Between Distance and Proximity: Contemporary French and Francophone Holocaust Literature

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis examines a corpus of texts by French and Francophone writers published from 1997 to 2018 that deal with questions of memorialisation of the Holocaust for those who come *after* this traumatic event. It argues that contemporary French writing about the Holocaust can be characterised by a complex interplay between distance and proximity. Thought of in terms of a dialectical relationship rather than as binary opposites, postmemorial writers simultaneously mobilise notions of distance and proximity to convey the ambivalence of their positions towards an event which, despite lacking direct memories of it, haunts them.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. After an introduction that sketches out the theoretical stakes of Holocaust memory as it transitions from living to cultural memory, each chapter, through the pairing of two texts, examines one aspect of the ambivalent memory produced by postmemorial texts – its temporality, its entanglements with other histories and stories, its engagement with the archive, and its mobilisation of a spectral imaginary – and how it relates to a complex dialectic between distance and proximity. In Chapter 1, I look at Laurent Binet's *HHhH* (2009) and Pierre Bayard's *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourrreau?* (2013) and demonstrate how, by disrupting a linear and homogeneous temporality, they perform a simultaneous gesture of distance and proximity that conveys the otherness and plurality of the past. In Chapter 2, I focus on Marie Bardet's *À la droite du père* (2018) and Anouar Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* (2015) and deconstruct the binary opposition between vertical and horizontal memory dynamics, developing a model of rhizomatic memory in which disparate elements are brought into proximity. In Chapter 3, I argue that Marianne Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* (2009) and Ivan Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* (2012) elaborate a poetics of the archive that holds in productive tension affective proximity to and critical distance from the archive. In the final chapter, I interpret the proliferation of spectral figures, at

once distant and near, in Lydie Salvayre's *La Compagnie des spectres* (1997) and Jean-Claude Grumberg's *Rêver peut-être* (1998) as closely tied to an interrogation on the possibility of justice. Both texts underline the ethical responsibility of the postmemorial subject to the spectral Others, regardless of temporal distance.

What emerges from my reading of these texts is a memory that attempts, through a complex, and at times ambivalent, dialectic of distance and proximity, to come to terms with a world profoundly transformed by the atrocities of the twentieth century.

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Introduction

Published just before the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a poll conducted amongst French adults in January 2020 revealed that a majority of French people (57%) did not know that six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust (Lemaignen, 2020). In addition, 16% of respondents said that they had never heard of the term 'Shoah' (which is more commonly used in France than the term 'Holocaust'), and only 2% said they were familiar with the name Drancy. If those results, together with the recent rise in anti-Semitic crimes, paint a bleak picture of the current state of Holocaust memory in France, they also stand in contrast to the recent French literary production that has established the Holocaust as one of its major foci.[1] The sheer number of texts published in French that are concerned with this historical period certainly seems to attest to the huge interest this difficult past continues to garner amongst writers. Despite greater temporal distance, the traumatic imprint of the Holocaust thus still seems to be very much felt by contemporary French and Francophone writers, and more specifically by writers born *after* this traumatic event and whose connection is thus indirect. This thesis is concerned with the texts produced by those writers, whom I call 'postmemorial writers' and, more specifically, with the question of how they navigate their ambiguous position towards an event which, despite lacking direct memories of it, appears to haunt them.

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[1] Even if literary prizes do not give an exhaustive nor a necessarily accurate picture of the literary landscape, it is noteworthy that, over the last twenty years, the Prix Goncourt, Renaudot, Goncourt des lycéens and Femina have regularly been awarded to texts dealing with the Holocaust or the Second World War (Chassagnon, 2017).

In this thesis, I argue that a dialectic between distance and proximity is best suited to approach the literary production written by those without a direct experience of the Holocaust who come after the event. This is not an entirely new development, for the first generation already used a dialectic of proximity and distance, and this thesis's argument therefore inscribes itself in the broader context of Holocaust literature. However, this thesis represents, first and foremost, an attempt to demonstrate the specificity of the interplay between distance and proximity that is used by postmemorial writers. Writing in 1947, Robert Antelme in *L'Espèce humaine* recounts his experience upon his return to 'normal' life in those terms:

> Et dès les premiers jours cependant, il nous paraissait impossible de combler la distance que nous découvrions entre le langage dont nous disposions et cette expérience que, pour la plupart, nous étions encore en train de poursuivre dans notre corps. Comment nous résigner à ne pas tenter d'expliquer comment nous en étions venus là ? Nous y étions encore. Et cependant c'était impossible. A peine commencions-nous à raconter, que nous suffoquions. A nous-mêmes, ce que nous avions à dire commençait alors à nous paraître inimaginable. (1999 [1947], p.9)

Antelme conveys the impossibility to speak the unspeakable through the collapse of distance and proximity: the experience of the camp in the past is still continuing in the present, the boundaries between the then and the now are suspended. This reversal of distance and proximity that Antelme feels in his body is also found in Charlotte Delbo's writing. In *Mesure de nos jours* (1971), the third volume of her trilogy *Auschwitz et après*, she writes for instance,

> Comment me réhabituer à un moi qui s'était si bien détaché que je n'étais pas sûre qu'il eût jamais existé ? Ma vie d'avant ? Avais-je eu une vie avant ? Ma vie d'après

> ? Étais-je vivante pour avoir un après, pour savoir ce que c'est qu'après ? Je flottais dans un présent sans réalité. (p.14)

Like Antelme, Delbo similarly highlights an oscillation of distance and proximity, between the here and there, the now and then.

This thesis argues for the continued relevance of the dialectic of distance and proximity as it unfolds in four different areas: the use of a non-linear time, the entanglements of Holocaust memory with other histories and stories, the archive, and the spectral. I explore this question in a corpus of texts published over twenty years, from 1997 to 2018, written by both writers with a familial connection (Marianne Rubinstein and Ivan Jablonka belong to the third generation (or perhaps more accurately to the '2.5 generation'); while Jean-Claude Grumberg – who was born in 1939 in Paris – belongs to the '1.5 generation'), as well as texts written by those with no direct familial ties to the Holocaust (Laurent Binet, Pierre Bayard, Marie Bardet,[2] Anouar Benmalek, Lydie Salvayre). This selection of texts aims to reflect the contemporary French literary landscape in which several generations coexist and publish simultaneously.[3] It also helps establish that the questions this thesis will explore – temporality, the connective nature of memory, the archive, the spectral – are not confined to one specific generation, but instead connect those different generations. Further, the texts included range from

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[2] In Bardet's case, her family history is however intimately linked with Vichy: her father Gaston Bardet, a fervent Anti-Semite, was the architect put in charge of the urban planning of the town of Vichy by Maréchal Pétain.

[3] Evelyne Ledoux-Beaugrand aptly describes the current French literary context as one in which 'les voix des héritiers officiels d'une mémoire de la Catastrophe, transmise pour une part à travers une parole familiale, souvent fragmentée et entre-tissée de silence, et portée, pour l'autre part, par les discours sociaux et les représentations, côtoient désormais celles d'auteurs qui n'entretiennent avec ces événements qu'un rapport affiliatif' (2013, p.146).

fiction, theatre, autobiographical writing, essay, to non-fiction, showing that the questions those texts are concerned with are not confined to one particular genre.

The purpose of this introduction is to contextualise this corpus of texts and situate my argument. In order to do so, I shall provide an overview of some of the key theoretical discussions and debates that have both influenced and been influenced by Holocaust literature. In what follows, I will first trace the evolution of the place of the figure of the witness, highlighting its instrumental role in Holocaust memorialisation, and show its continued relevance – even as 'l'ère du témoin' is now inevitably drawing to an end. I will then turn to Marianne Hirsch's influential concept of 'postmemory' – a concept to which I will repeatedly return throughout this thesis – and discuss the ethical issues such a concept must address and that, I suggest, notions of distance and proximity can help formulate. I will then address the implications of Hirsch's broadening of the scope of her initial concept beyond the structure of the family through the idea of 'affiliative postmemory'. While Hirsch's notion of affiliative postmemory strongly resonates with Alison Landsberg's 'prosthetic memory', I argue that one also needs to take into account the wider ways in which the Holocaust and the concentration camp system have left an imprint on society as a whole, which have for instance been conceptualised through the idea of 'l'univers concentrationnaire'. I will then move on to briefly discuss the ways in which the relationship between history and memory has been theorised, before discussing the specificity of the French memorial context. While this type of survey is, unfortunately, unavoidably reductive, my aim in this introduction is to highlight the complex, multi-faceted nature of Holocaust memory and outline the contours of my argument.

0.1 Witnessing from a Distance

In this section, I retrace the evolution of Holocaust memorialisation through the figure of the Holocaust witness. Focusing first on the figure of the witness, and its instrumental role in shaping Holocaust memory, will help me introduce the challenges brought about by the transition from living memory (or 'communicative memory' in Jan Assman's terminology (2008)) to cultural memory.

In *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (1990 [1987]), Henry Rousso's influential study of the evolving memorialisation of the French collaborationist past, the author identifies four phases: a period of unfinished mourning immediately after the war (1944-1954); a period of repression (1954-1971), with a resistancialist myth being encouraged and actively promoted by Charles De Gaulle; the 'miroir brisé' phase (1971-1974) characterised by a paradigm shift, with filmmakers and writers like Marcel Ophüls and Patrick Modiano exploring the dark years of the Occupation and subverting the dominant narrative that had focused only on the Resistance;[4] and finally, a period of obsessive return to the past which, according to Rousso, persists to this day.

Rousso's analysis can helpfully be read in tandem with Annette Wieviorka's *L'Ère du témoin* (1998) that focuses on the figure of the witness. The figure of the witness has undoubtedly occupied a central place in the memorialisation of the Holocaust, significantly shaping Holocaust memory. As Wieviorka argues, the Eichmann trial in 1961 was a mass media event (it was the first trial in history to be filmed in its entirety) that marked a turning point in the memorialisation of the Holocaust, witnesses being

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[4] For Rousso, the start of this period is marked by Ophüls *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (1971). The influence of Modiano should also be noted in this period – he published *La Place de l'Etoile* (1968), *La Ronde de nuit* (1969), *Les Boulevards de ceinture (1972)* (often referred to as his trilogy on the Occupation) and co-wrote the scenario of *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) with Louis Malle. This is also the period of the 'mode rétro'. Robert Paxton's historical study *La France de Vichy* (1973 [1972]) was also instrumental in bringing about a re-evaluation of France's wartime past.

recognised, for the first time, as key actors. Before then, survivors' testimonies did not find an audience, as the condition for the testimonial process to take place – the need for 'a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an *other* – in the position of one who hears' (Laub, 1992, p.70, original italics) – was not being fulfilled. For Wieviorka, since the late 1970s that saw the mass recording of video testimonies as well as the Americanisation of the Holocaust, the figure of the Holocaust witness has become prominent in the public sphere, signalling the beginning of what she calls 'l'ère du témoin'. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, writing in the early 1990s, reach a similar conclusion, arguing that 'our era can precisely be defined as the age of testimony' (1992, p.5).[5]

Before discussing the changes brought about to this configuration with the advent of the second and third generations, I will first discuss the figure of the Holocaust witness that has become inseparable, as Wieviorka's analysis demonstrates, from the memory of the event. This focus on the witness in the public sphere must be understood in conjunction with the various theoretical writings that have grappled with the complexity of the very act of witnessing in the context of traumatic events. Indeed, how can one bear witness to an event that has been characterised – given the unprecedented scale of the Nazi genocide that entailed the will to erase all evidence and witnesses of their crimes – as 'an event without a witness' (Felman and Laub, 1992, p.75)? The difficulty of the task that befalls the survivors who choose to write about their wartime experiences is poignantly articulated by Primo Levi in *The Drowned and the Saved* (1988 [1986]). Levi emphasises the paradoxical position of the survivors, arguing that 'the survivors, are not

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[5] Prior to the advent of the era of the witness at the end of the 1960s, some key texts had already been published. Robert Antelme, for instance, published *L'Espèce humaine* just after the war in 1947; Anna Langfus published her play *Les Lépreux* in 1953 and her trilogy of novels in the early 1960s (*Le Sel et le Soufre* (1960), *Les Bagages de sable* (1962), and *Saute, Barbara* (1965)); Elie Wiesel's *La nuit* was published in 1958. But, as Annelise Schulte Nordholt notes, in Antelme's case, his text only had a significant impact when it was republished in 1978 (2008, p.26, n.8). In Langfus's case, despite *Les Bagages de sable* being awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1962, it is only in the 1980s and 1990s that her work began to be more widely discussed (2008, p.31).)

the true witnesses' (1986, p.84). However, because the dead – the true witnesses for Levi – cannot testify to their own annihilation, it falls to the survivors to 'speak in their stead, by proxy' (p.85). That the Holocaust, because of its traumatic nature, is not directly accessible, even to those who have experienced it, is a point also made by Cathy Caruth. Caruth, who draws on Sigmund Freud's notion of *Nachträglichkeit*, explains that a traumatic experience, because it cannot be fully assimilated when it occurs, repeatedly and belatedly returns (1996, p.11). Because of this belatedness, trauma can thus only be made sense of through its relation to another time and another place (p.19). This leads Caruth to argue that 'one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another' and that 'trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound' (p.8). This claim has been important for the conceptualisation of the transcultural turn in memory studies, which I will discuss later on in this introduction.

With the figure of the witness having been so intimately tied with Holocaust memory, it is therefore not surprising that, with the era of the witness inevitably drawing to an end,[6] questions about the future of Holocaust memory have come to the fore. Nevertheless, the notion of witness has proved its continued relevance, with discussion about 'secondary witness' (LaCapra, 1999), 'vicarious witness' (Zeitlin, 1998), or 'witnesses by adoption' (Hartman, 1996, p.8). Laub, for instance, discussing his experience with the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University as interviewer in survivor testimonies, writes that 'the listener [to trauma, of the Yale's oral testimony project], therefore, has to be at the same time a witness to the trauma witness and a witness to himself' (1992, p.58). But this focalisation on the notion of witness has also been subject to intense debate, with Gary Weissman arguing that the

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6 For Ledoux-Beaugrand, we are now 'à l'aube "d'une ère sans témoin"' (2013, p.147).

use of the term 'witness' is misleading, for it blurs the line between survivors and non survivors, revealing instead 'fantasies of witnessing' (2004). He encourages instead the use of the term 'nonwitness' that 'stresses that we who were not there did not witness the Holocaust, and that the experience of listening to, reading, or viewing witness testimony is substantially unlike the experience of victimization' (p.20). Weissman's objection alerts us to the risk of appropriating and over-identifying with others' experiences, but also testifies to the compelling hold this past has, even on people who have not personally experienced it and/or who do not have a direct link such as a familial one.

However, despite Weissman's objections, I suggest that the notion of witness can still prove pertinent for thinking about the relation to the Holocaust of those who come after. Fransiska Louwagie argues that the testimonial quality of the texts of the subsequent generations stems not from a fantasy of having been *there* or having seen, but from '[soit leur] engagement existentiel avec le sujet des camps, le sort des victimes ou les conséquences de la Shoah, soit avec des questions mémorielles et éthiques qui dépassent [leur] sort individuel et [leur] propre autobiographie' (2008, p.182). In a similar vein, but discussing more specifically the second generation, Cécile Wajsbrot, a writer and a member of the second-generation herself, explains that while the subsequent generations cannot produce testimonies of the events of the Holocaust, their writing can testify to the difficulties of living in the shadow of their parents' past and of the intergenerational imprint of trauma. She writes,

> Nous avons beaucoup attendu, prisonniers des douleurs de nos parents et perdus dans nos dédales intérieurs, dans les récits labyrinthiques de ceux qui s'étaient d'abord tus. Eh bien, il est temps d'exister à notre tour et pour cela, de montrer que nous ne sommes pas les simples dépositaires des témoignages antérieurs, que nous aussi, nous sommes les témoins de quelque chose, et que ce quelque chose,

> s'il est moins spectaculaire que la catastrophe, est tout aussi important. Il s'agit de témoigner des difficultés de l'après – l'*aftermath*, comme on dit en anglais, la lente digestion des choses, l'appropriation, la symbolisation, il s'agit de donner sa portée universelle, non à Auschwitz, car c'est maintenant fait et c'était le travail de ceux d'avant, mais à l'après d'Auschwitz, il s'agit de dépasser nos biographies empesées, empêtrées dans l'impossible absorption des faits par nous seuls pour étendre cet après, le symboliser à notre tour et cesser de tourner autour de l'éternelle orbite' (2008, p.29, original italics)

What Wajsbrot touches on here is precisely the gist of the concept of postmemory, Marianne Hirsch's influential term that seeks to elucidate the relationship of the second generation with the traumatic past of their parents and that I propose to discuss in the next section.

0.2 Postmemory

It is with respect to the second generation[7] – usually understood as encompassing children of Holocaust survivors, but sometimes including those beyond – that Marianne Hirsch developed the notion of postmemory. Drawing on Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* (1986) as well as her own experience (her parents escaped the Holocaust), Hirsch

[7] In the taxonomy of intergenerational memory, one also finds the term '1.5 generation'. The 1.5 generation is Susan Suleiman's term that designates child survivors of the Holocaust. With this term, Suleiman seeks to grasp what for her differentiates the experience of child survivors to that of members of subsequent generations, namely the fact that, even though they were too young to fully comprehend what was happening, they nonetheless were first-hand witnesses (2002, p.77). An alternative name for this generation is the 'liminal generation' (Jaron, 2002). Georges Perec, who was born in 1936, is one example of a writer who belongs to this 1.5 generation. Other writers of the 1.5 generation notably include Marcel Cohen, Jean-Claude Grumberg and Sarah Kofman.

first defined, in her article 'Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory' (1992), postmemory as:

> distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Post-memory should reflect back on memory, revealing it as equally constructed, equally mediated by the processes of narration and imagination. […] Post-memory is anything but absent or evacuated: It is as full and as empty as memory itself. (pp.8-9)

Whilst memory is always mediated, the mediated nature of the 'memories' inherited from previous generations must be emphasised. By situating postmemory in reference to the relationship between history and memory, Hirsch also inscribes the notion of postmemory within the broader debates surrounding the relationship between history and memory (which I will discuss shortly) and implicitly addresses Saul Friedländer's concern that with the passing away of survivors 'the destruction of the Jews of Europe will become an empty formula and, in any case, "mere history"' (1993, p.48). Since then, Hirsch has revisited and refined her definition of postmemory. The most comprehensive (and most often quoted) definition of the term provided by Hirsch is the following one:

> 'Postmemory' describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life story displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events

> that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue in the present. This is, I believe, the structure of postmemory and the process of its generation. (2012, p.5, original italics)

Importantly, whilst feeling strongly connected to a past they have not experienced themselves, postmemorial subjects remain aware of the unbridgeable distance that separates them from this very past. In their attempts to connect with that past, through imagination and creativity, they therefore also maintain a sense of critical distance.

While Hirsch's concept has proven incredibly influential,[8] it has also generated some scepticism. Ernst van Alphen (2006) for instance argues that postmemory is a form of wishful thinking, for, according to him, like the term 'second generation', it implies a continuity between the experiences of survivors and that of their children born after the war.[9] Van Alphen is doubtful about the idea that trauma can be transmitted across generations. In the same vein, Richard Crownshaw (2014) has suggested that Hirsch's concept runs the risk of appropriating victims' memories and identities. In her formulation of postmemory, however, Hirsch is careful not to equate the experience of survivors with that of subsequent generations. In so doing, she endorses Eva Hoffman's words in *After Such Knowledge*: 'We who came after do not have memories of the Holocaust. Even from my most intimate proximity I could not form "memories" of the Shoah or take my parent's memories as my own' (2004, p.6).[10] What van Alphen and

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[8] While Hirsch's postmemory has proven to be one of the most (if not the most) influential models theorising the relationship of the post-Holocaust generation and the traumatic past that precedes them, it is not the only term. Henry Raczymow for instance elaborates a similar notion in his essay 'La Mémoire trouée' (1986).

[9] Recent research in epigenetics have shown the lasting impact of trauma across generations (see Yehuda et al., 1998; Lehrner et al., 2014)

[10] Although in his article van Alphen contrasts Hoffman's position with that of Hirsch's, Hoffman's conceptualisation of the relationship between survivors and their children is much closer to Hirsch's than what van Alphen implies. Further, while she criticises the notion of 'second generation', Hoffman herself does use that very term. She writes for instance: 'The guardianship of the Holocaust is being passed on to us. The second generation is the hinge

Crownshaw question is the ethical potential of postmemory. Hirsch herself addresses this question by suggesting that postmemory is a form of 'heteropathic memory' (2012, p.86), a reference to Kaja Silverman's model of 'heteropathic identification'. Heteropathic identification, as opposed to idiopathic identification which assimilates the other, entails the realisation that the experience one empathises with remains fundamentally other and different; it is a kind of 'identification at a distance' (1996, p.37). Like Hirsch and Silverman, Dominick LaCapra is likewise aware of the risk of appropriation and over-identification that arises 'when the virtual experience involved in empathy gives way to vicarious victimhood, and empathy with the victim seems to become an identity' (2001, p.47).[11] This leads him to what he calls 'empathic unsettlement', a form of ethical empathy that resists full identification and appropriation. Instead, it is dependent 'on one's own potential for traumatization (related to absence and structural trauma) and on one's recognition that another's loss is not identical to one's own loss' (p.79). Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties surrounding the idea of empathy, empathy is desirable for LaCapra because of its role in historical understanding and the ethics of everyday life (p.219).

