represents. If my research has found site to be plastic, therefore, then my critical framework has become equally so. Discernible in the construction of my thesis is what Malabou calls a “psychic process of construction or rather of reconstruction and of reconfiguration” (“un procès psychique de construction ou plutôt de reconstruction et de reconfiguration”) (Malabou, *Que faire* 174), and this has at times proven problematic. As I have assimilated new ideas, or as my understanding of an existing concept has shifted, the appropriateness of a given case study or conclusions reached in earlier work have been repeatedly called into question. What made sense two or three years ago may have been radically rethought when it came to redrafting, and time constraints have

prevented me from scoping and studying new examples. The result is a thesis that could very easily be continually worked upon and adapted well into the future.

It also became increasingly apparent towards the end of my writing that significant insight could have been gained by field trips to the individual sites. My disciplinary background in cultural studies and history meant that my instinctive approach was to engage with the chosen locations through the diverse media to which they have given rise and through the historical accounts written about them. It was only through conversation with geographers and archaeologists later in my research that the future possibilities of a fieldwork methodology became increasingly apparent. The prospect of engaging with the material sites offers significant potential for further study, in particular examining the way in which my current conceptions, formed for the most part in absentia, might pre-form my encounter with the physical spaces themselves. If the cultural works analysed in this thesis have remediated the case studies, reimagining the way in which they formerly existed or currently exist, then to visit the locations themselves would be to interrogate how they have been “pre-mediated” for the individual first encountering them (Grusin 18), to illustrate how our experience of any site is already defined by the wealth of cultural associations that we all carry around with us. Whilst a limitation on my current research, therefore, the lack of fieldwork undertaken nevertheless recommends a course for future research.

In asserting site to be simultaneously plastic, anachronic and anatomic, my thesis has attempted to move beyond several critical dichotomies that have hitherto characterised memory studies and geography. The tendency to oppose the reality of present space to the spectrality of the past has been shown to underestimate the extent to which the then continues to physically and psychologically structure the now: memory does not haunt site, but forms its very substance. Furthermore, the study of site has revealed that conceptions of presence and absence fail to do justice to our far more nuanced experience of these locations; what has been expunged from the face of the landscape may nevertheless continue to inform how we conceive of and interact within it. Consequently, the traditional delineation between the physical location and how it has been (re)thought breaks down. As Donald writes, “traffic between urban fabric ... and imagination fuzzies up the epistemological and ontological

distinctions” (10), so that the material and the imagined site prove to be inextricably interwoven and co-productive.

There of course remain other dichotomies to be interrogated. How that which we cannot see within a given site may nevertheless give form to and influence that which we do has been hinted at in this work, yet remains to be answered conclusively. Didi-Huberman writes that “*to see does not mean to perceive*” (“*voir ne signifie percevoir*”), so that what constitutes a site and the temporalities constellated within it should not be limited to what is easily observable (*Devant* 219); the question of how the invisible dimension of space may be studied as underpinning its visible form therefore deserves future examination. In addition, whilst the question of the relationship between métropole and colony, centre and periphery, has been touched upon in my thesis, it remains to be fully unpacked. Plasticity might offer a model which better accounts for the relationship between the spaces of colonialism and post-colonialism, examining not just how imperial regimes sought to impose their vision upon their overseas territories, but also how these locations and communities would shape the spaces of their colonisers.

I believe that a plastic understanding of site offers a critical framework through which such questions may be tackled, a means by which the pasts that structure our material and imagined landscapes may be exposed, explored and engaged. Plasticity enables us to conceive of temporality and spatiality differently: it offers a means by which to understand our present as holding in tension a diversity of times, both past and prospective; and it encourages us to approach sites both as an always pre-formed context and as a work in progress. Within this framework, memory forms part of the substance of what we experience in a site, and remembering is implicated in our every activity within it. If this thesis has revealed memory to be defined by its plasticity, therefore, then plasticity is inconceivable without the memory that its unfolding produces: the site produced as the forces of persistence and change play out through time forms the context of our never-ending yet always changing relationship with the present past.

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