In light of this discussion, it appears that notions of distance and proximity are key to an ethical form of postmemory. Taking this observation as a starting point, this thesis posits that postmemorial subjects reconfigure in innovative ways the relationship between distance and proximity in their texts. Rather than presenting them as opposites or mutually exclusive, I will argue that postmemorial writers simultaneously foreground their desire for proximity to a distant past and the unbridgeable distance that separates

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generation in which received, transferred knowledge of events is transmuted; into history, or into myth' (2004, xv).

[11] Hirsch herself has addressed this line of criticism – that postmemorial subjects, appropriating their parents' experiences, seek to assert their victimhood – by stating that 'postmemory is *not* an *identity* position but a *generational* structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation' (2012, p.35, original italics).

them from this very past. As opposed to a kind of proximity that overcomes distance, their affective engagement with the past is one that highlights the irreducible alterity of the dead Others, an insight from Levinasian ethics.[12] This thesis will therefore demonstrate that the project of the writers of the post-Holocaust generation subscribes to Andreas Huyssen's words according to which,

> The mode of memory is *recherche* rather than recuperation. The temporal status of any act of memory is always the present and not, as some naïve epistemology might have it, the past itself, even though all memory in some ineradicable sense is dependent on some past event or experience. (1995, p.3, original italics)

Returning to van Alphen's criticism that the idea of postmemory implies a sense of continuity from the survivors to the next generation(s), one can argue that if there is indeed continuity, it lies not in their experiences but in the need to remain ever attentive to the issue of identification. For Robert Eaglestone, what makes Holocaust testimony a new genre of writing is the unresolved tension between '[its] form [that] leads to identification while [its] content and surrounding material lead away from it' (2002, p.119).

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[12] This is also an insight that has been developed by feminist theory. Julia Kristeva, in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (1998), writes for instance : one must 'ne pas chercher à fixer, à chosifier l'étrangeté de l'étranger. Juste la toucher, l'effleurer, sans lui donner de structure définitive. Simplement en esquisser le mouvement perpétuel' (p.11). See also Ahmed (1998).

0.3 Beyond the Family: Affiliative Postmemory, Prosthetic Memory, and the Concentrationary

While initially, the notion of postmemory referred exclusively to children of Holocaust survivors, Hirsch has gradually broadened this notion by applying it to the third generation as well as by developing it into two strands: filiative and affiliative – a move that has attracted some further criticism. While the former's focus remains on the family as a key structure of transmission of memory, the latter is

> the result of contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation, combined with a set of structures of mediation that would be broadly available, appropriable, and indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission. (2012, p.36)

The increasing attention towards non-filiative connections to the Holocaust can also be seen in Landsberg's concept of 'prosthetic memory', a form of affiliative memory that designates memories of a past one did not live but that one can take on as a result of an encounter with a deeply affective narrative of the past – which can take the form of a reading of a book, a watching of a film, or a visit to a museum (2004, p.2). Here it is once again important to underline that neither Hirsch nor Landsberg, through their conceptualisations of 'postmemory' and 'prosthetic memory', seek to undermine the difference between authentic memories acquired from first-hand experience and mediated memories; the prefix 'post' and the adjective 'prosthetic' serve to reinforce the secondary and mediated nature of such memories. Cultural memory is always bound up with processes of mediation (Erll, 2011a, p.113), and this question of mediation, on both individual and collective levels, is key to both the notions of postmemory and prosthetic memory.

Weissman is one of those who have expressed concerns that the broadening out of the idea of 'second generation' erases the differences of experiences between children of survivors and people who have no such family ties (2016). On the other side of the spectrum, one finds Efraim Sicher who incorporates all those who come after in his definition of the 'second generation' (1997, p.7), or Ellen S. Fine who talks about 'the post-Holocaust generation', which encompasses those born during and after the war, including not only those with a familial connection but more broadly those 'who have come to endure the psychic imprint of the trauma' (1997, p.186). Those positions represent the two sides of the debate: while one side focuses on preserving the differences between the different generations and is wary about the possible conflation between survivors and non survivors, those with family ties and those without, the other side emphasises what the different generations, despite their differences, have in common. The latter position is also that of Annelise Schulte Nordholt, who asks:

> Faut-il séparer de manière absolue les deux expériences [génération liminale d'une part et de l'autre, 2ème et 3ème générations] ? Ne se rejoignent-elles pas là où elles témoignent toutes deux de 'l'après Auschwitz', là où elles appartiennent toutes deux à ce que j'ai appelé ailleurs 'la génération d'après' ? […] Leur expérience n'est pas celle des évènements eux-mêmes, mais de leur difficile transmission et élaboration dans l'univers d'après, c'est l'expérience de 'l'après-coup'. (2008, p.8)[13]

This thesis situates itself in-between those two positions: while being aware of the limitations of the notion of generation (the potential homogenisation of experiences it carries), it nonetheless acknowledges that the prism of generation remains an influential one. It retains Hirsch's distinction between filiative and affiliative postmemory but also

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13 Annelise Schulte Nordholt uses the term 'la génération d'après' in reference to Robert Bober's 1971 film *La Génération d'après*, but, unlike Bober's film which focuses on hidden children, her use of the term encapsulates children-survivors like Perec and children of survivors (Modiano and Raczymow) (2008, p.15).

calls for an understanding of time that challenges the temporal linearity implied within generational thinking. The decision to include writers with both types of connections – filiative and affiliative – in this thesis simultaneously acknowledges the enduring influence of the family as a vehicle of memory transmission and reflects the increasing influence of a turn towards an affiliative, postfamilial version of postmemory. What filiative and affiliative postmemory have in common is the realisation, as James Young puts it, that 'none of us coming to the Holocaust afterwards can know these events outside the ways they are passed down to us' (1988, vii).

In addition to affiliative forms of postmemory or prosthetic memory, this thesis is also concerned with the wider ways in which the Holocaust leaves an imprint on society as a whole, rather than on specific individuals. This very idea is at the heart of the notion of the 'concentrationary universe' that was first identified by David Rousset, a Mauthausen-Gusen survivor and returning political deportee, in his work *L'Univers concentrationnaire* (1946), and further developed in various ways by Hannah Arendt and Jean Cayrol, among others. It refers to the fact that the concentration camp system of the Third Reich, characterised by extreme violence and dehumanisation, did not end with the liberation of the camps in 1945 but continues to haunt the post-Holocaust world. Recent work by Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, through their series of edited volumes on the concentrationary, has been instrumental in bringing to the fore and further conceptualising this idea.[14] They have notably developed the ideas of 'concentrationary memories' and 'concentrationary imaginaries'. As Pollock explains,

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14 Pollock and Silverman's series on the concentrationary consists of four edited volumes: *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's Night and Fog* (2012), *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance* (2014), *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing Totalitarian Violence in Popular Culture* (2015), *and Concentrationary Art: Jean Cayrol, the Lazarean and the Everyday in Post-War Film, Literature, Music and the Visual Arts* (2019).

> The first expands the field of memory studies allying itself with the urgency of Holocaust memory while drawing out a parallel field that does not coincide completely, but is not entirely separable in some key locations. The second addresses the dissemination of the concentrationary in and by popular culture where the powerful role of film, music, and the visual image circulate elements of this other universe, often normalizing its logics, while continually accommodating us to the acceptance of its often violent and violating premises under the rubric of entertainment. (2019, p.240)

Crucially, both terms demonstrate the necessity of an 'aesthetics of resistance' (p.240): if the dehumanising logic of the concentrationary transcends the boundaries between the camps and post-war life and persists today, albeit in different forms and in different places, it is the task of concentrationary art to help us detect the ways in which the concentrationary has been normalised in contemporary culture. The idea of the concentrationary, though in a far more diffuse way than the intergenerational transmission of trauma within a family system, represents another important conceptual approach through which to explore the imprint of the Holocaust on post-war society in ways that affect us all. It also prompts us to reconsider the binary between distance and proximity: the concentrationary, rather than being a threat that belongs to a distant past, in fact coexists with our 'normal' everyday life – although its presence often goes unnoticed.

0.4 History and Memory

Here I briefly discuss the complex relationship between history and memory, which will come to the fore on a number of occasions in this thesis. This thesis, in line with recent scholarly developments that owe much to the linguistic turn, will argue that, in the wake

of the extreme violence of the twentieth century, one needs to re-evaluate the idea of a strict separation between history and memory. This paradigm shift has been the subject of intense criticism – with claims that the linguistic turn (and post-structuralist thought more broadly) is dangerous, or that the growing emphasis on memory in our contemporary societies threatens history – and in the following discussion I address this criticism.

The encounter of historians with testimonies – together with the linguistic turn of the 1970s, which challenged many historiographical assumptions by drawing attention to the narrative nature of history writing – [15] also importantly brought about a reflection on the relationship between history and memory. Friedländer and LaCapra, among others, advocate the need to move beyond a positivist understanding of historiography that values objectivity and acknowledge the fact that history is always in a dialogical relationship with memory. In doing so, they also highlight the need to re-evaluate the ways history and memory have been commonly defined: the former as an objective account of the past and the latter as personal recollection. For LaCapra, history and memory are best thought of in conjunction rather than as mutually exclusive since,

> History may never capture certain elements of memory: the feel of an experience, the intensity of joy or suffering, the quality of an occurrence. Yet history also includes elements that are not exhausted by memory, such as demographic, ecological and economic factors. More important, perhaps, it tests memory and ideally leads to the emergence of both a more accurate memory and a clearer appraisal of what is or is not factual in remembrance. (1998, p.20)

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[15] For a detailed genealogy of the term 'linguistic turn', see Surkis (2012). Judith Surkis demonstrates that there was no singular turn as such but rather a multitude of discussions in the 1980s and 1990s all problematising, but in varying ways, the relationship between language and the production of knowledge.

In agreement with LaCapra, Friedländer encourages the integration of the victims' voices into the historian's narrative in order to 'express, however inadequately, the breakdown of all norms and the dimensions of suffering that traditional historiography cannot easily deal with' (2000, p.15). Friedländer's *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (2007), with its inclusion of Jewish individual testimonies that disrupt the overarching historical narrative, is one such work that challenges the boundaries of a traditional historical narrative. Instead of a narrative dominated by the sole authoritative voice of the historian, Friedländer crafts a polyphonic work. For Alan Confino, it is therefore a 'historical narrative against itself […], a book built on its own contradiction: describing the past as history and setting at the same time the limits to that describing' (2009, p.211). These points about Holocaust historiography must be understood within the wider discussions about the nature of historical representation that were happening in the 1970s onwards. In this respect, Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973), in which White notably develops the idea of emplotment, defined as 'the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind' (p.7), proved influential in bringing to the fore the narrative nature of history.[16] Around the same time, French thinkers such as Paul Veyne (1971) and Michel de Certeau (1975) were also producing a rich body of works exploring the writing of history. In *Comment on écrit l'histoire* (1971), Veyne famously writes that '[l'histoire] est un roman vrai' (p.10), it is:

> un récit d'événements : tout le reste en découle. Puisqu'elle est d'emblée un récit, elle ne fait pas revivre, non plus que le roman ; le vécu tel qu'il ressort des mains de

16 *Probing the Limits of Representation* (1992), a volume edited by Friedländer, was also instrumental in bringing to the fore issues surrounding the limits of historical representation specifically with regards to the Holocaust. This edited volume notably includes White's article 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth' (pp.37-53).

> l'historien n'est pas celui des acteurs ; c'est une narration, ce qui permet d'éliminer certains faux problèmes. (p.14)

By contrast, a more traditional view of the relationship between history and memory is articulated by French historian Antoine Prost for whom 'La demande de mémoire comporte toujours une dimension affective […]. L'histoire, elle, est du côté de la connaissance, du savoir ; elle est mise à distance, rationalisation, volonté de comprendre et d'expliquer. Ce qui n'est pas toujours compatible avec la mémoire vive' (2000, p.5). Whilst Prost opposes the affective nature of memory to the objectiveness of history, I will deconstruct this dichotomy and show that a much more complex relationship between affect and cognition, memory and history is at play in the postmemorial generations' texts.

It is worth noting here that the linguistic turn, which crystallised questions shared by poststructuralist thinkers regarding the writing of history, has often been received with suspicion, with claims that postmodernism (or poststructuralism), because it challenges the idea of history being an objective science, represents a slippery slope potentially leading to Holocaust denial. To equate postmodern thinkers with Holocaust deniers stems from a flawed reasoning: as Eaglestone has shown in his analysis of the 2000 Irving/Lipstadt libel case,[17] 'Holocaust denial is not history that is inaccurate: it is no sort of history at all, and simply cannot be discussed as if it were' (2004b, p.243). Against these misconceptions, Eaglestone further argues that postmodernism (or poststructuralism) – and in particular the thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida – can be understood as a response to the Holocaust. What Eaglestone detects in Levinas's and Derrida's philosophies is 'a humanism beyond humanism, based on a sense

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[17] In 2000, David Irving sued Deborah Lipstadt who had accused him of being a Holocaust denier in her book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (1993).

of the "fundamentally fragile, corporeal existence" and on an awareness of "the trace", of that otherness which escapes the limits of systems of thought and language but is made manifest in them' (p.3) and 'an awareness and consequent rejection of the metaphysics of comprehension' (p.4).

In other words, it is the presence of a sense of otherness that resists totalisation and normalisation. In line with Eaglestone, this thesis will also argue for the potential of poststructuralist thought – especially in its articulation of otherness and its refusal of binaries – to grasp the complex and multifaceted nature of Holocaust memory.

If there are some who perceive the linguistic turn as dangerous (even if, as I have just shown, their critique actually stems from a reductive understanding of the ideas that underpin this paradigm shift), there are also some critics who have voiced concerns about the very place and role of memory in our contemporary societies. Questions of memory have seemingly come to dominate the public sphere, and Jay Winter's observation that "'memory" is the historical signature of our own generation' (2001, p.66), though written two decades ago, still seems to ring true nowadays. Perhaps the quintessential illustration of this phenomenon is – even more so than the numerous commemorations of various historical events that regularly take place – the omnipresence of the idea of the 'devoir de mémoire' in media and political discourses.[18] This very notion has been highly criticised, notably by Tzvetan Todorov (1995) who argues that this often leads to 'abus de la mémoire' that promotes a culture of victimhood. Likewise, Olivier Wieviorka slightly alters Annette Wieviorka's argument about the development of 'l'ère du témoin'

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[18] For an overview of the evolution of the notion of 'devoir de mémoire', see Lalieu (2001). Olivier Lalieu explains that the notion was first put forward by 'le mouvement des déportés' (with notably the 'Fédération Nationale des Déportés et Internés Résistants et Patriotes' (FNDIRP)) immediately after the Libération. However, it is only in the late 1970s that it was introduced to a larger public. For Lalieu, the activists Beate and Serge Klarsfeld were instrumental in bringing to the fore the need to remember the genocide of the Jews on its own rather than as a mere facet of the wartime past. In the 1990s, the term became highly popular and a recurrent topic of discussion in the media.

by suggesting that since the 1970s, 'la figure du héros s'efface devant celle de la victime' (2010, p.186).

It is perhaps in Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984-1992) – a text that rapidly established itself as a seminal text for the study of memory in France and beyond – that one can paradoxically find one of the most violent criticisms regarding the ascent of memory in contemporary French society, Nora talking about a 'terrorisme de la mémoire' (1984, xxviii) and 'boulimie commémorative' (1993, p.4687).[19] In his insightful critique of Nora's thought, Kenan van de Mieroop demonstrates that Nora's distrust of memory is part of a broader political context in which

> [t]he concepts of 'history' and 'memory' have taken on a supplementary socio-political meaning: memory is associated with community identities, and hence is deemed prone to particularism and division, while history is associated with the French Republic, inclusion and universalism. (2016, p.184)[20]

In this perspective, memory is seen as divisive, serving identity politics and threatening French identity and unity.[21] The noted omission of colonial sites in Nora's monumental project, that has 'become emblematic of a certain French incapacity and/or unwillingness to engage with the inherent and increasingly undeniable imbrication of the colonial in the

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[19] Nora is not alone in using a lexical field of disease to discuss the French memorial culture. Rousso follows suit and, as mentioned previously, diagnoses the 'Vichy syndrome'. Thomas Ferenzci, for his part, asks 'La France est-elle malade de sa mémoire ?' (2002, p.13).

[20] This is notably visible in the introduction of the *Lieux de mémoire* when Nora writes: 'il y a autant de mémoires que de groupes ; qu'elle est par nature, multiple et démultipliée, collective, plurielle et individualisée. L'histoire, au contraire, appartient à tous et à personne, ce qui lui donne vocation à l'universel' (1984, xix).

[21] Although he is one of the most visible and vocal historians in the media, Nora is not isolated; he is notably President of the group of historians 'Pour la liberté' founded in 2005 to protest against the rise of memory.

roman national' (Achille, Forsdick, and Moudileno, 2020, pp.5-6, original italics) can also be understood in this broader context.[22]

Taking note of the shortcomings of Nora's project, this thesis inscribes itself instead into the recent development of memory studies that has seen an emphasis on conceptualising memory beyond national borders and the framework of the Nation State. Memory studies scholars have increasingly challenged the belief that memory could be neatly contained within rigid national boundaries and have instead highlighted the dynamicity of memory and the ways in which, by coming into contact with other memories, it is reshaped and transformed. One illustration of this shift is the proliferation of terms such as 'cosmopolitan memory' (Levy and Sznaider, 2002), 'multidirectional memory' (Rothberg, 2009), 'travelling memory' (Erll, 2011b), 'palimpsestic memory' (Silverman, 2013) or 'globital memory' (Reading, 2016). This recent development owes a lot to trauma studies that have, since the early 1990s, emphasised the potential of trauma to act as a transcultural link (Caruth, 1996). The transcultural turn is characterised by the will to move beyond the traditional framework of the Nation State, which is seen as narrow and static, and hence not able to account for the increasingly fluid and dynamic cultural and memorial phenomena that occur in a globalised world. Astrid Erll's 'travelling memory' (2011b) is one example of a concept that tries to grapple with the intensification of the circulation of memories on a global scale and highlights the need to understand memory beyond national frameworks. Growing interactions between the fields of Holocaust studies and postcolonial studies have been an important

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[22] In Nora's case, it is fair to talk of a staunch rejection of the colonial past rather than a mere unwillingness to discuss it. Nora recently declared in a radio interview that 'il n'y a pas de repentance à avoir' regarding French colonialism (2021). In the same interview, he also reasserts his refusal to incorporate events that he does not deem to be contributing to a positive narrative of the French nation. He thus dismisses the commemoration of the 150 years of the Paris Commune 'qui n'a pas apporté grand-chose à la construction de la République', while praising the commemorations of the bicentennial of Napoléon's death whom he describes as 'un personnage historique qui a eu sur l'Europe des conséquence si positives'.

development, which has contributed to the emergence of this so-called transcultural turn. Following a long tradition of twentieth-century thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon who explored the relationship between the Holocaust and colonialism, Michael Rothberg (2009), Bryan Cheyette (2013) and Max Silverman (2013) have articulated and explored connections between different histories of atrocities in recent years. Rather than being studied in isolation, increasing attention is now being paid to the way histories of violence and trauma resonate with one another and how the memory of one event is to some extent shaped, transformed, and modified by these connections. One prime example of this is Rothberg's concept of 'multidirectional memory' that posits the need to move away from a competitive understanding of memory, a 'zero-sum game' in Rothberg's words, and towards a dialogical understanding of memory (2009, p.11).

0.5 Contemporary French Memorial Context

While Holocaust memory has, since the late 1970s, come to occupy a central place in contemporary French society, commentators have noted a further intensification of interest in recent years. According to Helena Duffy, there has been an additional increase of interest in the Holocaust from French and Francophone writers and artists since the mid-1990s. For Duffy, a key catalyst in this process was the speech delivered in 1995 at a memorial for the victims of the Vel d'hiv roundup by the then President Jacques Chirac. In this speech, Chirac acknowledged France's responsibility in the deportations of Jews – the first time a French President had done so. This speech enacted an important change in France's memory politics, and according to Duffy, acted as 'a catalyst for French-language Holocaust literature' (2019, p.3).

Unlike Duffy and Rousso, Manuel Bragança (2014) argues that this traumatic past is no longer 'un passé qui ne passe pas' and that contemporary writers tend to adopt a more distanced stance towards this past. Bragança, who focuses on the bestselling novels about the Second World War published since 1945, proposes another periodisation that challenges Rousso's by categorising those novels in four categories: 'les romans engagés' (1945 – early 1960s), 'les romans des survivants' (mid-1950s – mid-1970s), 'les romans gris' (late 1960s – beginning of the 2000s), and finally 'les romans distanciés' (2000s). Of particular interest for this thesis is this last category, that encompasses novels such as Laurent Binet's *HHhH* (2009), Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes* (2006), Yannick Haenel's *Jan Karski* (2009), Fabrice Humbert's *L'Origine de la violence* (2009). For Bragança, *HHhH* (one of the texts that I will examine in this thesis) can be considered the 'archétype de cette nouvelle vague' (2014, p.316). According to Bragança, signs that the 'obsessional phase' identified by Rousso is drawing to an end notably include an emphasis on the European dimension of the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust and the retrospective position adopted by the narrators. While Bragança seems to be arguing that distance is the notion that best characterises contemporary texts about the Holocaust and the Second World War, this thesis will instead contend that these texts partake in a complex, dynamic dialectic between distance and proximity. Bragança's point about the transnational dimension of the event as being more readily discussed by writers does not necessarily only result in an effect of distanciation, but instead, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, shows awareness of the intertwined nature of different histories together and demonstrates the fluidity of memory that travels across boundaries. Furthermore, I will also argue in Chapter 1, in contrast to Bragança, that the retrospective position adopted by writers, that does certainly create a distanciation effect, is also always in tension with a desire for proximity to a past that they have not personally experienced.

For Frédérique Leichter-Flack, Chirac's speech signalled the beginning of the integration of the Holocaust into national political memory. This shift in memory politics has had noticeable effects and has encouraged the creation of a 'a national third generation, not just the third generation in a family or a community' (2015, p.76). For Leichter-Flack then, the French memorial context, influenced by new political developments, has encouraged the advent of the third generation, which, in this perspective, is understood not merely as the coming of age of grandchildren of survivors or victims of the Holocaust eager to discuss the experiences of their ancestors and the impact it has had on them, but extend more broadly, beyond the family sphere.

According to Aurélie Barjonet, the third generation gained visibility in France with the publication of Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*, which was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 2006 (2019, p.55). Given that Littell's grandparents are not Holocaust survivors (his grandparents were Jews who emigrated from Russia to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century), it is particularly interesting that it is this novel that marks the ascent of the third generation, and suggests that the third generation is made up of individuals with ties to the Holocaust of various nature – familial, affiliative, cultural, affective, political, etc.[23] The publication of Littell's novel was notably followed by Haenel's *Jan Karski* in 2009. The publication of both these texts was accompanied by heated controversies, which contributed further to their visibility. Littell's novel, although it was a commercial success, divided the critics.[24] The fact that it is told from the

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[23] This is in keeping with recent scholarship on the third generation. Recent attempts to conceptualise the third generation notably include the edited volumes *Third-Generation Holocaust Narratives. Memory in Memoir and Fiction* (2016) edited by Victoria Aarons, and *In the Shadows of Memory: the Holocaust and the Third Generation* (2016), edited by Esther Jilovsky, Jordana Silverstein and David Slucki. Both of these edited volumes use a broad definition of the third generation. Aarons thus writes that 'to limit the definition of "third generation" to direct familial ties – an uninterrupted line from grandparent to grandchild – does not get at the range of expression and representation found among contemporary narratives that return to the Shoah' (2016, xvi).

[24] For a detailed discussion of the reception of Littell's novel in France, see Laurent (2010).

perspective of a Nazi perpetrator proved highly divisive, even though it was not the first time a novel had used such a narrator.[25] Claude Lanzmann, who had already criticised Littell's novel, unequivocally condemned Haenel's *Jan Karski*, which he qualified as 'faux roman' (2010). Historian Annette Wieviorka, for her part, described it as a 'faux témoignage' (2010). This latter accusation implicitly puts Haenel's text in the same category as Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* (1996). Presented as an authentic testimony, it was later discovered to be instead a fictional novel, since its author, whose real name was Bruno Dössekker, was not a Jewish Holocaust survivor as he pretended. In the case of Wilkomirski, it is the violation of the testimonial pact which, according to Renaud Dulong, rests on the declaration 'j'y étais' (1998, p.56) that proved unethical. Wieviorka's criticism thus seems unjustified: unlike Wilkomirski, who aspired to be a member of the 1.5 generation, Haenel, as a member of the third generation, is not subjected to the same testimonial pact. Louwagie shows that the testimonial pact is reconfigured for those who come after: the statement 'j'y étais' becomes 'je n'y étais pas et je n'y serai jamais' (2008, p.182).[26] What these controversies reveal is the enduring relevance of the epistemological debates surrounding the representation of the Holocaust, especially in fiction.

In addition to Littell's and Haenel's texts, numerous other texts have been published, including Thierry Hesse's *Démon* (2009), Humbert's *L'Origine de la violence* (2009), Binet's *HHhH* (2010), Arnaud Rykner's *Le Wagon* (2010), Colombe Schneck's *La Réparation* (2012), or Nathalie Skowronek's *Max en apparence* (2013), to name but a few. This testifies

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[25] See Robert Merle, *La mort est mon métier* (1952) for instance.

[26] For an in-depth and nuanced discussion of Haenel's novel, see Duffy (2018). Duffy convincingly proposes to view Haenel's text as performing an act of 'metawitnessing': 'the act of testifying on behalf of a witness, which, analogically to metafiction, is underpinned by a self-reflective meditation upon the mutually contradictory necessity and impossibility of bearing witness (for a witness)' (p.5).

to the vitality and diversity of this literary production. The diversity of this literary production partly explains why critics have been unable to provide a definitive, exhaustive analysis of this generation. Critics have nonetheless suggested some tentative themes and questions that might bind these texts together. Aarons and Alan L. Berger have, for instance, suggested that the texts of the third generation often feature 'a search for details' (2017, p.15), a pattern of 'affective transference' (p.25), a sense of loss and absence (p.31), 'an almost obsessive pattern of contemporizing the Holocaust, of negotiating the Holocaust as a parallel event to other, more contemporary, tragedies' (p.35). For Diana I. Popescu and Tanja Schult, on the other hand, it is the assumed relevance of the role of the imagination that characterises the post-witness era (2015, pp.1-2). There is thus no apparent consensus about the distinctive features of the third generation.

In fact, the third generation does not enact a rupture with the previous generations; the relationship between the different generations is much more about continuity than it is about rupture. One visible illustration of this is the remarkable frequency with which Aarons and Berger refer to Henry Raczimov, a second-generation writer, to define the aims of the third generation (2017, pp.4-6). In their introduction to *'After' Testimony: Holocaust Representation and Narrative Theory*, Jackob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman and James Phelan reflect on the very use of the word 'after' in the title of their edited volume, suggesting a multi-layered meaning. The phrase 'after testimony' invites us to reflect on a new phase of Holocaust memory in which first-person testimonies by Holocaust survivors will no longer be possible; it also encourages us to consider another meaning related to artistic creation, where 'the phrase seeks not to describe artistic imitation but rather to suggest that all works dealing with the Holocaust must in some way come to terms with the historical reality that the accounts of survivors have tried to communicate' (2012, p.2). In this account, the word 'after' conveys a sense of continuity; the post-

memory generations are not only writing in the shadow of the Holocaust, but after a rich body of literature that precedes them.[27]

0.6 Thesis Overview

In the first chapter of this thesis, I look at Laurent Binet's *HHhH* (2009) and Pierre Bayard's *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourrreau?* (2013) and show that, rather than adopting a linear and homogeneous temporality, these texts foreground temporal dissonances and non-chronological time, which I will investigate through the philosophies of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and Emmanuel Levinas. While Popescu and Schulte argue that imagination is key to the post-witness era writers, in this chapter I will explore how postmemorial writers specifically re-imagine time beyond linearity. This allows Binet and Bayard to negotiate the ambiguity of their positions in seeking to create memories of an event they have not experienced themselves. In doing so, I argue that they perform a simultaneous gesture of distance and proximity that conveys the otherness and plurality of the past. By depicting the past as other and plural, these texts also challenge François Hartog's claim that we have now entered an era dominated by the omnipotence of the present, and in which past and future have become fully subservient to the present.

Not only does the memory produced by contemporary writers foreground a complex relationship between past and present; it is also deeply connective, and it is this

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[27] Judith Klein interestingly suggests that the literature of the Holocaust can, to a certain extent, be read as prolonging the earlier literature that emerged in reaction to modernity. Indeed, she suggests that 'Si l'holocauste peut être compris comme l'autre face de la modernité, la littérature de l'holocauste pourrait être considérée comme le miroir grossissant de certains choix esthétiques de la modernité. Elle ne serait donc pas en rupture avec la littérature moderne, mais prolongerait ou porterait à leur comble certains de ses procédés' (1999, p.436). On the contrary, for Myriam Ruszniewski-Dahan, the Holocaust can be considered as an 'évènement fondateur d'un renouvellement littéraire' (1999, p.10).

relational aspect that I will discuss in the second chapter. Framing my discussion once again around distance and proximity, I will investigate how meaningful connections between seemingly distant places and times are made. Focusing on Marie *Bardet's À la droite du père* (2018) and Anouar Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* (2015), two texts that unravel the threads of history, one memory leading to another, I will deconstruct the binary opposition between vertical and horizontal memory dynamics, and highlight points of connection between different memories of atrocities – the Holocaust, the Herero and Nama genocide, the Lebanese civil war and incest. In doing so, I develop a model of rhizomatic, relational memory in which disparate elements are brought into proximity without losing sight of the singularity of each element.

In Chapter 3, my attention will turn to what appears to be another key aspect of the memorial practice of contemporary writers who lack a personal experience of the Holocaust: its relationship with the archive. In a memorial context often characterised by a compulsion to record traces of the past, gripped by an 'archive fever', I will argue that the problematisation of the archive carried out in many texts challenges a model of archival memory in which traces of the past could be easily retrieved. Rather, through the deployment of a fragmentary aesthetics, they emphasise the irrecoverable loss of the past and a dialectic between presence and absence, affect and cognition, distance and proximity. Investigating the place of archival documents and significance of the archive in Marianne Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* (2009) and Ivan Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* (2012), I will show how these texts participate in elaborating a poetics of the archive that reveals both the affective power of archival fragments and the violence that is the very condition of existence of these fragments. This chapter will ultimately argue that the postmemorial engagement with the archive is characterised by a dialectical relationship between critical distance and affective proximity.

In the final chapter, I focus on a recurrent figure in texts that deal with the Holocaust: the spectre. I will demonstrate that this ambiguous figure is one that perhaps best embodies the kind of memory elaborated in the previous three chapters: a sign of the intrusion of the past into the present, the spectre transgresses temporal boundaries and disrupts linearity; it is a reminder of the violence of history and past atrocities; hovering between life and death, the spectre participates in the same dialectic of presence and absence as the archive. Exploring this spectral imaginary eventually allows me to highlight a critical dimension of the engagement of contemporary texts with Holocaust memory: the need to resist present and past injustice. Building on Jacques Derrida's concept of 'hauntology' as well as his reflections on justice, I interpret the proliferation of spectral figures in Lydie Salvayre's *La Compagnie des spectres* (1997) and Jean-Claude Grumberg's *Rêver peut-être* (1998) as closely tied to an interrogation on the very possibility of justice. Building on Felman's argument that '[b]etween too much proximity and too much distance, the Holocaust becomes today accessible […] in [the] space of slippage between law and art' (2002, p.107), I will show how the spectre confronts the inadequacy of the law and resists dehumanisation, asking what it means to be human in the post-Holocaust world.

Overall, this thesis suggests that contemporary French and Francophone writing about the Holocaust can be productively characterised by a complex interplay between distance and proximity.

Chapter 1

Imagining Time: Non-Linearity and Temporal Dissonances in Laurent Binet's *HHhH* (2009) and Pierre Bayard's *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau ?* (2013)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the use of non-linear time by postmemorial writers. In my exploration of Laurent Binet's *HHhH* (2009) and Pierre Bayard's *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau ?* (2013) (hereafter *Aurais-je été*), I show that what first appears as a profoundly dissonant, even potentially problematic, relationship between past and present can in fact account for the otherness of the past. Both narrators of *HHhH* and *Aurais-je été* negotiate, in unconventional ways, the distance that separates their enunciative positions (anchored in the present) to the past with their desire for proximity to this very past. I elucidate the entanglement of past and present, virtual and actual, at the forefront of Binet's and Bayard's texts thanks to Henri Bergson's and Gilles Deleuze's philosophies of time. This allows me to demonstrate that *HHhH*'s challenge to the linear time of historiography reconfigures the relationship between past and present, and provides a novel way of approaching distance and proximity in postmemorial texts – not as binary opposites but as closely intertwined. On the other hand, I show that the criticism of linear time in Bayard's text lies in the way it limits the notion of the possible as past presents. Instead, I demonstrate that Bayard's text endeavours to open up the infinite virtual possibilities of the past by detaching the instant from the linear succession of time that erases the heterogeneity of each instant.

In the introduction of this chapter, I first briefly discuss the use of non-linear time by survivors, with examples from Charlotte Delbo and Jorge Semprun. I argue that, in the case of first-generation writers, non-chronological time is used mainly to convey the traumatic nature of the Holocaust and as a form of resistance to the linear time of modernity. As Zygmunt Bauman and others have shown, modernity, in its pursuit of rationality and efficiency, provided a framework that made possible the extreme violence of the Holocaust. This latter aspect helps explain the endurance of a non-linear, fragmented time – a key part of modernist and avant-garde practice – for writers who acutely perceive the continuation of dehumanising practices in post-war everyday life, as it manifests for instance in colonial violence. From this initial discussion contextualising the use of non-chronological time by first generation Holocaust writers, I then move on to discuss how subsequent generations have approached time, and speculate as to why non-linear time forms such a central aspect of their writing. While, with regards to the writing of survivors, distance and proximity can be seen in the tension between the then and now, the here and there, that stems from the difficulty to reconcile the experience of the Nazi camps with post-war life, later generations face a different set of challenges. Writing about an event situated in a past that grows further distant and that they have not directly experienced, postmemorial writers have to negotiate the ambiguity of their own positions. They also evolve in a different temporal context, the linear pace of modernity having been replaced, according to François Hartog and other thinkers of postmodernity, by an omnipresent present that eats away the past and precludes the future. In this chapter, I argue that in order to elucidate the complex temporal dynamics that often feature in texts by postmemorial writers, turning to Bergson's model of time, and Deleuze's further conceptualisation of that model, proves productive. Through close reading of Binet's *HHhH* and Bayard's *Aurais-je été*, I demonstrate that their challenge to linear time should be understood as an attempt to preserve the alterity of the past.

In *La Mémoire et les Jours* (1985), Delbo contrasts the process of a snake shedding its old skin and gaining a new one, seemingly unburdened by the past, with the impossibility she experiences of leaving the traumatic past of the camp behind and starting afresh. The shedding process experienced by the snake can only be a short-lived illusion in her case, for the boundaries she erects between her 'mémoire profonde', which includes her visceral memory of Auschwitz, and her 'mémoire ordinaire' prove porous. She writes: 'La peau dont s'enveloppe la mémoire d'Auschwitz est solide. Elle éclate pourtant, quelquefois, et restitue tout son contenu' (p.13). Asked by an imagined interlocutor if she lives 'avec Auschwitz', Delbo replies 'Non, je vis à côté' (p.13). What becomes evident here is that Delbo's deep and common memories do not coexist on separate planes, but rather partake in a complex pattern of intertwining, the traumatic past always susceptible to disrupting the present and unsettling linearity. For Lawrence Langer who analyses this very same passage, 'the doubling that Delbo speaks of invalidates the idea of continuity, and even of chronology, the testimonies from former victims *seem* to offer us by the very structure of their narratives' (1991, p.5, original italics). Delbo's testimony thus highlights a key feature of testimonial writing for Langer: 'cotemporality', which 'as witnesses struggle with the impossible task of making these recollections of the camp experience coalesce with the rest of their lives', becomes the 'controlling principle of these testimonies' (p.3). The reintegration into post-war 'normal' life is at odds with the uncanny feeling of sliding between different times experienced by Delbo and other returnees of the camps. This reintegration is made all the more difficult by the observation of the continuation of extreme violence. As Michael Rothberg suggests, a substantial reason that encouraged Delbo to publish her Auschwitz trilogy was the political context of the 1960s, marked by colonial atrocities perpetrated by France, notably the use of torture against Algerians (2009, p.200).

Another example from Delbo, this time from *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* (1970 [1965]), alerts us to the need to rethink, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, our understanding and perception of time. In 'Le printemps' (pp.174-182), a passage in free verse, Delbo writes,

> Ici, en dehors du temps, sous le soleil d'avant la création, les yeux pâlissent. Les yeux s'éteignent. Les lèvres pâlissent. Les lèvres meurent.
>
> Toutes les paroles sont depuis longtemps flétries
>
> Tous les mots sont depuis longtemps décolorés
>
> Graminée – ombelle – source – une grappe de lilas – l'ondée – toutes les images sont depuis longtemps livides. (p.180)

Here, Delbo conveys not only the failure of language and images to communicate the experience of the camp (paradoxically through the very use of poetic language that conjures up and subverts familiar images) but also the peculiar temporal dimension of Auschwitz, where Delbo was interned. Maurice Blanchot's statement in *L'Écriture du désastre* (1980) that '[l]a souffrance ne se présente pas, n'est pas portée (encore moins vécue) au présent, c'est sans présent, comme c'est sans commencement ni fin, le temps a radicalement changé de sens' (p.30) certainly seems to apply to Delbo's temporal experience, who locates the traumatic experience of the camp outside linear time.

Jorge Semprun's *Le Grand Voyage* (1963) is another text in which linearity is suspended. Whilst centred on the excruciating five-day journey from Compiègne to the concentration camp of Buchenwald in a cramped freight car, the narrator intersperses various memories, including of his past as a Spanish refugee child, a pupil in a Parisian high school, a resistant during the war, but also of his return to post-war life, effectively disrupting the linear succession of past, present and future. This temporal dimension of Semprun's text leads Langer to name it 'the most successful artistic attempt' to render

the tension between chronological time and what Langer calls 'durational time' (1995, p.16). In Langer's terminology, durational time, unlike chronological time, 'does not believe in or allow for any sort of foreclosure towards the past: *its* foreclosure expels the future' (p.20, original italics)[28]: when trauma precludes the linear flows of time, a new time unfolds, one characterised by discontinuity.

Rather surprisingly, Langer, in his conceptualisation of 'durational time', does not refer to Bergson, who developed the notion of 'durée' at the turn of the twentieth century. Bergsonian duration is radically different from a spatial understanding of temporality in which past, present and future are viewed as successive (spatial) points. With the notion of duration, Bergson develops instead a qualitative, psychological understanding of time that takes into account the fluid nature of time, as opposed to the scientific, purely quantitative time that reduces time to space (1908 [1889], p. 76). What Langer's durational time and Bergson's *durée* have in common is their refusal of linear time; where they differ is that, while Langer's traumatic time repeats itself (it is 'a constantly re-experienced time' (1995, p.15)), leaving the traumatised subject trapped in the past, for Bergson the past never repeats itself identically in the present, the act of remembering being inherently creative. Because for Bergson (and Deleuze), the process of actualisation of the past in the present is essentially a process of differentiation, of suspension of linearity and creation, the past can never be replayed identically.

Langer's exploration of time is therefore much closer to a Freudian and Caruthian understanding of traumatic time. The idea that the traumatic experience of the camps is

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[28] Other critics have also commented on this aspect of Semprun's work. Valérie Capdevielle-Hounieu for instance argues in her analysis of Semprun's writing that the Buchenwald camp is conceived as '[un] espace de l'horreur absolue, [qui] appelle la réalité à un processus de néantisation : non-lieu, il réfute l'identité en abolissant le temps qui passe pour le muer en temps qui fuit dans la répétition des mêmes actes' (2010, p.94).

located outside our conventional temporal frameworks has been at the forefront of trauma studies. Drawing on Freudian psychoanalysis and especially the concept of 'nachträglichkeit', Cathy Caruth posits a model of trauma in which delay is central. According to Caruth, traumatic experience 'suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness' (1996, pp.91-92). In the Caruthian model of trauma, because the psychic apparatus cannot assimilate the traumatic event when it occurs due to its sudden, overwhelming nature, the traumatic event is re-experienced belatedly by the subject. Given that the traumatic event, because of the way it is experienced, defies linear time, Anne Whitehead argues that 'if trauma is at all susceptible to narrative formulation, then it requires a literary form which departs from conventional linear sequence' (2004, p.6). The previously discussed examples from Delbo and Semprun, which successfully convey the disruptive impact of trauma through their non-linear narratives, certainly seem to confirm Whitehead's point.

Assessing the influence of trauma studies in shaping our sense of temporality, Robert Eaglestone (2014) argues that the idea of 'afterwardness', which trauma studies have underlined since the 1990s, can be 're-imported into the wider humanities' (p.17) and productively expanded to non-traumatic texts. Eaglestone's argument provides a clue to start approaching the sense of belatedness and non-linear temporality that are often present in narratives written by those who come after. One example that immediately comes to mind is Patrick Modiano, whose novels often blur the boundary between past and present. For Bertrand Westphal (1994), '[l]e décalage [temporel] est constant' (p.108) in Modiano's novels, with a 'va-et-vient temporel […] qui, au lieu de favoriser le découpage du temps en séquences, instaure une communion si étroite entre les époques qu'elles finissent par se surimprimer' (p.109). Westphal concludes his analysis of time in Modiano's writing by highlighting 'un pacte entre Pandore et les Danaïdes' (p.111). In

other words, there is a tension between, on the one hand, a past that haunts the Modianesque narrator, and on the other, his quest, doomed to fail (like the Danaïdes' task of filling up a pierced basin with water), to uncover a past that will remain out of reach. As I will show throughout this chapter, Modiano's subversion of a linear timeframe in which past and present follow one another is taken up by Binet in *HHhH* and Bayard in *Aurais-je été*.

If the endurance of non-linear time in texts by the postmemory generations can be read as evidence of the influence of trauma studies and narratives by survivors that highlight how delay structures our temporal experiences, I will however argue in this chapter that, in order to fully elucidate the temporal dynamics of Binet's and Bayard's texts, turning to Bergson's philosophy of time and memory (and Deleuze's reading of Bergson) is key. If Eaglestone is certainly correct in underlining how trauma studies have brought about a reconsideration of temporality in our lived experiences, Bergson had already prompted such a turn in the early twentieth century, his most radical proposition, to which Deleuze subscribes, relating to the coexistence of past and present. Because, in Bergson's and Deleuze's model, the coexistence of past and present is not tackled on a traumatic mode, it is better equipped to explain the temporal experiences of postmemorial writers who have not, unlike writers of the first generation like Delbo and Semprun, undergone a deeply traumatic experience. It is not my intention here to deny the possibility that those who come after may be traumatised. However, I argue that it is helpful to bear in mind the difference in kind between what Dominick LaCapra (1999) has called structural trauma (associated with absence) and historical trauma (associated with loss). Unlike structural trauma that is the result of a foundational absence, historical trauma is 'related to particular events that do indeed involve losses, such as the Shoah or the dropping of the atom bomb on Japanese cities' (p.724).

Since in the Bergsonian/Deleuzian model of time and memory, non-linear time is not framed through the lens of trauma, this model answers Gary Weissman's concern regarding the appropriation of Holocaust victims' experiences that has been discussed in the introduction of this thesis. This model also answers broader concerns about the ubiquity of trauma and a focus on repetition and belatedness that risk narrowing down our temporal horizons. Thus, for Silke Arnold-de Simine, '[i]f we can only gain access to the past through the concept of trauma, we are trapped in the debilitating confines of rupture, shock and meaninglessness' (2019, p.62). This concern, shared by other memory scholars (Radstone, 2007; Rothberg, 2014; Rigney, 2018; Silverman, 2021), seems to denote a shift of paradigm within memory studies, which had been, thus far, closely associated with the notion of trauma.[29] My approach in this chapter is in keeping with this evolution in memory studies, for I subscribe to the idea that interpreting the work of postmemorial writers through the sole prism of trauma can be reductive, but I also acknowledge that the influence of the concept of trauma nonetheless remains important to understand their literary production.

The emergence of traumatic time, characterised by belatedness and haunting repetitions, should also be understood with regards to the broader context of modernity.[30] With his book *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), sociologist Bauman

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[29] See also Lauren Berlant's critique of the ubiquity of trauma in *Cruel Optimism* (2011): 'A traumatic event is simply an event that has the capacity to induce trauma. My claim is that most such happenings that force people to adapt to an unfolding change are better described by a notion of systemic crisis or "crisis ordinariness" and followed out with an eye to seeing how the affective impact takes form, becomes mediated. Crisis is not exceptional to history or consciousness but a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what's overwhelming' (p.10).

[30] While there is a tendency to view time as a linear succession of measurable units as natural, it is important to recall that such an understanding of time is historically constructed. According to Jacques Le Goff, it is in the Middle Ages that 'le temps de l'Église', Christian theological time, was challenged by the emergence of a new understanding of time: 'le temps du marchand', which understands time as profit possibilities, productivity and performance (1977). Merchant's time requires, in order to make the most precise calculations and the most profit, ever more accurate measurements of time. The burgeoning mercantile capitalist conquest of time in the Middle Ages was helped by the development of mechanical clocks in the late thirteen and fourteenth centuries,

demonstrates that the Holocaust can be understood as a hidden possibility of modernity and rationalisation. Thus, George Steiner's statement that '[w]e come *after*, and that is the nerve of our condition. After the unprecedented ruins of humane values and hopes by the bestiality of our age' (1986, p.4, original italics) must also be interpreted as a reckoning, not merely with the event of the Holocaust, but also with the ideas of progress and modernity that drove systematic dehumanisation. Traumatic time and non-linear time can then be understood as a reaction against the linear time of progress that can be represented as an arrow pointing forwards. The very idea of progress, inherited from the Enlightenment, rests on the belief that as time progresses forward, a better future awaits, brought about by technological innovation and the advent of rationality. The Frankfurt School, and, on the periphery of this group of critical thinkers, Walter Benjamin, who describes the time of progress as 'homogène et vide' (2000 [1942], p.439) pointed to the illusory nature of the Enlightenment ideals of progress and rationality.

If modernity's linear temporality, which writers like Delbo and Semprun among others resisted, was the dominant model at the time when they were writing, a new temporal configuration – or 'régime d'historicité', Hartog's notion that designates the way the articulation of past, present and future is thought of at a given time (2003, p.27) – has now arguably taken hold. According to Hartog, whereas the dominant modern regime of historicity, which roughly lasted from the French revolution until the fall of the Berlin Wall, was characterised by a belief in the linear time of progress (pp.116-117), we have now entered a new regime of historicity that values instantaneity and immediacy. Hartog calls this regime a presentist regime in which '[l]e présent est devenu l'horizon. Sans future et sans passé, il génère, au jour le jour, le passé et le futur dont il a, jour après

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a major innovation that revolutionised Western societies' approach to time (Landes, 2000, p.6). It is arguably with the industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the subsequent advent of industrial capitalism, however, that linear time became further ingrained in Western societies and the *de facto* norm.

jour, besoin et valorise l'immédiat' (p.126). In Hartog's model, past (and future) become subservient to the present. A sign that 'présentisme' has now become the norm is, for Hartog, the increasing place of memory within contemporary French society, which in Hartog's analysis, is less the result of an authentic engagement with the past than an instrumentalisation serving the present's needs. As opposed to Hartog's presentist model of time, which seems to rely on the assumption that past, present and future are clearly delineated and homogeneous temporal categories, I will argue that the picture of time that Binet and Bayard draw in their texts is a much more complex one that actually resists the temporality of 'présentisme'. Rather than a devouring present that consumes the past, what is at stake in their texts is not the appropriation of the past, but the preservation of the dead Others and the past as radically other.[31] This debate can helpfully be framed in terms of distance and proximity: if the presentist model of time seeks to abolish the distance to the past, the temporal dynamics of both Binet's and Bayard's texts carefully subvert the idea of presentism by foregrounding a sense of distance that is revealed by the desire for proximity to the past. If indeed the past persists in the present, it does so as radically other.

Binet and Bayard's problematisation of chronological time and its reconfiguration in favour of non-linearity is motivated by the inability of linear time to preserve the otherness of the past and to account for the ambiguity that characterises their respective positions. Indeed, the enunciative situation of the narrators of both texts, firmly anchored in the present, means that they can only cast a retrospective gaze towards the past, or, to use Dominique Viart's phrase, 'un regard en amont' (1998, p. 21). Binet and Bayard, as well as the other writers examined in this thesis, all depict the complexity and ambiguity of the relationship between past and present that is constitutive of their memories.

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[31] Here and throughout this thesis, I capitalise 'Other' when used in a Levinasian sense, that is to say when 'Other' refers to 'l'Autre' or 'Autrui'.

Despite the temporal distance from the Holocaust and the Second World War, and regardless of their familial connections, all nonetheless feel deeply connected to these traumatic events. A fundamental sense of ambiguity and a tension between distance and proximity thus traverse Binet's and Bayard's texts: in *HHhH*, temporal dissonances simultaneously foreground the narrator's desire to be part of a history that has already passed and the impossibility of realising this desire; in *Aurais-je été,* the initial appeal of the 'what if' scenario fades away early on and, rather than a hypothetical rewriting of history, enables instead the narrator to convey the virtual and creative dimension of the past. In my reading of these texts, I will show that, if their respective narrators twist and stretch time, they are at the same time aware of the limitations of their experiments and endeavours, and eventually embrace ambiguity as a defining feature of their memories. In this chapter, I will therefore show that *HHhH* and *Aurais-je été* conform to Régine Robin's definition of postmemorial texts as constituting 'un espace transitionnel où ce passé est revécu, "réexpérimenté", et où cette nouvelle représentation permet de ne plus en rester fasciné, halluciné, mais d'en être partie prenante dans la conscience de l'éloignement' (2003, p.323).

1.2 Dissonances, Delay and Non-Chronological Time in Laurent Binet's *HHhH* (2009)

In my reading of *HHhH*,[32] Laurent Binet's novel that was first published in 2009 and the winner of the 'Prix Goncourt du premier roman' the following year, I explore how time is articulated. More specifically, I investigate the unconventional temporal dynamics

[32] *HHhH* is the acronym for 'Himmlers Hirn heiβt Heydrich' ('Himmler's brain is called Heydrich'), one of Heydrich's nicknames among his subordinates.

that animate Binet's text. Through the model of time derived from Bergson and Deleuze that I introduced previously, what can be perceived as abnormal temporal movements – anachronism, delay, the coexistence of past and present – can be directly related to the tension between the postmemorial generations' desire for proximity with the past – and more specifically with the dead Others – and the distance to both the past and the Other that cannot be bridged.

The plot of *HHhH* can be summarised as follows: the narrator, who shares many similarities with Binet the author (to the extent that the two become almost indistinguishable) plans on writing a novel about 'Operation Anthropoid' in the Second World War, that was led, among others, by the Czechoslovak resisters Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš.[33] The goal of Operation Anthropoid was the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the then Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia (now in the Czech Republic), who played a central role in the organisation of the Holocaust (he notably chaired the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 when the 'Final Solution' was discussed). Fatally wounded by a grenade thrown by Kubiš, Heydrich died on 4th June 1942 in Prague. As a consequence of this attack, bloody reprisals ensue on the resisters as well as on their relatives and the inhabitants of the Lidice village, who are brutally murdered. In addition to recounting the historical event of Operation Anthropoid, *HHhH* is also the narrative of the doubts that torment the narrator during the writing process of his novel. Two narrative lines therefore intertwine throughout the text: on the one hand, the historical account of Operation Anthropoid, which forms the main project of the narrator and which must eventually be published as a novel entitled 'HHhH', and

[33] Even though, in an interview, Binet stated that 'He [the narrator] is absolutely identical [to the author]. When I was a student I was always annoyed by the teachers telling me you have to make the distinction between the author and the narrator' (Binet, 2012), Kelly nuances his remarks, preferring to talk of an 'aura autofictive' surrounding the narrator (2013, p. 137).

on the other hand, the narrative of the writing of this novel, thereby giving a strong metafictional dimension to Binet's work.

Alongside Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes* (2006) and Yannick Haenel's *Jan Karski* (2009) novels, Binet's *HHhH* is perhaps one of the most emblematic texts of the recent wave of writing by writers who belong to a third generation, not in the familial sense, but as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, as a national third generation. Unlike with the first two, whose publications were accompanied by heated debates and controversies, *HHhH*'s reception was less polarised. The originality of Binet's text lies in its questioning of the relationship between history and literature and its challenge to the conventions of the traditional historical novel. Binet thus describes his text as an 'infra-roman'. This neologism, with its inclusion of the prefix 'infra' from the Latin meaning 'below' or 'beneath', signals Binet's intention to depart from the genre of the novel as it is conventionally understood. With the notion of infranovel, Binet tries to find a new literary form that allows for a reconsideration of the relationship between history and literature. Taking issue with the use of fiction to represent real people – here Gabčík and Kubiš – Binet problematises, through his narrator's many metafictional interruptions, a tension between the historical novel and historiography. Binet clearly shares postmodernist concerns and *HHhH* has rightly been called a postmodern novel, or a 'historiographical metafiction' (Carrard, 2014, p.188). 'Historiographical metafiction' is a term that was developed by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) and applies to novels that are 'both intensely self-reflexive and paradoxically lay claim to historical events and personages' (p.5).

It is therefore not surprising that it is Binet's treatment of history that has been the focus of the existing critical literature (Tame, 2013; Kelly, 2013; Carrard, 2014; Morache, 2014; Morache, 2015; Bracher, 2015; Bracher, 2016; Berberich, 2019). While Van Kelly, Philippe Carrard, Marie-Andrée Morache and Christine Berberich are

generally positive about Binet's novel, emphasising its success in questioning the boundaries between historical and fictional writing, Peter Tame and Nathan Bracher see the project of *HHhH*'s narrator as a flawed one that conveys a problematic view of History.[34] Bracher, for instance, disapproves of the 'implication subjective' (2015, p.105) of the author in his narrative, his omission of important historiographical works by professional historians (p.108), and his alleged erasure of the difference between past and present (p.108). Such a view echoes the way the relationship between history and literature (together with memory) has been conventionally understood, with objectivity and cognition seen as incompatible with subjectivity and affect. In my analysis of Binet, I will however show that such clear-cut boundaries are in fact much more porous, past and present, virtual and actual, subjectivity and objectivity, being part of a much more complex interplay. When Bracher doubts 'whether close narrative contact, intensity of emotion and virtual reimmersion in past events can prove to be productive, desirable or even truly possible without a clear awareness of all the distance and alterity that definitively and irremediably separate the present from the past' (2016, p.24), I will instead argue that those are precisely the features of *HHhH* that allow a consideration of the otherness of the past. Then, beyond sharing postmodern thematic concerns, *HHhH*, as my analysis will make clear, is in dialogue with postmodern ethics. Eaglestone underlines the ethical dimension of postmodernism when he argues that 'postmodernism is, first, *the disruption of the metaphysics of comprehension, which is the gesture that characterizes western thought. This disruption stems from an encounter with otherness*' (2004a, p.184, original italics). Thus, while for Bracher, *HHhH*'s narrator's lack of objectivity, together with his desire

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[34] One key divergence, which may help explain the radically different opinions on Binet's text, is that Bracher and Tame, unlike the other critics mentioned, seem to be taking the narrator's statements at face value. Even if Bracher correctly stresses the narrator's frequent use of preteritio (2015, p.105) – a rhetorical device wherein the speaker deliberately mentions a topic by saying her intention not to talk about this very same topic – he does not consider the idea that it effectively undoes his own narrative and introduces a sense of irony towards the narrator.

for proximity to the past, preclude a sense of critical distance and subsume the alterity of the past, I shall demonstrate that it is precisely the ambiguous temporal dynamics of the text that is able to preserve the alterity of the characters.

1.2.1 Temporal Heterogeneity

In this section, I bring to light the temporal heterogeneity that characterises Binet's text. What Bracher reads as the problematic immersion of the narrator into the past – because it risks erasing the difference between past and present – will be shown to be much more complex. The intertwining of past and present, exemplified through the temporal ambiguity of the present tense that Binet plays on, does not lead to the past being absorbed by the present. The narrator is in fact highly aware, I argue, that to synchronise his own time with that of his characters would constitute an act of violence against the Other of the past.

From the very start of his narrative, the narrator of *HHhH* repeatedly conveys his distrust of fiction, stating that he does not wish to invent anything, and is reluctant to turn human beings into mere 'êtres de papier'.[35] His suspicion of fiction is directly linked with the question of how to ethically represent the past Other. The narrator's doubts about his legitimacy to tell the story of Operation Anthropoid without betraying the past is reminiscent of the anxiety experienced by writers of the second generation like Henri Raczymow, who asks in his essay 'La mémoire trouée' (1986): 'de quel droit parler, si l'on n'a pas été, comme c'est mon cas, ni victime, ni rescapé, ni témoin de l'événement ?' (p.180). About Kubiš for instance, he writes: 'Je réduis cet homme au rang de vulgaire personnage, et ses actes à de la littérature : alchimie infamante mais qu'y puis-je ?' (2015

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[35] Roland Barthes uses this phrase in his essay 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits' (1996, p.19).

[2009], p.10). The deep admiration he holds for Kubiš and Gabčík, as well as the ethical responsibility he feels towards the dead, constitute the source of the unease he experiences towards his own writing: how, indeed, tell a true story, or in other words, how can the complexity and the irreducible otherness of the dead be preserved through literary writing? The writing and reading pact elaborated by the narrator at the beginning of *HHhH* in response to that very question is the following:

> Quoi qu'il en soit, mes dialogues, s'ils ne peuvent se fonder sur des sources précises, fiables, exactes au mot près, seront inventés. Toutefois, dans ce dernier cas, il leur sera assigné, non une fonction d'hypotypose, mais plutôt, disons, au contraire, de parabole. Soit l'extrême exactitude, soit l'extrême exemplarité. Et pour qu'il n'y ait pas de confusion, tous les dialogues que j'inventerai (mais il n'y en aura pas beaucoup) seront traités comme des scènes de théâtre. Une goutte de stylisation, donc, dans l'océan du réel. (pp.33-34)

From the point of view of the narrator, producing an ethical narrative that would do justice to the resisters seems to be dependent on historical accuracy, which explains his desire to let the historical sources and documents speak for themselves. This commitment borders on obsession, for in the absence of such documents, he confesses, later on in the novel, his regret at not having been a witness of the historical events of 1942 so as to guarantee himself their veracity (p.395). The narrator thereby rejects what Roland Barthes calls 'l'effet de réel' (1968) together with the various literary techniques that aim to increase the verisimilitude of a narrative, and instead places his narrative under the aegis of veracity. He thus conveys a vision of historiography in which fiction and imagination do not belong. It is a rather naïve understanding of historiography that underlies his pact: the narrator's naivety is reflected in his conviction that historical knowledge can be obtained solely through contemporaneous documents and sources. The narrator therefore articulates, from the very beginning of his narrative, a problematic

view of historiography which privileges notions of objectivity and purity. Such an approach corresponds to what Georges Didi-Huberman calls 'une interprétation euchronique': an interpretation according to which understanding of a past image is first and foremost dependent on an understanding of contemporaneous sources (2000, p.13). As Didi-Huberman demonstrates, this type of approach is characterised by a refusal of anachronism and a quest for an (artificial) temporal consistency and agreement ('concordance des temps').

In light of the writing and reading pact aforementioned, it seems, indeed, that this is the approach that the narrator of *HHhH* endorses; at least the first half of the novel appears to confirm it. As I will show later on however, this very approach is then rejected by the narrator himself as he progressively comes to question in his writing the conventions of historiography. The two narrative lines of *HHhH* – the narrative of Heydrich's assassination and that of the narrator's peregrinations in the 2000s – are clearly delineated, each part presenting a homogeneous temporality: on the one hand the narrative of the historical events of 1942 is written in the historical present ('présent de narration' or 'présent historique'), and on the other, the narrator's metafictional comments are written using the enunciative present ('présent d'énonciation'). The historical present used to narrate the events of 1942 appears as a logical choice for the narrator who, this time, seems to endorse Barthes's analysis according to which:

> lorsqu'à l'intérieur de la narration, le passé simple est remplacé par des formes moins ornementales, plus fraîches, plus denses et plus proches de la parole (le présent ou le passé composé), la Littérature devient dépositaire de l'épaisseur de l'existence, et non de sa signification. (1972, p.27)

While the narrator earlier rejected Barthes's notion of 'effet de réel', he also, rather paradoxically, does not frown upon the use of the historical present to convey the vividness of the past. It is therefore far from surprising that Binet, whose avowed goal is

to transmit a sense of the *real* existence of Kubiš and Gabčík, decides to opt for the historical present to tell the events of Operation Anthropoid. Even though the two narrative lines use the present tense, it is easy to distinguish between the different values assigned to the grammatical tense of the present, since they are separated in different chapters or paragraphs.

However, as the novel unfolds, this apparent impermeability collapses and eventually disappears, giving way to a much more ambiguous narrative in which it becomes increasingly hard to assign a stable value to the present. In Chapter 45 for instance, even though the narrator starts by noting the date of the day he is writing – 'Nous sommes le 27 mai 2006' (2015, p.77) –, he seems to inhabit a different temporal moment by the end of the paragraph when he writes: 'Je suis en 1920, devant les murailles tremblantes de Varsovie, et à mes pieds s'écoule, indifférente, la Vistule' (p.78). In a similar fashion, when the narrator tells of the siege of the church where the resisters have found refuge, a temporal ambiguity can also be observed. One thus reads: 'Aujourd'hui nous sommes le 27 mai 2008. Quand les pompiers arrivent, vers 8 heures, ils voient des SS partout […]' (p.426); and later on : '4 juin 2008. Les parachutistes ont de l'eau jusqu'aux genoux' (p.429). This pattern is repeated until the end of the chapter, which ends with the following sentence: 'Il est midi, il a fallu près de huit heures aux huit cents SS pour venir à bout de sept hommes' (p.433). Here, it becomes extremely difficult to determine whether the adverb of time 'midi' refers to the moment when the narrator writes in his Parisian flat in 2009, or whether it refers to the moment in June 1942 when the siege ended. Whereas in the first half of the novel, the two narrative levels are clearly delineated, no such temporal homogeneity can be found in the second half, in which past and present, the historical events and the narrator's daily life intertwine. Kelly suggests that such episodes produce 'un état second, quasi hypnotique, entre action et rêve, et produisent un glissement affectif entre connaissance historique de l'assassinat et

sentiment de participation' (2013, p.141). Binet's play on the ambiguity of the assigned value to the present tense echoes Modiano's own use of the 'passé composé' – 'le temps verbal par excellence' in Modiano's novels (Westphal, 1994, p.111) – which helps establish a link between past and present. Binet's use of the present seems to go one step further however, since it also subverts the conventions of historiography.

If one can therefore observe some temporal heterogeneity, since different temporal moments seem to coexist, it is important to note that the narrator also attempts to make his rhythm of duration coincide with that of his protagonists. Given that Bergson's notion of duration relates to our subjective experience of time, which differs for each individual, Bergson explains that

> il n'y a pas un rythme unique de la durée ; on peut imaginer bien des rythmes différents, qui, plus lents ou plus rapides, mesureraient le degré de tension ou de relâchement des consciences, et, par là, fixeraient leurs places respectives dans la série des êtres. (1929 [1896], p.231)

In the chapter that describes the scene of the attack against Heydrich, the narrator writes: 'Je parle en secondes, désormais. La seconde suivante, ce sera autre chose. Mais là, ici, en cette matinée claire du mercredi 27 mai 1942, le temps suspend son cours, pour la deuxième fois en deux minutes, quoiqu'un peu différemment' (2015, p.353). He describes here a malleable time, able to stretch, closer to the Bergsonian duration than scientific time, and a moment of temporal suspension during which his rhythm of duration attempts to adjust to that of Kubiš and Gabčík. This enables him to 'catch a glimpse' of Gabčík: 'Et moi qui boite dans les rues de Prague et qui remonte Na Poříčí en traînant la jambe, je le [Gabčík] regarde courir au loin' (p.363). The sense of distance and distanciation in this sentence is not only spatial but also temporal, which shows that the narrator is eventually unable to make his rhythm of duration coincide with that of his character.

The opening sentence of Chapter 250 – 'Je suis Gabčik, enfin. Comment disent-ils ? J'habite mon personnage' (p.413) – is another example that sees the narrator almost giving in to his desire to identify with Gabčík. A sense of distance is however swiftly restored when, a page later, the narrator reverses his previous statement and, in an implicit criticism of the psychological novel and in an effort to preserve the otherness of Gabčík, acknowledges that 'Je ne suis pas Gabčík et je ne le serai jamais' (p.414). Once again, the process of identification is closely associated with the narrator's perception of time: when his sense of self seems to be merging with Gabčík, he notes that he has no idea of 'quelle heure il peut être' (p.414). On the other hand, his acknowledgement that he is not Gabčík is grounded in his awareness that the temporal moment he inhabits is temporally removed from the events of the past: 'je sais très bien l'heure qu'il est' (p.414). The narrator, who tries to synchronise his rhythm of duration with that of Gabčík and Kubiš, is thus eventually confronted with his failure, but his attempts also produce dissonances, that he himself does not fail to underline during his numerous metafictional interruptions. David Lapoujade's reading of Bergson allows us to interpret the narrator's position as defined by a complex relationship to delay and asynchrony:

> Qu'est-ce qu'un homme en effet sinon un certain rythme de durée ou plutôt une pluralité de rythmes de durée qui s'entremêlent et se confondent ? Il arrive certes, *au prix d'efforts violents*, à se synchroniser avec d'autres rythmes de durée, mais le plus souvent il retarde sur eux et pense tout à partir de ce retard. L'homme est ce retard même, une arythmie. (2010, p.105, my italics)

The various slippages between one temporal and narrative level towards another, as well as from one rhythm of duration to another, always represent fleeting moments that lead the narrator to confront his own temporal position, characterised by delay and his powerlessness to alter the past.

The narrator is fully aware of his powerlessness to alter the past through his writing, for instance when he acknowledges that:

> Kubiš est mort. Je regrette d'avoir à écrire ça. J'aurais aimé mieux le connaître. J'aurais voulu pouvoir le sauver. […] L'Histoire est la seule véritable fatalité : on peut la relire dans tous les sens mais on ne peut pas la réécrire. Quoi que je fasse, quoi que je dise, je ne ressusciterai pas Jan Kubiš le brave, l'héroïque Jan Kubiš, l'homme qui a tué Heydrich. Je n'ai pris absolument aucun plaisir à raconter cette scène dont la rédaction m'a coûté de longues semaines laborieuses, et pour quel résultat ? Trois pages de va-et-vient dans une église et trois morts. Kubiš, Opalka, Bublik, morts en héros mais morts quand même. Je n'ai même pas le temps de pleurer car l'Histoire, cette fatalité en marche, ne s'arrête jamais, elle. (2015, p.421)

In this passage, the narrator plays on the ambiguous meaning of the sentence 'j'aurais aimé mieux le connaître'. It appears that it is not merely factual knowledge that is the narrator's object of desire, but also affective knowledge about the past. The narrator's desire for the past is therefore first and foremost a desire for the Other, which corresponds to Emmanuel Levinas's description of desire in *Totalité et Infinité* (2006 [1961]) as '[le] désir de l'absolument Autre' (p.23), or, in other words, desire for the alterity of the Other, and which, as such, must remain unfulfilled (since the Other is transcendent and cannot be possessed).

The unfulfilled nature of this desire is exemplified in the narrator's failure to synchronise his rhythm of duration with that of his protagonists. To do so would constitute an act of violence against the Other, as Lapoujade implies by noting the 'efforts violents' that underlie any attempts at synchronising one's rhythm of duration with another's. This echoes Levinas's philosophy of ethics, which, as Colin Davis explains, stresses the fact that

> To preserve the Other as Other, it must not become an object of knowledge or experience, because knowledge is always *my* knowledge, experience always *my* experience; the object is encountered only in so far as it exists *for me*, and immediately its alterity is diminished. (1996, p.41, original italics)

The narrator's acknowledgment that he will never be Gabčík shows his awareness that to claim otherwise would be unethical and would, in any case, only ever constitute a violent projection of himself onto Gabčík.[36] I further argue that this realisation is only made possible thanks to a dialectic of distance and proximity. As the narrator's withdrawal of his previous statements shows (him claiming to be able to catch a glimpse of Gabčík from afar, or him claiming to be Gabčík), it is only when he attempts to reduce the *écart* between him and the Other of the past that the unbridgeable distance that separates him from that Other can be revealed.[37] Therefore, the temporal heterogeneity that characterises Binet's text does not lead to an encounter with the Other, but to the recognition of the alterity of the Other.

Going back to the question that has guided us since the beginning of this section – how to tell a true story, or in other words, how to preserve the complexity and the irreducible otherness of the dead through literary writing? – the answer appears widely different from the one that was initially presented by the narrator and that rested on a euchronic, simplistic vision of historiography. This initial question has raised another question, that of the temporal dimension of alterity. I have shown that in order to

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[36] The possibility of doing violence to the (dead) Other is one of the narrator's greatest fears, with the idea that 'le sort des victimes pourrait être empiré par la littérature, par une réduction de l'être dans le personnage, par l'objectivation de la mise en forme, par la banalisation dans le cliché' (Morache, 2015, p.227).

[37] Here I use the word 'écart' in resonance with Derrida's 'différance'. The Derridean concept of différance (a pun on the verb 'différer' that suggests both 'to defer' (referring to a temporal delay) and 'to differ') implies a movement of delay and differentiation.

establish an ethical relation to the Other[38] – one in which the otherness of the Other is preserved – non-linear time seems better equipped than a homogeneous, linear temporality. For Levinas, historiography is unable to reveal the transcendental nature of the Other since,

> [e]lle repose sur l'affirmation et sur la conviction que l'ordre chronologique de l'histoire des historiens, dessine la trame de l'être en soi, analogue à la nature. Le temps de l'histoire universelle demeure comme le fond ontologique où les existences particulières se perdent, se comptent et où se résument, au moins leurs essences. (2006, p.47)[39]

This critique of historiography's temporality aligns with that of Bergson who similarly points out the reductive nature of an objective, measurable time in which one instant follows another. This critique also echoes that of Benjamin, which the narrator of *HHbH* seems to endorse, most visibly when, in the passage quoted earlier, he describes the historical process as an implacable linear movement that does not allow him to mourn for the dead: 'Je n'ai même pas le temps de pleurer car l'Histoire, cette fatalité en marche, ne s'arrête jamais, elle' (2015, p.421). He thereby adopts a position reminiscent of the Angel of History that Benjamin describes in the ninth of his theses 'Sur le concept d'histoire' inspired by Paul Klee's 1920 painting 'Angelus Novus'. Of the Angel of History, Benjamin tells us:

> Son visage est tourné vers le passé. Là où nous apparaît une chaîne d'événements, il ne voit, lui, qu'une seule et unique catastrophe, qui sans cesse amoncelle ruines

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[38] Though this relation is, paradoxically, a 'relation without relation' (Levinas, 2006, p.79). Derrida helpfully explains that '[t]he structure of my relation to the other is of a "relation without relation". It is a relation in which the other remains absolutely transcendent. I cannot reach the other. I cannot know the other from the inside and so on' (1997, p.14).

[39] For more on the place of time in the thought of Levinas, see Sophie Galabru's *Le temps à l'œuvre* (2020). In her study, Galabru's main thesis is that 'le temps constitue *le* troisième terme entre le sujet et l'Autre, de sorte qu'il assure le rapport de l'un à l'autre' (p.19, original italics).

> sur ruines et les précipite à ses pieds. Il voudrait bien s'attarder, réveiller les morts et rassembler ce qui a été démembré. Mais du paradis souffle une tempête qui s'est prise dans ses ailes, si violemment que l'ange ne peut plus les refermer. (2000, p.434)

Like Klee's painting in which different temporalities collide, the narrator also experiences a clash of temporalities: while his gaze is directed to the past, he is led, in spite of himself, towards the future. Benjamin identifies the storm that propels the Angel with the idea of progress, which, as we have seen in the introduction of this chapter, is underpinned by a homogeneous and mechanical time where ruins and catastrophes only accumulate. The narrator of *HHbH* casts the same look on the past as the Angel of History, a look that seeks to rescue the victims of historical tragedies from the linear time of progress that would have them fall into oblivion. With this *regard en amon*t, the Angel of History and *HHbH*'s narrator become actors of memory. Furthermore, as Gérard Bensussan explains, the Angel of History embodies the non-contemporaneity of the present with itself and 'oblige à penser le temps autrement que comme la succession de présents et de modifications de présents et la différence temporelle autrement que comme différence du présent par rapport à lui-même' (2001, p.45). Thanks to this allegory that illustrates a temporal collision, Benjamin subverts mechanical time and lets us catch a glimpse of time outside a chain of successions. What becomes clear when reading Benjamin's theses on history is that where linear time fails to accommodate the memory of the victims of History, non-linear time in which past, present and future intertwine may succeed.

1.2.2 Anachronism

In this section, I look at another phenomenon of temporal heterogeneity that one can observe in *HHhH*: anachronism. Anachronism refers to the action of placing an object or a character in a time other than the one in which they originally belong, most commonly in a time in which they did *not yet* exist. If the model of traumatic memory is characterised by a disruption of the present by the past, in the case of anachronism it is the present that seemingly interrupts the past. It is therefore a different kind of temporal dynamic than the one that characterises the model of traumatic memory, though in both cases, what is at stake is the entanglement of past and present. While in the previous section, I focused primarily on the narrator's efforts to make past and present coincide, here I am interested not only in the narrator's attempt to insert himself into his own narrative – a clear example of anachronism – but I also wish to demonstrate that, because he was born long after the events he is writing about, he can only relate to the past in an anachronistic way, through mediated representations.

Anachronism is commonly seen as an error in chronology – for the historian and founding member of the *École des Annales*, Marc Bloch, it is even 'entre tous les péchés, au regard d'une science du temps, le plus impardonnable' (2006, p.969). Anachronism can also be approached, in a different way, through the model of presentism. Anachronism is then seen as a forceful projection of present concerns onto the past. In such a view, anachronism effectively leads to a denial of the alterity of the past. In what follows, I will demonstrate that the anachronistic dynamics of Binet's text emphasises the ambiguity of the narrator's position as someone who, having access only to mediated representations of the event, cannot separate the event itself from its representations. In contrast to the historiographical and presentist models, I will show that it is reductive to see anachronism as an error or flaw, and that anachronism can help us better grasp the

tension between past and present, fiction and reality, that is characteristic of Binet's text but also more largely of postmemorial texts. I therefore follow LaCapra who argues that

> Even in its falsifications, repressions, displacements, and denials, memory may nonetheless be informative – not in terms of an empirical representation of its object but in terms of that object's often anxiety-ridden reception and assimilation by both participants in events and those born later. (1998, p.19)

That the narrator's postmemory is characterised by anachronic tensions between past and present does not mean it should be dismissed as erroneous, for this would only reproduce the too common binary opposition between history and memory.

Binet's text (like the other texts examined in this thesis) participates in what Laurent Demanze calls 'un imaginaire de la secondarité' (2008, p.22). The narrator of *HHhH* is fully aware that the events he is fascinated by have already been represented countless times, notably in film and literature, and that he therefore arrives after all those previous representations. Demanze's remarks about the 'afterwardness' or 'secondariness' of narratives that engage with the past echo those of Eva Hoffman according to whom, '[o]ur relationship to them [the formative events of the twentieth century] has been defined by our very "post-ness" and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed from it' (2004, p.25).[40] Since Binet, both the narrator of *HHhH* and the author, is removed from the events that fascinate him (he was born in France in the early 1970s, far from the Czechoslovakia of the Second World War), he can only approach these events retrospectively, through historical sources, the works of historians, and various cultural mediations. The latter play a key role and fascinate the narrator much more than the various academic books he consults. Very

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[40] Even though Hoffman's remark is in reference to children of survivors, her statement arguably also applies to people with no such familial connection.

quickly, it appears that cinematic and novelistic representations and mediations have become inseparable from the event itself, to the extent that they seem to replace the historical event itself. The narrator watches all the film adaptations of Operation Anthropoid he can find, and more widely the representations of Heydrich in literature and film (about which he reports to the reader in the numerous metafictional interruptions). Eventually, he seems to have gained 'memories' of the event himself: 'Car je me souviens maintenant. Chaque jour, chaque heure, le souvenir se fait plus net' (2015, p. 318).[41]

For the narrator of *HHhH,* who does not have first-hand memories of this event, these memories, acquired after his exposure to mediated representations, are rather 'prosthetic' memories, as conceptualised by Alison Landsberg (2004). The narrator of *HHhH*, who is an avid consumer of such media and cultural representations, seems to have acquired a considerable amount of such memories, eventually leading to the declaration mentioned above. The narrator therefore seems to inscribe his own project in the same optic as Landsberg, for he himself underlines literature's potential in creating such memorial prostheses – 'Pour que quoi que ce soit pénètre dans la mémoire, il faut d'abord le transformer en littérature. C'est moche mais c'est comme ça' (2015, p.244) –, thereby acknowledging his active role as both a consumer and producer of prosthetic memories. According to Landsberg, prosthetic memories, though 'not organically based', are

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41 This idea of having memories of a past that one has not experienced first-hand is key to postmemorial texts. One is reminded here of the narrator of Modiano's *Livret de famille* (1977) who explains that 'Je n'avais que vingt ans, mais ma mémoire précédait ma naissance. J'étais sûr, par exemple, d'avoir vécu dans le Paris de l'Occupation puisque je me souvenais de certains personnages de cette époque et de détails infimes et troublants, de ceux qu'aucun livre d'histoire ne mentionne' (p.96).

> nevertheless experienced with one's own body—by means of a wide range of cultural technologies—and as such, become part of one's personal archive of experience, informing not only one's subjectivity, but one's relationship to the present and future tenses. (2004, p.66)

Being, in his own words, 'corrompu par la littérature' (2015, p.329), his imaginary is filled with cultural references that make him adopt an anachronistic view of the events of the past. The historical events he describes become uncannily akin to scenes taken from action films and westerns. This is perhaps inevitable given the postmodern condition which 'condemn[s] [us] to seek history by way of our own pop images and simulacra of […] history, which itself remains forever out of reach' (Jameson, 1991, p. 25). When he describes Gabčík fleeing his pursuers in the streets of Prague after the attack, for instance, he compares Gabčík to Jean-Paul Belmondo in *La Mort aux trousses* and to Cary Grant in *L'Homme de Rio* (2015, p. 362). In the same way, some chapters (especially Chapters 127 and 130) are also reminiscent of spy novels (pp. 209-211; pp. 214-215). Morache pertinently notes the anachronic nature of such an association, which she links to the growing influence of cultural representations of violence (2014, p. 128). What proves hard to accept for the narrator is the tension between the risk of falling into clichés and the fact that he cannot help but feel that the historical events resemble the plot of an action film. As the narrator explains, '[i]l me fallut attendre deux ou trois ans pour réellement prendre conscience de ce que j'avais toujours soupçonné : que cette histoire dépassait en romanesque et en intensité les plus improbables fictions' (2015, p.15). There is here what seems to be a change of paradigm: the past becomes anachronic and the present reminiscent;[42] fiction and reality appear closer than ever before. The anachronistic

[42] For more on this dynamic, see Pierre Fédida (2004).

tensions between past and present intensify as the novel progresses, culminating in the very last chapter, which acts as epilogue.

In this chapter, the narrator seemingly gives in to the temptation of invention that he had so vehemently rejected early on and pictures himself living in the past, meeting the characters of his narrative on a liner:

> Ils auront tout le temps, durant la traversée, de faire connaissance. D'autres ombres se sont mêlées aux ombres des soldats en civil qui arpentent le navire, vieillards déboussolés, dames seules au regard voile, enfants sages qui tiennent leur petit frère par la main. Une jeune femme qui ressemble à Natacha se tient sur le pont, les mains posées sur le bastingage, une jambe repliée jouant avec l'ourlet de sa jupe, et moi aussi, peut-être, je suis là. (p.443)

In this invented scene, one can observe a clear transgression of the various narrative levels – or, in Gérard Genette's terminology, a metalepsis (1972, p.244) – the narrator inserting himself into an imagined past and becoming a character in his own narrative. From a heterodiegetic narrator, he becomes a homodiegetic one. His anachronic presence goes against the writing pact he had himself elaborated, rendering it void. Indeed, this chapter that imagines the meeting between Kubiš and Gabčík does not function as a parable, nor does it provide a better understanding of historical facts. While one could argue that this episode constitutes what Weissman (2004) has called a 'fantasy of witnessing', I argue that this episode does not result from the narrator's desire to have witnessed the events of the past, but rather from his yearning for an affective encounter with his protagonists. This corroborates Morache's analysis for whom the narrator's imaginary projection 'n'attribue pas au texte une compétence testimoniale (il ne s'agit pas de se servir de l'imaginaire de l'écrivain pour témoigner à la place du témoin)' (2015, p.221). It is important to underline here the dissonant effects the epilogue produces, amplified by the narrator's previous remarks about his distaste for invention and

imagination – temptations which he had so far managed to keep mostly at bay. The epilogue can also be read as the ultimate, perhaps even desperate, attempt by the narrator to compensate for his delayed position towards the historical event that haunts him. It is however impossible to compensate for this belatedness and any attempts at compensating it creates further dissonances. The narrator thus finds himself in a position akin to the one described by Nadine Fresco in the following words: 'Je suis venu irrémédiablement trop tard. Jamais je ne serai l'un d'eux […], et moi, je n'ai rien d'autre que ce regret absurde et désespéré, presque obscène, pour un temps dans lequel je ne peux avoir été.' (1981, p.211).

With such an emphasis on the jarring dimension of the epilogue, the reader is encouraged to view the insertion of the narrator standing side by side with his characters as a kind of 'faux raccord'. For Deleuze, what *faux raccords* reveal, rather than an anomaly, is the '*interstice* entre images, entre deux images: un espacement qui fait que chaque image s'arrache au vide et y retombe' (1985, p.234, original italics). Deleuze underlines here the ability of *faux raccords* to open up a space where two heterogeneous elements that came into contact enter into a dialectical relationship and where 'l'interaction de deux images engendre ou trace une frontière qui n'appartient ni à l'un ni à l'autre' (p.236). By defining anachronism as a kind of *faux raccord*, it is the complex relationship between the two elements that are brought together that comes to the fore.

Crucially, this scene testifies to the desire not of having witnessed the events, but of an affective encounter with the characters of the past. If mediation is key to the notion of prosthetic memory, so is affect. It is because the mediated representations (films, novels, etc.) have the power to affect their viewer or reader that, after an experiential encounter with them, the subject then gains 'memories', whose inauthentic nature make them akin to artificial limbs. Further, according to Landsberg, these memories shape one's subjectivity, but also one's perception of time. I want to suggest here that the

anachronistic dynamics of Binet's text not only reflect the mediated nature of prosthetic memory, but also its affective power. This affective power brings together two disparate moments in time. The link between affect and anachronism has been noted by Didi-Huberman in his discussion of the work of the Hungarian painter Simon Hantaï: '[i]l n'y a, dans l'anachronisme du temps psychique, ni début, ni suite, ni fin. Ce n'est pas exactement une histoire. Cela ne se raconte pas mais s'éprouve en blocs d'intensités, en sites mémorables, en nœuds de forces' (1998, pp.25-26).

Moreover, the adverb 'peut-être' in the last sentence of the novel emphasises the tentative nature of this episode and introduces the idea that what can be seen as the narrator's attempt at reducing the distance with his protagonists is only short-lived. This is in keeping with the pattern of unsaying that I identified in the previous section, through which the narrator undermines his own narrative. Eventually, the ambiguous movement it stages between a desire for proximity and the distance that cannot be crossed (though sometimes it seems as if it is about to be bridged) is ultimately reminiscent of the figure of Penelope, who weaves during the day and unravels her work during the night.

1.2.3 Conclusion

If the narrator of *HHhH* is not able to produce the exhaustive narrative of Operation Anthropoid he hoped for and is forced to renounce his initial writing pact that conveyed a euchronic vision of History, he is, however, able to navigate the complex relationship of time and memory. To Tame's stern judgment, who reproaches what he describes as an 'inconsistance du texte de Binet dont le récit saute trop souvent et de façon trop subjective du coq à l'âne' (2013, p.135), and who believes that Binet's project fails to tell a true story through the means of a novel (albeit an infranovel), I argue instead that it is precisely through his refusal to inscribe Gabčík and Kubiš in a linear and homogeneous

time that he is able to preserve their singularity. It is therefore thanks to a montage of heterogeneous temporalities that the complexity of these characters is able to be revealed. Instead of appearing as unidimensional, *HHhH* exceeds a historical frame folded on itself. This non-chronological time produces temporal dissonances and instils a sense of indiscernibility between virtual past and actual present, between imagination and reality, and therefore echoes the paradoxes of those who belong to the generation of postmemory.

1.3 Present and Past Virtualities in Pierre Bayard's *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau ?* (2013)

Born in 1954, Pierre Bayard is a French writer, psychoanalyst and professor of French literature at the University Paris VIII. He is a prolific essayist, and has published over twenty books and essays over the course of his career, some, including *Comment parler des livres que l'on n'a pas lus?* (2007), with considerable commercial success. In many of his essays, notably *Demain est écrit* (2005) and *Le plagiat par anticipation* (2009), Bayard adopts an anachronic position and challenges linear representations of time, arguing that literature can complicate our model of chronological time:

> Au-delà des différences, le point commun entre *Demain est écrit* et cet essai [*Le plagiat par anticipation*] est que s'y trouve dans les deux cas mise en cause une certaine représentation linéaire du temps, qui ne se déroulerait – à en croire certains critiques – que dans un seul sens, du passé vers le présent et l'avenir. Outre que de multiples expériences de la vie quotidienne nous montrent qu'il n'en va pas toujours ainsi, il est patent que cette représentation figée convient mal à la littérature, qui appelle d'autres modèles temporels. (2009, p. 16)

His 2013 essay *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau ?* extends this line of thinking, as one sees Bayard seemingly twisting time and imagining what he would have done had he lived during the Second World War. He explains the principles of this thought experiment in the opening pages of his essay:

> Je me propose donc ici, en me transportant en esprit dans le passé et en y reconstituant ma vie, d'examiner avec attention le comportement que j'aurais eu pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale si j'avais eu l'âge d'y participer, les choix auxquels j'aurais été confronté, les décisions que j'aurais dû prendre, les erreurs que j'aurais commises et le destin qui aurait été le mien. (p.13)

The very idea upon which Bayard's text is premised recalls the genre of alternate history (or counterfactual history, or 'uchronie' in French), in which one or several historical events occur differently, and which results in the course of history being altered. The genre of alternate history has enjoyed growing popularity, in particular scenarios that speculate on the fate of the world if Nazi Germany had won the Second World War.[43] However, Bayard's project differs from one of alternate history to a certain extent since, instead of altering the course of a historical event, it is his own date of birth that he chooses to modify. Bayard therefore suggests that his project could be considered as 'une uchronie individuelle' (p. 60). Although he was actually born in 1954, he creates 'un personnage délégué', born in 1922 (like Bayard's own father), who 'conservera l'essentiel de mes caractéristiques intellectuelles, sociales et psychologiques d'aujourd'hui, tout en tenant compte de quelques variables dues à la nouvelle situation où il se trouvera placé'

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[43] See for instance Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and Richard Harris's *Fatherland* (1992) (what if Hitler had won the war?), Stephen Fry's *Making History* (1996) (what if Hitler had never been born?), and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004) (what if Charles Lindbergh had become president of the USA in the Second World War?). Though less common in France, one can note the publication of *La part de l'autre* (2001) by Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt in which, instead of failing the entrance exam of the Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna in 1908, Adolph Hitler is accepted into the school and goes on to become a famous painter, which prevents the Second World War from happening.

(p. 14). The first-person narrator sent to the past through this device is therefore not Bayard the author, but a 'personnage délégué'.[44] The idea of 'aura autofictive' that Kelly uses to describe *HHhH*'s narrator also applies here.

Whereas, for the historian Gavriel Rosenfeld, alternate history is 'inherently presentist. It explores the past less for its own sake than to utilize it instrumentally to comment upon the present' (2002, p.93), I will demonstrate that Bayard's text presents us with a more complex picture of time, one in which the past is not subservient to the present. Like Binet, Bayard is concerned with how to foster a meaningful engagement with the past in which the otherness of the past is preserved. While I contend that both texts are concerned with the question of how to ethically engage with a past one has not personally experienced, I will show that Bayard's text reaches a different answer to Binet's, though also related to non-linear time. With regards to Binet's text, I demonstrated that the text crafts a complex interplay between distance and proximity, in which, even as past and present coexist, the past retains its irreducible alterity. In my close reading of Bayard's text, I will show that it is by detaching the moment from a linear sequence that non-linear time can open up the infinite possibilities of the moment prior to its fictionalisation in representation. This, in turn, preserves the singularity and irreducible otherness of the moment.

In my analysis, I will once again draw on Bergson's notion of duration, which Leonard Lawlor helpfully defines with two claims: '[t]he first is perhaps at the heart of Bergson's philosophy: the past survives. The second follows from the first: the moment

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[44] Bayard came up with this term in response to the reception of his essays that has tended to equate the author with the narrator: 'La présence d'un narrateur-personnage installé au pôle d'énonciation a pour résultat d'introduire une part massive de fiction dans des textes qui se présentent pourtant comme des textes théoriques. Telle est la raison pour laquelle je les présente comme des *fictions théoriques*, pour bien marquer que la part de fiction et la part de théorie s'y entremêlent, y compris pour moi-même, de manière inextricable' (2018).

coming from the future is absolutely new' (2003, p.80). Whereas in my analysis of *HHbH* I focused mostly on the first dimension of Bergson's notion of duration, in what follows I investigate the second aspect identified by Lawlor (and further explored by Deleuze) – the idea that each new moment is unexpected and original.

1.3.1 'Le champ disparu des possibles'

It is easy in hindsight to view the past as static, for in retrospect, one does know the course of History. Yet, such a fixed past stands in sharp contrast to the temporal experience of those who lived through this past (when this was their present) that was characterised by fluidity, uncertainty and unpredictability. A static view of the past is what linear time conveys, for, if past, present and future merely follow each other, then the past must be left behind as a static and frozen structure. Bayard's project in *Aurais-je été* of recovering what he calls 'le champ disparu des possibles' (2013, p.156) must therefore inscribe itself in another time. As I will demonstrate, what is at stake in *Aurais-je été* is a way of imagining the past, not merely as what happened, but also as a series of unpredictable bifurcations, and it is by resisting linear time that Bayard's project may eventually succeed. While earlier in this chapter I argued, through Levinas's philosophy of ethics and Benjamin's allegory of the Angel of History, that *HHbH* condemns linear time because of its failure to accommodate the memory of the victims of History, in *Aurais-je été*, linear time appears insufficient because it conceives of time as closed on itself. The question that was central to *HHbH* – how to convey the complexity and irreducible otherness of the past – finds here a slightly different articulation, for even if, as we shall see, Binet and Bayard both require a reconfiguration of time as non-linear, Bayard's answer seems to lie specifically with the question of preserving a sense of the possible. In this section, I first comment on the assumed ethical dimension of Bayard's

essay, before linking it with its peculiar treatment of time which, I argue, challenges a reductive vision of the possible as past presents.

The strong ethical dimension of *Aurais-je été*, visible from the onset, sets it apart from Bayard's other essays. If *Aurais-je été* sees Bayard's avatar – his 'personnage délégué' – transported into the historical past, this represents an unusual move for Bayard who is more accustomed to experimenting with literary history. In this regard, *Aurais-je été* stands in sharp contrast to his *Aurais-je sauvé Geneviève Dixmer ?* (2015) in which Bayard's avatar finds himself not in the historical past, but rather in the fictional world of Alexandre Dumas's novel *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* (1846). But for Sophie Létourneau, it is the difference in tone that appears most striking: indeed, the tone is much more solemn – 'posé, personnel, intime presque' (2013, p.927) – a far cry from the usual playfulness displayed by Bayard. The importance of the ethical dimension of Bayard's essay is evident from the very beginning of the book with the following quote from Primo Levi's *Les Naufragés et les Rescapés* serving as epigraph:

> Il nous arrive à nous qui sommes revenus et qui racontons notre histoire, que l'interlocuteur nous dise : 'Moi, à ta place, je n'aurais pas résisté un seul jour.' Cette affirmation n'a pas de sens rigoureux : on n'est jamais à la place d'un autre. Chaque individu est un sujet tellement complexe qu'il est vain d'en prévoir le comportement, davantage encore dans des situations d'exception, et il n'est même pas possible de prévoir son propre comportement.

Bayard's endorsement of Levi's quote – which asserts the complexity of each individual, including oneself – makes it clear that the question 'Aurais-je été bourreau ou résistant ?' that serves as the essay's title cannot lead to a definitive, satisfactory answer. Just like the narrator of *HHhH,* who fantasises about synchronising his own rhythm of duration with that of his characters but simultaneously recognises the impossibility of his fantasy, the narrator of Bayard's essay is also acutely aware of the limitations of his project. In

addition to the epigraph mentioned above, the narrator does not shy away from underlining the shortcomings of his approach, talking for instance about its 'impossibilité manifeste' (2013, p.14). Despite the fact that he lucidly acknowledges that his experiment is bound to fail, the appeal of this 'what if' scenario suggests that, despite being potentially problematic, such an engagement with the past nonetheless constitutes an important way of relating to and making sense of the past. Here, the same dynamic I identified with regards to Binet's text can be observed: a simultaneous gesturing towards the past, which testifies to the narrator's desire for an intimate knowledge of the past, together with an acknowledgement that this movement must remain suspended in order to preserve the irreducible otherness of the past. As I will now demonstrate, this aborted movement is also one of suspension of linearity, which then opens up the notion of the possible as what cannot be mapped in advance.

In his essay entitled 'Le possible et le réel' included in *La Pensée et le Mouvant* (1938 [1934]), Bergson denounces the common misconception that sees the possible as a mere 'mirage du présent dans le passé' (p.111), as somehow pre-existing the real, waiting to be realised. This is a reductive and problematic vision of the possible for it also negates the very possibility of creation and novelty: indeed, if the real is made of pre-existing possibilities that are realised, it would then mean that the real is only repetition, devoid of unpredictability and openness. For Bergson, for whom human beings are first and foremost creative beings, this understanding of the possible, which he associates with linear time, comparing it to the mechanical movement of the 'oscillations du balancier de l'horloge' (p.101), is deeply flawed. One can further argue that with such a narrow definition of the possible, any understanding of the past will necessarily be lacking, reducing the fate of the past Other to mere pre-existing possibilities, thus denying the Other's uniqueness. It is in this sense that I argue that Levinas's ethical injunction of the irreducible alterity of the Other exceeds the notion of the possible that is criticised by

Bergson. As I mentioned in my analysis of the challenge posed by *HH/H* to conventional historiography, the chronological time deployed by historiography erases, for Levinas, the singularity of the Other by incorporating them into a homogenising and totalising narrative. In the following passage of *Totalité et infini*, Levinas argues that the notion of totality subsumes the Other into the Same by constructing the Other as an object of knowledge:

> La face de l'être qui se montre dans la guerre, se fixe dans le concept de totalité qui domine la philosophie occidentale. Les individus s'y réduisent à des porteurs de forces qui les commandent à leur insu. Les individus empruntent à cette totalité leur sens (invisible en dehors de cette totalité). L'unicité de chaque présent se sacrifie incessamment à un avenir appelé à en dégager le sens objectif. Car seul le sens ultime compte, seul le dernier acte change les êtres en eux-mêmes. (2006, p.6)

Within a totalising system, the future can only be envisioned as a future present and the past as a past present, each heterogeneous instant being assimilated into a homogeneous whole. By opposing this thought structure, Levinas thus pursues a 'déformalis[ation] du temps […] qui revient à conférer à l'instant une valeur en dehors de son inscription dans la synthèse du temps' (Vanni, 2004, p.48). If Bergson and Levinas both underline the danger a reductive notion of the possible carries, it is by turning to the notion of the virtual as conceptualised by Deleuze in his reading of Bergson that one can find a way of resisting totalisation and closure. As Deleuze explains:

> Ce que Bergson critique dans l'idée de possible, c'est que celle-ci nous présente un simple décalque du produit, ensuite projeté ou plutôt rétroprojeté sur le mouvement de production, sur l'invention. Mais le virtuel n'est pas la même chose que le possible : la réalité du temps, c'est finalement l'affirmation d'une virtualité qui se réalise, et pour qui se réaliser, c'est inventer. (2002, p.41)

The question that now arises, and that I will try to answer, is that of determining whether Bayard's text is able to convey such a view. For Hanna Meretoja (2016), it is precisely fiction that has the potential to cultivate such a sense of the possible. According to Meretoja, who draws on Paul Ricœur's and Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, 'one of the central and ethically relevant ways in which fiction can produce historical insights is through its ability to interpret the past world as a space of possibilities in ways that cultivate our sense of the possible' (2016, p.373). As she explains, this requires the dichotomy that associates literature with the possible and history with the actual to be deconstructed, for the actual and the possible constantly interpenetrate (p.372). According to Meretoja, a key dimension of the ethics of storytelling lies then with the potential of narratives to both expand and limit our sense of the possible (2018, p.2). However, as I have argued this first requires the very notion of the possible to be problematised.

If Bayard uses the terms 'possible' and 'virtuel' interchangeably in his essay,[45] I will, in what follows, argue that what Bayard is trying to achieve actually relates much more to the virtual than to the possible. In so doing, he can be seen to be implicitly agreeing with the philosophical reflections by Bergson, Deleuze and Levinas that I have discussed in this first section. Beyond those philosophical works, Bayard's text also relates, in this respect, to the notion of 'sideshadowing' that the literary scholar Michael André Bernstein (1994) has developed in reaction to what he perceives as the somewhat pervasive view to see the Holocaust as an inevitable tragedy in Holocaust narratives. Such a view, because it 'implies a closed universe in which all choices have already been made, in which human free will can exist only in the paradoxical sense of choosing to accept or

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[45] Bayard repeatedly uses the term 'possibilités' but also writes of 'devenirs virtuels' (p.25) or 'représentations virtuelles' (p.97).

willfully—and vainly—rebelling against what is inevitable' (p.2), is for Bernstein a kind of 'foreshadowing'. As opposed to this reductive model,[46] sideshadowing underlines 'the unfulfilled or unrealized possibilities of the past', thus disrupting 'the affirmations of a triumphalist, unidirectional view of history in which whatever has perished is condemned because it has been found wanting by some irresistible historico-logical dynamic' (pp.3-4).

1.3.2 Temporal Bifurcations

Rather than providing an answer to the question 'Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau ?' that serves as the essay's title (which, as we have seen, and as Bayard acknowledges, is bound to failure), Bayard's main interest lies rather in identifying various factors that might help explain the decision of some individuals to resist. Through the examination of case studies which include the trajectories of Daniel Cordier (Jean Moulin's secretary), Romain Gary, Aristides de Sousa Mendès (the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux during the Second World War who defied his superiors' orders and issued visas to refugees) or Milena Jesenska (a Czech, anti-fascist writer and journalist who exchanged letters with Franz Kafka; she was interned in Ravensbrück where she passed away in 1944) among others, Bayard highlights the importance of various factors, notably ideological beliefs, empathy, fear, etc. that come to the fore in situations of intense ethical conflict. However, beyond these factors, what fascinates Bayard above all is the singular capacity of these individuals to 's'extraire du cadre qu'il[s] constitu[ent] pour [eux-mêmes]' (2013, p.118),

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[46] As Bernstein explains, '[w]hen an event is so destructive for a whole people, so hideous in its motivation, enactment and consequences as was the Shoah, there is an almost irresistible pressure to interpret it as one would a tragedy, to regard it as the simultaneously inconceivable and yet preordained culmination of the entire brutal history of European anti-Semitism' (1994, p.10).

and to open up the field of the possible. In other words, it is their ability to perceive what Bayard calls 'bifurcation' that appears central. As Bayard explains:

> Chaque vie est ainsi une succession de bifurcations, plus ou moins nettement visibles, qui dessinent devant nous une multitude d'itinéraires virtuels conduisant à des existences parallèles que nous ne connaîtrons pas, où nous aurions vécu d'autres expériences, fait d'autres rencontres, aimé ou haï d'autres gens. (p.49)

The question that animates Bayard's own incursion into the past as well as his investigation into other people's trajectories revolves around this very notion of bifurcation, which I propose to examine in what follows. In doing so, I will demonstrate, through Deleuze, that this notion entails a specific conceptualisation of time as non-linear, and as the crystallisation of past and present, virtual and actual.

According to Deleuze, who, in his analysis of Joseph L. Mankiewicz's films, investigates 'le temps qui bifurque', 'les points de bifurcation sont le plus souvent si imperceptibles qu'ils ne peuvent se révéler qu'après coup, à une mémoire attentive. C'est une histoire qui ne peut être racontée qu'au passé' (1985, p.70). What Deleuze describes here corresponds to Bayard's enunciative position, as someone who looks back to the past from the present. If his retrospective position allows him to perceive bifurcations, it appears, in light of the reflections on the notion of the possible elaborated in the previous section, that those bifurcations, grasped in hindsight, fall under the notion of the possible in its reductive sense, for it prevents any sense of futurity or novelty. Therefore, what the 'regard en amont' entails is, in fact, 'un remodelage constant du passé par le présent, de la cause par l'effet' (Bergson, 1938, p.114).

If it is true, however, that bifurcations can be more easily identified in hindsight – once they have passed – what really interests Bayard is the more peculiar case of an individual realising in the present moment that he or she is facing such a bifurcation; it is

also such a configuration, with a character being able to perceive these bifurcations, that is, for Deleuze, the most original aspect of some of Mankiewicz's films, such as *All about Eve* (1985, p.72). Bayard thus writes about Gary 'qui a su percevoir la bifurcation essentielle qui se présentait à lui, entre partir et rester' (2013, p.66), but also Mendès who does not just perceive the existence of a bifurcation, but who '*crée lui-même une bifurcation* qui n'existait pas en tant que telle et dont peu de diplomates à l'époque, placés dans des conditions identiques ont eu l'idée' (p.109, original italics). The latter case – being able to create bifurcations, what Bayard also refers to as the ability to think outside previously established frameworks (p.109) – is all the more striking for, in the historical context of the Second World War and the Holocaust, the possibility of resisting was not readily available. Indeed, as Gary writes in *La Promesse de l'aube* (1980),

> ils [ceux qui avaient refusé de suivre de Gaulle] avaient raison, et cela seul eût dû suffire à les mettre en garde. Ils avaient raison, dans le sens de l'habileté, de la prudence, du refus de l'aventure, de l'épingle du jeu, dans le sens qui eût évité à Jésus de mourir sur la croix, à Van Gogh de peindre, aux Français d'être fusillés, et qui eût uni dans le même néant, en les empêchant de naître, les cathédrales et les musées, les empires et les civilisations. (p.283)

This passage, that Bayard refers to (2013, p.68), illustrates the need to think creatively, which as I shall demonstrate, also requires thinking time outside a linear framework. The fact that the very possibility of resisting needed to be created is established by Bayard earlier on in his discussion of Stanley Milgram's and Christopher Browning's analyses, which unearthed psychological laws that might help explain what drove some individuals to commit acts of atrocity,[47] and which, in turn, make the act of defying these

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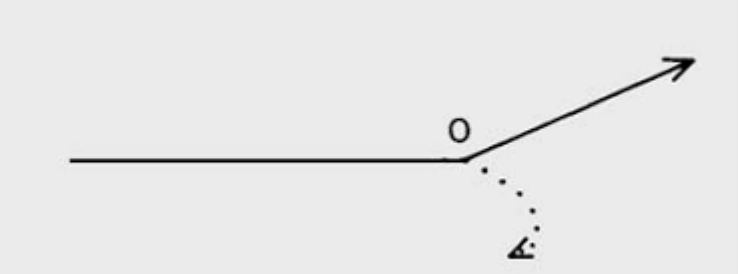
[47] See especially chapters 2 and 3 of *Aurais-je été.*

psychological laws and refusing to comply with dehumanising orders even more distinctive.

Another example discussed by Bayard is that of Jesenska. According to Bayard, what characterises the attitude of Jesenska who, during her internment at Ravensbrück, saved her friend Margarete Buber-Neumann by inventing 'une nouvelle forme d'action – aller dénoncer auprès d'un responsable nazi ses propres complices' – is its creativity, for, through her actions, Jesenska opens up the field of the possible since 'elle fait apparaître des voies nouvelles pour la pensée et pour l'action, ou, si l'on veut, des bifurcations qui ne se dessinaient pas comme telles auparavant' (p.118). Bayard's text reveals two distinct but interrelated facets of memory work: first, a memory constituted in the aftermath that is able to perceive bifurcations in hindsight, in which the past is recast by the present, and second, a memory at the very moment it is being formed, a memory that lets us catch a glimpse of the creation of bifurcations. Of this latter form of memory, Deleuze writes : 'au lieu d'une mémoire constituée, comme fonction du passé qui rapporte un récit, nous assistons à la naissance de la mémoire, comme fonction du futur qui retient ce qui se passe pour en faire l'objet à venir de l'autre mémoire' (1985, p.72). Deleuze's keen interest in bifurcations might be explained by the fact that the very form of time is bifurcation, as Deleuze suggests in the previous sentence. As mentioned earlier, Bergson describes time as a scission into two jets, one directed towards the past, the other to the future, a movement of which Deleuze provides a helpful visualisation (p. 109):



The dotted jet that falls back to the past entails not only what has happened but also encompasses what could have happened, or in other words, it encompasses not just what was actualised in the present, but also what remains in a virtual state.

In his essay, Bayard argues that the ability to create or perceive new bifurcations, which harbours the potential to resist, is what differentiates such individuals like Jesenska and Mendès. This point can, in fact, be considered the main argument of his essay and, as Bayard explains, a partial answer to the question he set out to answer:

> [Q]uelle que soit la part essentielle de mystère qui détermine *in fine* l'engagement, les figures de résistance évoquées ici délivrent par leur exemple un enseignement précieux qui mérite d'être transmis. L'un de ses thèmes majeurs est la *capacité de désobéissance*, si bien illustrée par Sousa Mendès, ou, plus largement, la *capacité à sortir du cadre* imposé par l'ensemble de la société.
>
> Cette capacité à sortir du cadre, qui n'est pas seulement un cadre administratif mais un cadre inconscient de pensée, permet d'inventer, par un véritable *travail de création*, des bifurcations qui ne se dessineraient pas en temps normal. En cela, il y a davantage ici qu'une échappée du cadre, il y a remaniement de l'ensemble de la réalité, un remaniement qui la fait apparaître différente de ce qu'elle était, puisque ouverte à des transformations invisibles jusqu'alors. (2013, p.156, original italics)

Although, in this brief passage, Bayard does not draw an explicit connection between the notion of bifurcation and a specific model of time, I argue, nevertheless, that when Bayard writes about the necessity to break free from 'un cadre inconscient de pensée', this can be read as an injunction to break free from linearity. Thinking time outside of a linear framework mobilises one's faculty of imagination, and it is in this sense that it can be considered an act of resistance. Indeed, if, as I explored in this chapter's introduction,

one can draw a connection between the culmination of linear time and the ideology of progress and the atrocities of the twentieth century, then imagining a time outside linearity subverts established power dynamics. This is all the more critical in dehumanising situations like those experienced by Jesenska, and the others mentioned by Bayard, where there was a clear attempt at depriving people of what makes them human, including the faculty to imagine and create. Therefore, what transpires throughout Bayard's text is that the ability to create bifurcations requires a suspension of a linear causal relationship.

This moment of suspension, or of detaching the singular moment from a linear succession, is precisely what Bayard touches on when he recounts the moment when Mendès, after witnessing the influx of refugees in Bordeaux, locks himself in his bedroom for three days, delaying his decision. Read through the prism of Bergson's philosophy, this prolonged moment of hesitation can be interpreted as a moment of creation. As in *HHhH*, in which delay is presented as a creative force, the same can be said of *Aurais-je été.* As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is in *Matière et Mémoire* that Bergson introduces the idea of a 'zone d'indétermination'. For Bergson, what differentiates more developed organisms such as humans from more primitive ones is the fact that between perception and action a delay is introduced (1929, p.19). Whereas a simple organism – Bergson gives the example of protozoans, single-celled organisms (p.18) – will react instantly and automatically, a delay between perception and action allows complex organisms time to select and choose between different responses to a stimulus, with the help of memory. This delay or temporal interval is key to what enables voluntary choice and freedom. In his essay 'Conscience et imprévisibilité' included in *L'Énergie spirituelle* (1919), Bergson explicitly links this zone of indetermination with creation and duration and the act of choosing with creativity:

> L'être vivant choisit ou tend à choisir. Son rôle est de créer. Dans un monde où tout le reste est déterminé, une zone d'indétermination l'environne. Comme, pour créer l'avenir, il faut en préparer quelque chose dans le présent, comme la préparation de ce qui sera ne peut se faire que par l'utilisation de ce qui a été, la vie s'emploie dès le début à conserver le passé et à anticiper sur l'avenir dans une durée où passé, présent et avenir empiètent l'un sur l'autre et forment une continuité indivisée : cette mémoire et cette anticipation sont, comme nous l'avons vu, la conscience même. (p.13)

The moment of creation of a bifurcation can thus be considered a suspension of linear time, of the causal relationship, but it is also a moment of indeterminacy, a moment of hesitation where the crystallisation of the actual and virtual can be located.[48]

Bayard uses the image of the crystal throughout his text in reference to Freud. According to Bayard, a situation of intense ethical conflict 'révèle en nous – comme dans ce cristal psychique dont parle Freud, qui, jeté par terre, se brise selon des lignes prédéterminées –, ce que nous sommes véritablement sans le savoir' (2013, p.25). Bayard borrows here Freud's metaphor of the crystal and the way a crystal breaks according to specific cleavage planes that are determined by the crystal's structure (2010 [1917], p.60), that Freud uses in *Nouvelle suite des leçons d'introduction à la psychanalyse* to illustrate the structure of the psyche. Although, on the one hand, Bayard's use of the image of the crystal seems to imply a certain predeterminism, since a crystal normally breaks according

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[48] Though elaborated in a radically different context (Mai 68), this recalls Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the 'moment critique' in *Homo Academicus* (1984), 'où, en rupture avec l'expérience ordinaire du temps comme simple reconduction du passé ou d'un avenir inscrit dans le passé, tout devient possible (au moins en apparence), où les futurs paraissent vraiment contingents, les avenirs réellement indéterminés, l'instant vraiment instantané, suspendu, sans suite prévisible ou prescrite' (pp.236-237).

to existing cleavage and fracture planes, at the end of the essay, what seems to prevail, beyond this idea of predeterminism, is the multiplicity of these virtual lines and their unpredictability. Indeed, after having looked at different factors throughout his essay – including psychological laws but also internal forces (ideology, indignation, empathy, fear) – the conclusion Bayard reaches is one that emphasises a 'capacité [qui] n'implique pas seulement une re-création du monde, traverse de nouvelles lignes de force qui en remodèlent le paysage, elle signifie aussi une re-création de soi' (2013, p.156). There is a subtle but meaningful change here as this implies that, beyond any determinism, new cleavages and fractures can be created in the crystal.

1.3.3 Conclusion

Despite the impossibility to come up with a definitive answer to the question 'Aurais-je été bourreau ou résistant ?', this very question nonetheless remains one that most people can relate to and is significant, for it illustrates an intense desire to experience the past, a past that, in the case of Binet's and Bayard's narrators who belong to the generation of postmemory, is missing. Projecting himself into the past, Bayard's narrator seeks to restore a sense of the possible and of futurity to the past. While Meretoja argues that literature cultivates our sense of the possible, what she defines as 'our capacity to imagine beyond what appears to be self-evident in the present' (2018, p. 20), I have argued that, in *Aurais-je été*, the sense of the possible is closely linked to the way time is perceived, for, in order to escape a reductive dimension of the possible, what is required is, above all, a deconstruction of linear causal relationships. Reading Bayard's essay through the prism of Bergson's and Deleuze's theories on time and memory enables us to approach the past as not merely what was actualised but as a series of virtual bifurcations that, in order to be perceived, require a suspension of linearity. It therefore seems crucial to recognise the

temporal experience of authors like Bayard and Binet as one marked by both alterity and creativity.

1.4 Chapter Conclusion

Hartog's claim – that we have now entered a new regime of historicity, characterised by an overbearing present that eclipses and subordinates both past and future – eventually appears unable to account for the complex temporal experiences that are at the heart of both *HHhH* and *Aurais-je été*. Against the utilitarian idea that memory is 'un instrument présentiste' (Hartog, 2003, p.138) through which the present uses the past in order to assert itself, this chapter has demonstrated that it is possible to foster a meaningful engagement with the past that preserves its otherness. While Richard Terdiman defines memory as 'the present past' (1993, p.8), and Max Silverman as a 'performative and transformative act in the present' (2013, p.23), this does not imply, contrary to what Hartog seems to be suggesting, that the past becomes subservient to the present.

Throughout this chapter, I have drawn instead on Bergson's and Deleuze's models of non-linear time which, I have argued, help us navigate the shortcomings of presentism, which sees the past only as a derivative of the present. In *Le Bergsonisme* (2004 [1966]), the two common misconceptions about time identified by Deleuze – 'd'une part nous croyons que le passé comme tel ne se constitue qu'après avoir été présent ; d'autre part, qu'il est en quelque sorte reconstitué par le nouveau présent dont il est maintenant le passé' (p.53) – correspond to the defining features of the model of presentism. Instead, as Bergson and Deleuze underline, the past is not constituted *after* having been present, but it is constituted *at the same time* as the present, illustrated by the bifurcation or forking movement of time. Moreover, the past can never be reconstituted by the present as it was, for the direction of the process of actualisation is from the past towards the present

rather than the opposite and actualisation is, as we have seen, synonymous with creation. Further, I have shown that within such a model of non-linear time, the alterity of the past, underlined by Levinas, is preserved. Against the linear time of progress and conventional historiography, non-linear time reveals the irreducible otherness of the Other who cannot be assimilated into a homogenous, closed narrative.

I contend that, ultimately, these features make such a temporal model an adequate prism through which to examine the work by postmemorial writers such as Binet and Bayard. While postmemory remains a helpful model, I argue that, in order to further elucidate the ambiguous temporal dynamics that agitate Binet's and Bayard's respective texts, turning to Bergson's and Deleuze's philosophies of time and memory proves productive. Indeed, within such a framework, it becomes possible to reconfigure the relationship between past and present, distance and proximity, virtual and actual – areas that have been undertheorised within the model of postmemory.

This chapter has also implicitly argued for the potential of literature, over other forms and genres, notably historiography, to convey the otherness of the past and complicate our perception of time. From the historicist perspective, questions of non-chronological time, anachronism, alterity, creativity, and imagination are more often reduced to anomalies. There are, of course, some historians, such as Nicole Loraux (2005) who have highlighted the productivity of anachronism for their work, but they remain a minority. I will pursue the discussion of the relationship between literature and historiography more explicitly in Chapter 3 of this thesis, when I examine the work of historian Ivan Jablonka, who seeks to unsettle the dichotomies between cognition and affect, history and literature.

While, in this first chapter, I have explored how, through the power of anachronism, two disparate temporal moments in time collide and enter into a complex dialectical relationship, in the next chapter, I investigate how this temporal collision may

also reveal connections between what may seem at first sight disparate histories. Such a proposition has notably been put forward by Rothberg in *Multidirectional Memory*, who has argued that anachronism has the potential to articulate multidirectional memory (2009, p.172). In the next chapter, I thus broaden the scope of my investigation and turn my attention to the way contemporary texts such as Anouar Benmalet's *Fils du Shéol* (2015) and Marie Bardet's *À la droite du père* (2018) draw connections not just between past and present but also between the local and the global, the individual and the collective. I will demonstrate that these two texts, in which one memory leads to another, deconstruct the binary opposition between vertical and horizontal memory dynamics and seek, instead, to articulate a relational, rhizomatic model of memory.

Chapter 2

Vertical and Horizontal Dynamics of Memory in Marie Bardet's *À la droite du père* (2018) and Anouar Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* (2015)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned not only with the interpenetration of different temporal moments as in the previous chapter, but more broadly with memory's potential to connect different histories of extreme violence. While the texts that I propose to investigate in this chapter – Maire Bardet's *À la droite du père* (2018) and Anouar Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* (2015) – focus partly on family histories, they also draw attention to the way family histories are intertwined with other histories and stories. Both texts disrupt a rigid opposition between horizontal and vertical dynamics, wherein horizontality is linked with transcultural affiliations and verticality is associated with filiation. In order to elucidate the complex entanglements of different histories and different traumatic memories that characterise Bardet's and Benmalek's texts, I argue that we need a model that can accommodate both the tensions between memory's dynamics of horizontality and verticality, and their interpenetration. As I demonstrate, the model I elaborated so far, drawing on Bergson and Deleuze, can shed light on such connections, which as I show, works according to what Deleuze, together with Félix Guattari, calls a rhizomatic network that weaves connections along both horizontal and vertical lines. The potential of Bergson and Deleuze's theory of time to establish connections, not only between two temporal moments, but also between different histories, has rightly been underlined by Alia Al-Saji, according to whom 'the links between present and past are of consequence not only for the experience of temporality and memory in an individual

subject, but for the possibilities of interplay and transmission between different subjects, different pasts, histories and planes or *sheets* (*nappes*) of memory (to use Bergson's term)' (2004, pp.203-204, original italics). In a similar vein, Bill Marshall has pointed out the potential of Deleuze's adaption of Bergson's model for drawing out memory's multidirectionality (2010). In this chapter, I go one step further than these two critics and argue that the links enabled by Bergson and Deleuze's model of time can be described as rhizomatic. Because the rhizome is a concept that transcends the binary between horizontality and verticality, it is able to bring to the fore the multi-dimensional nature of the notions of distance and proximity. Eventually, I show that the textual spaces of Bardet's and Benmalek's texts can be productively characterised as a rhizomatic network that opens up a space of relationality, which can be located in an ambivalent space between distance and proximity where horizontality and verticality intersect.

In the introduction to this chapter, I begin by highlighting how the connective nature of memory is often, whether explicitly or implicitly, framed by notions of horizontality and verticality in memory discourses. This discussion has a twofold aim: on the one hand, it reveals how an ethics of memory's multidirectionality, in which attempts at identifying interconnections between disparate histories do not lead to the collapse of difference into the Same, can be located at the intersection between horizontality and verticality. On the other hand, it helps establish the productivity of the concept of the rhizome – a concept which is explicitly structured around a tension between verticality and horizontality – for thinking about memory's relationality.

As Astrid Erll (2014) has shown, vertical and horizontal dynamics are at play in the very notion of generation, which entails ideas about generationality and genealogy at the same time, with generationality referring to how one generation is constructed synchronically and genealogy drawing attention to the dialogic relationships between different generations (either preceding or following). Generationality is thus synchronic

and horizontal while genealogy refers to a diachronic and vertical understanding of memory. Marianne Hirsch's own distinction between familial postmemory and affiliative postmemory reflects this twofold dimension. She writes,

> To delineate the border between these respective structures of transmission—between what I would like to refer to as familial and as 'affiliative' postmemory—we would have to account for the difference between an intergenerational *vertical* identification of child and parent occurring within the family and the intra-generational *horizontal* identification that makes that child's position more broadly available to other contemporaries. (2008, pp.114-115, my italics)

Here, Erll and Hirsch's observations draw attention to two types of connections – filiative (vertical) and affiliative (horizontal) – that need to be considered when exploring memory's relationality. While the family has been for a long time a privileged site of inquiry for memory scholars, in recent years, attention has increasingly turned to the way memory travels beyond the family, but also more broadly, beyond national borders.

According to Erll, those recent developments of memory studies that focus on the circulation of memory in a globalised world, and which have become known as the 'transnational turn' and 'transcultural turn', mark the 'third phase' of memory studies (2011, p.4).[49] This evolution signals a change of paradigm: from an understanding of memory as static and contained within national boundaries, to an emphasis on its fluidity that transcends national borders. Within this turn, Michael Rotherg's model of multidirectional memory has proven influential. In sharp contrast to a competitive

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49 Though interrelated, the transnational and the transcultural are not the same: according to Jenny Wüstenberg, '"transnational" is about the relationship between multiple localities of memory and "transcultural" is about their blending' (2019, p.374). In other words, transnational movements may not necessarily result in transcultural encounters. In this chapter, I am interested in both the transnational and transcultural potential of memory, in its ability to cross both geo-political and cultural borders.

understanding of memory according to which the remembrance of one event in the public sphere must always be at the expense of other historical memories in a logic of 'zero-sum game of competition' (2009, p.9), Rothberg's model of multidirectional memory has provided an invaluable way for thinking of memory as 'subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative' (p.3). The move towards increased attention paid to transnational and transcultural connections is perhaps best exemplified by the move away from Pierre Nora's 'lieux de mémoire' to alternative models attuned to the transnational dynamics of memory such as Rothberg's 'multidirectional memory' (2009) or Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal and Silverman's notion of 'nœuds de mémoire' (2010). While Nora's notion of sites of memory encompasses a wide range of material and immaterial objects and symbols, for instance historical figures, museums but also songs, they are all envisioned through the prism of the French Nation-State (1984, p. vii). Despite presenting his project as 'une étude polyphonique' (1984, p.vii), the voices Nora includes in the three volumes of *Les Lieux de mémoire* are only those of the metropole.[50] The shortcomings of such an approach, which omits France's colonial and postcolonial past and remains grounded in a decidedly linear understanding of history, have since been highlighted by numerous scholars, including Hue-Tam Ho Tai (2001), Gregory Mann (2005) and Rothberg (2010). In contrast to Nora's study, which uses the nation as a focal point and presents a rather static vision of memory, Rothberg, Sanyal and Silverman propose instead the notion of 'noeuds de mémoire' – a more complex, dynamic and nuanced understanding of memory. Such an approach 'suggests that "knotted" in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of

50 The recent volume *Postcolonial Realms of Memory* seeks to remedy the blind spots of Nora's *Les Lieux de mémoire* and to 'postcolonialize the *lieu de mémoire'* (Achille, Forsdick and Moudileno, 2020, p.8).

temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialization (whether at the local or national level) and identitarian reduction' (Rothberg, 2010, p.7).

Before exploring more closely this reference to the rhizome and its implications in the context of transnational and transcultural movements of memory, I first highlight how notions of horizontality and verticality are used in memory discourses that deal with transnational remembrance, either explicitly, or implicitly through figures of speech such as metaphor and metonymy.

For Chiara De Cesari and Anne Rigney, the transnational turn entails a rethinking of 'imagined topographies of verticality' (2014, p.5), i.e. hierarchies and power dynamics (notably between the local and the global), and of memory 'not as horizontal spread or as points or regions on a map but as a dynamic operating at multiple, interlocking scales and involving conduits, intersections, circuits, and articulations' (p.6). De Cesari and Rigney point here to the inadequacy of ideas of verticality and horizontality, when those are associated with hierarchical power structures and homogeneous linearity respectively, to grasp the dynamicity of memory's circulation. De Cesari and Rigney are not the only memory scholars to explicitly frame their discussion of the transnational dynamics of memory around ideas of horizontality and verticality. Retracing the evolution of war memorials and their spatial organisation since the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day, Jay Winter argues that there has been, since the 1970s, a noticeable shift away from the vertical, which he associates with sentiments of hope and pride, towards the horizontal, which for Winter, conveys notions of mourning and loss (2017, p.154). One of the examples discussed by Winter includes *L'Anneau de la Mémoire*, a World War I memorial located in Ablain-Saint-Nazaire in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, which opened in 2014. Designed by Philippe Prost, the memorial lists the names of the 580,000 soldiers of over 40 different nationalities who died in Nord-Pas-de-Calais between 1914 and 1918. The names are arranged alphabetically rather than by nationality or rank. Such a memorial

thus moves away from hierarchy, but also acknowledges the role of the colonial troops, which have historically suffered from a lack of recognition. For Winter, these features convey a sense of horizontality and testify to the transnational character of the memorial (p.169). Although Winter arrives at a different conclusion from De Cesari and Rigney – namely that a sense of horizontality conveys transnational solidarity, as opposed to the latter, who argue that transnational memory transcends verticality and horizontality – these examples suggest that an exploration of transnational movements of memory must take into account those dynamics, even if only to challenge and subvert them. As I will now show, those very dynamics can also be seen at play, albeit implicitly, in the use of figures such as metaphor or metonymy. Such aesthetic figures, Sanyal argues, function as 'vectors of memory' (2015, p.7)[51] and are 'the site of mobile and renewable interpretive energies that animate – rather than paralyze – ethico-political engagements' (p.29), thus able to convey the entanglements of different pasts.

While, in the previous chapter, I underlined the power of anachronism to bring to the fore links between disparate temporal elements, I now turn my attention to metaphor and metonymy and discuss their potential to establish similar links to those brought about by anachronism. Metaphor and metonymy have been associated by Roman Jakobson with verticality and horizontality, a distinction which he derived from Ferdinand de Saussure's differentiation between paradigmatic (selective, vertical) and syntagmatic (combinatory, horizontal) axes of language. Though metaphor and metonymy both establish a sense of relationality between different elements, they work in different ways: metaphor works through similarity while metonymy works through contiguity. Thus, while metonymy already implies the existence of a pre-existing relation between the two elements (for instance between part and whole, cause and effect,

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51 Sanyal is here using Nancy Wood's phrase (1999).

container and content, etc.) it brings into contact, metaphor appears able to bring to the fore novel associations. This is precisely what Paul Ricœur, in *La Métaphore vive* (1975) emphasises when he writes,

> Ne peut-on pas dire que la stratégie de langage à l'œuvre dans la métaphore consiste à oblitérer les frontières logiques et établies, en vue de faire apparaître de nouvelles ressemblances que la classification antérieure empêchait d'apercevoir ? Autrement dit, le pouvoir de la métaphore serait de briser une catégorisation antérieure, afin d'établir de nouvelles frontières logiques sur les ruines des précédentes. (p.251)

One can relate this opposition between metaphor, with its ability to reveal new, unexpected connections between disparate elements, and metonymy, which emphasises an already existing logical link between two elements, to the distinction between the possible and the virtual developed by Bergson and Deleuze that was discussed in the previous chapter. This also aligns with Silverman's view, according to which '[m]etaphor is a creative and transformative process in that it unsettles or defamiliarizes habitual meanings, connects the most unlikely elements and reshapes our perceptions' (2013, p.23).

A criticism often addressed to the use of metaphor is its alleged substituting of one element for another. This is what Huyssen is alluding to when he writes that the metaphoric use of the Holocaust 'may also serve as a screen memory or simply block insight into specific local histories' (2003, p.14). Such a critique can also be found in the work of Stef Craps, for whom a metaphorical view of history, because of 'its insistence on similarity', 'threatens to conflate distinct historical experiences', whereas 'a metonymical view […] places them alongside one another and thus preserves the distance between them' (2013, p.89). If for Craps, a metaphorical view of history transmutes what is Other into the Same, Ricœur has instead argued that metaphor entails a process of

'voir comme' in the Wittgensteinian sense (1975, p.269),[52] which, rather than conflating two elements, reveals the complex relationship between the two elements a metaphor is made up of.[53] This relation is one structured by a dialectic between absence and presence, since as Ricœur emphasises, 'Être-comme signifie être *et* ne pas être. Cela était et cela n'était pas' (p.388, original italics). Against a reductive understanding of metaphor as substitution, I thus argue that it is more productive to view metaphor as a creative process out of which something new emerges and that plays on the ambivalence between absence and presence. A metaphoric use of the Holocaust, rather than obscuring other histories, reveals instead a dynamic relationship between the Holocaust and those histories, capable of bringing to light both similarities *and* differences between them.

A final point that needs to be raised is that of the relationship between metaphor and metonymy. While Jakobson posits a binarism,[54] I wish here to nuance such a view, and highlight instead how the two interact, especially in memory. In his analysis of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu (*1987 [1913])*,* Gérard Genette (1972) demonstrates that,

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52 In *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), Wittgenstein uses the example of an ambiguous image which can be alternatively seen as either a duck or a rabbit to introduce the difference between 'seeing' and 'seeing as'. While saying 'I *see* a duck' is definitive and precludes the emergence of other meanings, saying 'I *see* the picture *as* a duck' leaves open the possibility for other interpretations (I simultaneously acknowledge that this duck-rabbit picture can be seen as either a duck or a rabbit). While in Wittgenstein's example, 'duck' (A) and 'rabbit' (C) have to be deduced from the 'duck-rabbit picture' (B), in the case of metaphor, A and C are given, and it is B (the point of view in which A and C are similar) that needs to be inferred.

53 'Le "voir comme" est le lien positif entre *vehicle* et *tenor* : dans la métaphore poétique, le *vehicle* métaphorique est *comme* le *tenor* ; d'un point de vue, mais non de tous les points de vue ; expliquer une métaphore, c'est énumérer les sens appropriés dans lesquels le *vehicle* est "vu comme" le *tenor*' (1975, p.269, original italics).

54 However, in *Essais de linguistique générale,* Jakobson does concede that, in poetic language, the opposition between similarity and contiguity is reconfigured: 'La superposition *de la* similarité *sur la contiguïté* confère à la poésie son essence de part et d'autre symbolique, complexe, polysémique […] En poésie, où la similarité est projetée sur la contiguïté, toute métonymie est légèrement métaphorique, toute métaphore a une teinte métonymique*' (1963, p.238, original italics).*

> Seul le recoupement de l'un [la liaison horizontale établie dans le trajet métonymique] par l'autre [la liaison verticale du rapport métaphorique] peut soustraire l'objet de la description, et la description elle-même, aux 'contingences du temps' ; c'est-à-dire à toute contingence ; seule la croisée d'une trame métonymique et d'une chaîne métaphorique assure la cohérence, la cohésion 'nécessaire' du *texte.* (p.60, original italics)

These tensions between horizontality and verticality, metonymy and metaphor are most visible in moments of involuntary memory. The taste of the madeleine dipped in tea brings together sensations that have been experienced by the narrator in different spatio-temporal circumstances, but it also triggers the unfolding of a metonymic chain (from the taste of the madeleine to his aunt Léonie's room, the grey house, and the town of Combray).

Though my discussion has focused on metaphor and metonymy, such interpenetration of the horizontal and the vertical can also be observed in montage, the figure of the palimpsest, or allegory. As it is used for instance by Chris Marker in *La Jetée* (Ffrench, 2005) or Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Heywood, 2010), montage not only performs a horizontal sequence of images, but also a vertical superimposition of different temporal layers. Although it first evokes a sense of verticality, the figure of the palimpsest, especially as it has been conceptualised by Silverman (2013) in his model of palimpsestic memory, also operates on a vertical and horizontal axis at the same time. In this perspective, the palimpsest reveals 'a combination of not simply two moments in time (past and present) but a number of different moments, hence producing a chain of signification which draws together disparate spaces and times' (p.3). Finally, Sanyal (2015) contends that 'allegory's operations are key vectors in memory's multidirectionality, even as they remain a risky mode of engaging history' (p.126) and has demonstrated how allegory functions both on a synchronic (horizontal) axis (for instance in Camus's allegory

of the plague) and on a diachronic (vertical) axis (in Resnais and Cayrol's *Nuit et brouillard*) (pp.121-122).

My discussion so far has underlined the way vertical and horizontal dynamics are at play in memory discourses, and more importantly, that when they operate together, they reveal the potential of memory to form connections between disparate elements. As has become apparent, an ethics of transnational or transcultural memory must carefully negotiate between distance and proximity: it must bring into proximity disparate times and sites without erasing the differences nor establishing a hierarchy between them. In what follows, I argue that best suited to respond to this challenge is Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome that they elaborate in *Mille Plateaux* (1980).

Originally a stem that spreads horizontally and randomly, without any apparent order, the rhizome, as conceptualised by Deleuze and Guattari in their introduction of *Mille Plateaux* (1980), becomes a productive concept for thinking about transcultural connections. If Deleuze and Guattari are keen to emphasise that the rhizome resists exhaustive definition, given its ability to expand and transform at all times, they nonetheless provide some key principles of the rhizome. The first two principles are those of 'connexion et hétérogénéité' according to which 'n'importe quel point d'un rhizome peut être connecté avec n'importe quel autre, et doit l'être' (p.13). This means that the rhizome connects a multiplicity of heterogeneous points together, and importantly, while doing so, it preserves the singularity of each point. It does not flatten out the differences between different points nor does it establish hierarchical relationships. The type of relationality promoted by the rhizome is thus one which may accommodate an ethics of transcultural memory as outlined above. The third principle, that of 'multiplicité', positions the rhizome as resisting totalisation and binary thinking. The fourth, the 'principe de rupture asignifiante', posits that '[u]n rhizome peut être rompu, brisé en un endroit quelconque, il reprend suivant telle ou telle de ses lignes et

suivant d'autres lignes' (p.16). Thus, '[i]l n'a pas de commencement ni de fin, mais toujours un milieu, par lequel il pousse et déborde' (p.31). A key consequence of the fact that there is no originary point that can be traced back as the start of the rhizomatic network, is a rejection of linear chronology. The fifth and sixth principles relate to 'cartographie' and 'décalcomanie' (p.19). Deleuze and Guattari associate the rhizome with the map, which unlike the 'calque' that only replicates pre-existing structures, 'est ouverte, elle est connectable dans toutes ses dimensions, démontable, renversable, susceptible de recevoir constamment des modifications' (p.20).

These principles demonstrate the potential of the concept of the rhizome for exploring and articulating transnational and transcultural connections between different memories, without falling into what Rothberg calls a 'zero-sum game' logic. The rhizome is characterised by its ability to form connections with disparate elements across time and space, and, in this respect, it is therefore characterised by the same sense of temporal heterogeneity and non-linearity that was explored in the previous chapter. Unbound by pre-existing, rigid structures, the rhizome, with its capability to expand and to constantly establish new and unexpected connections, appears desirable for thinking about memory in a transcultural context and for building new alliances. While Sanyal is sceptical as to the ability of theoretical models (as opposed to aesthetic figures) to grasp the fluidity of memory, Deleuze and Guattari's model of the rhizome is characterised by open-ended connections that are subject to change and evolution. Yet, despite this apparent potential for the concept of the rhizome to articulate transcultural connections, the relationship between the rhizome and the way memory works in a transnational context has surprisingly not been the subject of scrutiny. If memory scholars have paid little attention to the rhizome so far, Deleuze and Guattari's concept has been taken up by a number of postcolonial thinkers, most notably Edouard Glissant, who uses it in his elaboration of a 'poetics of relation' (1990).

For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome's horizontal dynamics resists the vertical logic of 'l'arbre-racine'. Arborescent thought, according to them, is only capable of producing hierarchy, linearity and binaries. Another notable difference between the rhizome and the tree-root, they suggest, consists of the fact that '(l)'arbre est filiation, mais le rhizome est alliance, uniquement alliance' (1980, p.36). While the tree is associated with filiation and verticality (the family or the Nation-State are examples of arborescent systems), the rhizome is associated with horizontal connections. If the rhizome can be considered horizontal, it is insofar as it rejects the establishment of hierarchical relationships that are organised along a vertical axis, but a rhizomatic network is itself constituted of various lines – horizontal, vertical, transversal. Especially important then, is the disruptive power of the rhizome to establish connections in spite of pre-established frameworks and systems. Ultimately, while Deleuze and Guattari use a binary opposition between the tree and the rhizome to convey a clear understanding of what is at stake in their conceptualisation of the rhizome, they nonetheless fully acknowledge that in practice the two intersect:

> Il y a des nœuds d'arborescence dans les rhizomes, des poussées rhizomatiques dans les racines. […] Ce qui compte, c'est que l'arbre-racine et le rhizome-canal ne s'opposent pas comme deux modèles : l'un agit comme modèle et comme calque transcendants, même s'il engendre ses propres fuites ; l'autre agit comme processus immanent qui renverse le modèle et ébauche une carte, même s'il constitue ses propres hiérarchies, même s'il suscite un canal despotique. (pp.30-31)

2.2 Marie Bardet's *À la droite du père* (2018): Filiation, Affiliation and Transcultural Encounter

À la droite du père (2018) is the first novel of Marie Bardet, a former journalist and winegrower. All of Bardet's writing to date has been concerned with the intertwinement of personal and collective trauma (including the Holocaust, the Lebanese Civil War, and the Vietnam War), and the question of origins.[55] *À la droite du père* is a complex novel with multiple characters that spans several decades, from the dark years of the Vichy regime to present-day France and Lebanon. Unlike her other writings however, *À la droite du père* is a novel with a strong autobiographical dimension: the novel, with its protagonist named Claire Robert, who is the daughter of Gaston Robert, an architect in charge of the urban planning of the town of Vichy and a fervent Pétain admirer, inevitably recalls Bardet's own private life and family background. Marie Bardet herself is the daughter of Gaston Bardet (1907-1989) who was the architect in charge of the planning of Vichy by Maréchal Pétain and an influential figure in French architecture as well as a vocal opponent of Le Corbusier's architectural vision.[56] His influence faded in the mid-1950s and from then on he dedicated most of his time to theology and esotericism.[57]

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55 *Babylift* (2021), her latest novel, focuses on the aftermath of the 'Operation Babylift', a mass evacuation of children from South Vietnam to Western countries that took place at the end of the Vietnam War. Bardet has also published two short texts in the Apulée magazine, 'Je veux mourir à mon nom' (on Chakib Daher, a pro-Palestinian Lebanese Christian Maronite who died during the Chatila massacre in 1982) and 'Un jour un amoureux pleurait, les mains sur la figure…', the latter included in a dossier dedicated to the Rivesaltes camp (also known as the camp Joffre de Rivesaltes) that she coordinated herself. Between 1940 and 1942, around 20,000 Jews were interned in the Rivesaltes camp, and this camp plays an important role in *À la droite du père*.

56 The paratextual information on the back cover describes Bardet's book as a 'roman en partie autobiographique' and in an interview, Bardet uses the label of 'roman autobiographique' (2019).

57 Nicholas Bullock speculates that this is due to a combination of factors, one of which being that Bardet's reputation was tainted by his association with the Pétain government (2010, pp.360-361). Interestingly, this did not affect Le Corbusier who was also close to the Vichy regime. Bardet comments on this in her novel, and points to the concentrationary dimension of Le Corbusier's architectural vision: 'Blanchi de son antisémitisme notoire, aimablement introduit au ministère de la Reconstruction, Le Corbusier peut s'atteler à couvrir la France d'immeubles inspirés de l'architecture collectiviste qu'il a étudiée avec application dans la Russie de Staline. Ces

A hybrid genre in-between autobiography and novel, referential non-fiction and fiction, the autobiographical novel genre cultivates a sense of instability around the identities of the protagonist/narrator/author. As Philippe Gasparini argues, readers of autobiographical novels are led to wonder 'Est-ce l'auteur qui raconte sa vie ou un personnage fictif ?' (2004, p.9). For Gasparini, while in autofiction this identification between author and character is fictional, in an autobiographical novel, it is ambiguous and sometimes contradictory (p.32). This ambiguity appears in the first lines of the foreword, the sentence 'L'homme qui a remis au maréchal Pétain les plans de la ville de Vichy, en 1942, c'était mon père' (2018, p.10), potentially referring to both Claire Robert and Marie Bardet. While the 'avant-propos' is written in the first-person, the rest of the novel, divided into three parts - respectively entitled 'Oubli', 'Enfances' and 'Mémoires' – uses a third-person narrator and is therefore much less ambiguous; Claire Robert the character and Marie Bardet the author can be more easily separated. While the identity of the foreword's speaker remains ambiguous, there is no onomastic identity of the author and narrator/protagonist in the ensuing text and the term autofiction does not apply, unlike the case of the two texts discussed in the previous chapter where narrator and protagonist bore the same name.[58]

In 'Oubli', the first part of the novel set in 1940 in Vichy, the narrative offers internal focalisation into multiple characters, including Jeanne Gauchet, a maid who witnesses the death of George Hirsch – her former Jewish employer and the father of her close friend Annelise – shot from the back by, she believes, Gaston Robert. Her friend Annelise is

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unités d'habitation conçues pour répondre aux fonctions primaires d'un individu type, sériel, ressortissent d'une rhétorique que l'Europe post-concentrationnaire est étrangement prête à inclure dans le paysage des vertes prairies françaises.' (2018, pp.95-96).

58 The term 'autofiction' as defined by Philippe Lejeune is a text in which the narrator of a novel has the same name as the author (1975, p.31). Serge Doubrovsky with *Fils* (1977) responded to Philippe Lejeune's challenge about imagining a case in which the narrator of a novel would have the same name as the author.

taken away (the reader learns in the last part of the novel that she was taken to Rivesaltes, then Drancy, and was eventually deported to Auschwitz where she died) and Jeanne begins working for the Morlet family. Charles Morlet is the head of the Vichy spas and the organiser of secret meetings attended notably by Gaston Robert, during which the participants share their enthusiasm for Pétain's politics. In addition to these meetings, it is suggested that Morlet is involved in the sex traffic of young women, including his own daughter Elsa.

The second part of the novel 'Enfances' is itself divided into two parts: the first one follows Claire Robert in the 1970s as she grows up in Vichy under the over-bearing influence of her father. Gaston Robert is now old and in poor health, and devotes his time to deciphering ancient religious texts. It is also implied that Gaston Robert is sexually abusing Claire. When Gaston Robert becomes gravely ill, Claire imagines sacrificing herself in exchange for her father's life, while eventually hoping that Carlos, the Venezuelan-born terrorist, would come and rescue her from this fate of martyr. The second half of 'Enfances' focuses on Maksim, a character who will come to play an important role in Claire's life later on, and his childhood in Lebanon and Syria over the same period. Maksim's family are pro-Palestinian Christian Maronites who are close to Carlos, Maksim's older brother being Carlos's godson. Mistaking Maksim for his older brother, Carlos takes the young boy to Syria and initiates him into handling firearms and guerrilla tactics. After a few years spent with Carlos, Maksim eventually returns to Beirut only to find out that his grandfather Chakib has been killed during the 1982 Sabra and Chatila massacre.

In 'Mémoires', the final part of the novel, Jeanne, Claire and Maksim, whose stories had so far been told separately from one another, cross paths. Claire, now a winegrower, and Maksim, who has achieved his childhood ambition of becoming an architect, meet

and fall in love in Beirut at the Salon du livre francophone. Maksim then visits Claire in her vineyard located in Rivesaltes Southern France, near the Rivesaltes camp and shares traumatic events of his past with her, while Claire remains reluctant to confront her past. Jeanne and Claire also meet, and Jeanne confesses that Gaston Robert may not have killed George Hirsch. The novel ends with Claire and Maksim going to the Rivesaltes camp where a memorial is being built. There, they have a violent argument and Claire flees, but, disoriented, she finds herself on a minefield and is wounded, and the novel ends with Claire agonising amongst asphodel flowers.

In my reading of Bardet's text, I will first analyse the vertical dynamics of the novel, and demonstrate that the question of filiation proves multi-layered for Claire, for it links her not only to her father Gaston Robert but also with the colonial and collaborationist past. Following the initial opposition to be found in the text between filiation and affiliation, I then discuss Claire's attempt to escape her filiation by trying to find new affiliations. Finally, I shall demonstrate that the opposition between vertical and horizontal dynamics collapses through Claire's meeting with Maksim and their respective traumatic memories.

2.2.1 Filiation: Fiction and Arborescence

The title of Bardet's novel, *À la droite du père*, seems to stress first and foremost the importance of filial relationships. In addition to a familial connotation, the phrase 'à la droite du père' also brings forth religious and political meanings. This phrase appears in the Bible to designate Jesus sitting at the right-hand of the Father after his ascension to heaven, and thus refers to a special place of honour, but, equally, it may also refer to a particular political stance. As Bardet's novel unfolds, however, this phrase resonates in a cruel way, as it is revealed that Claire, the protagonist of the novel, rather than occupying

a special place of honour, is sexually abused by her father. As I shall demonstrate, Claire's filiation inevitably brings her back to her father but also, by extension, to Vichy, especially to the dark years of the Collaboration, and also to colonialism. 'Vichy' becomes not only a metaphor for the sexual abuse she suffered (which becomes clear only towards the very end of the novel), but it also triggers a metonymic chain that encompasses the Collaboration and France's colonial past.

The question of filiation and of how to deal with the familial past is a major theme of Bardet's novel, but Bardet's project inscribes itself in a different dynamic to that which has become dominant in recent years with the proliferation of what Dominque Viart has called 'récits de filiation'. Viart defines 'récits de filiation' as:

> une enquête sur *l'ascendance* du sujet. Tout se passe en effet comme si […] les écrivains remplaçaient l'investigation de leur *intériorité* par celle de leur *antériorité* familiale. L'un des enjeux ultimes est une meilleure connaissance du narrateur de lui-même à travers ce(ux) dont il hérite. (2009, p.96)

According to Viart, the proliferation of these 'récits de filiation', in which a narrator tries to determine his own place in history through his ascendants, is directly linked to the crises and traumas of the twentieth century that have resulted in parental figures being characterised by uncertainty, opacity and anxiety (1999, pp.119-120). Viart cites, for instance, Pierre Bergounioux's texts; and, in relation to recent Holocaust texts specifically, the two texts that I will discuss in the next chapter, Marianne Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* (2009) and Ivan Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* (2012), fall in this category. One can discern two important elements at play in the notion of 'récit de filiation' as defined by Viart: first, the attempt to recover broken or occulted genealogies (this aspect will be key to my analysis of *Fils du Shéol* later on in this chapter) and, second, an emphasis on the role of intergenerational relationships in shaping one's identity. This

of course resonates with Hirsch's concept of familial postmemory, which explores the way members of later generations relate to the traumatic experiences of their ancestors. In the context of Holocaust literature specifically, the first characteristic of filiation narratives described by Viart has an ethical dimension in so far as one underlying aim of such narratives is to rescue ancestors who disappeared and whose traces were forcibly erased, and in Chapter 3, I will consider the role of the archive with regards to this aim. At the same time, this questioning around family history is also viewed in direct relation to the narrator's present identity. As Viart observes, 'ce qui est de l'ordre d'une pensée de l'Autre en général dans le contexte des sciences humaines et de l'éthique philosophie prend, dans le champ littéraire français, la coloration particulière des récits de filiation' (1999, p. 123). In other words, while the Other presents a more universal dimension outside literature – as is the case in Levinas's philosophy of alterity, for instance – in literature this Other is often reconfigured as a parental figure. As I will show later on, however, in the case of Bardet's text, this reflection on otherness comes to the fore with Claire's encounter with Maksim.

Rather than a 'récit de filiation' then, I argue that the narrative of Claire's childhood in the second part of the novel can be best understood as a 'fiction de filiation'. Her childhood in Vichy in the 1970s, spent isolated and under the over-bearing influence of her father Gaston Robert – still deeply anti-Semitic and longing for Pétain – is indeed dominated by her desire to reinvent her filiation and genealogy. Neglected and unloved by her mother, she imagines that she is the product of her father's first marriage with, she imagines, a Jewish woman:

> Et si elle, Claire, était la fille de l'épouse délaissée ? Cela pourrait tout expliquer ! La froideur d'Anne, l'hostilité d'Odile... L'anachronisme que suppose une telle hypothèse n'effleure pas l'enfant. Dans l'espace confiné de la mansarde, Claire a eu

> tout le temps d'imaginer quelle sorte de femme était l'épouse abandonnée. Elle lui prête la tendresse de Jeannine, son émouvante gaucherie, mais aussi les traits de cette race maudite qui a mis à mort le Christ. Pour la première fois depuis la mort annoncée de son père, elle entrevoit une issue. (2018, p.111)

She does not realise that such an anachronic filiation is impossible, being herself seven years old and her father and mother having been married for several decades already. As Valentine Moulard-Leonard underlines,

> Although claiming descent from any oppressor can prove a rather repugnant task for anyone (even though all 'first-world' citizens aspiring to historical and social responsibility must eventually learn to do so), having to claim descent from one's own perpetrators poses specific challenges. (2012, p.838)

Claire's anachronic speculations can also be interpreted as a way for her to unconsciously grapple with the sexual abuse she is subjected to by her father. With an imaginary Jewish mother, her thus inherited Jewishness might be able to explain, Claire speculates, why she falls victim to her anti-Semitic father. Claire's anachronic thinking also brings into proximity her suffering with the suffering experienced by Jewish people during the Holocaust, and even though problematic, since it risks appropriating the suffering of Others, this brings her out of her feeling of isolation and provides her with the sense of belonging she is yearning for. This fantasy is the only way available for her childhood mind to access, albeit indirectly, the traumatic truth she wishes to repress – that she is a victim of incest. This example shows that it would be reductive to see Claire's fantasy as a malicious use of the Holocaust that becomes a substitute that covers up her

own trauma.[59] Rather, the process of displacement at play shows truth and fiction to be in productive tension.

A patriarchal and devout Catholic family, the Bardet family's interactions are characterised by vertical and hierarchical dynamics, which in turn structure Claire's vision of her environment. Thus, when her father falls gravely ill, she forms an esoteric pact whereby she would sacrifice her life to God in order to prolong his. The rhetoric of sacrifice that she adopts is in keeping with Stephen Clingman's observation that,

> Where horizontal connection is prevented, vertical alignments – of repression, substitution, sacrifice – result. Similarly, where repression, substitution, sacrifice exist, horizontal connection is either prevented or permitted only in pathological forms. But where trauma or damage has produced repression or sacrifice, opening up horizontal boundaries admits healing, navigation, connection. (2009, p.135)

This certainly seems to apply to Claire for when she starts to fear death, she begins to believe that the terrorist Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, better known as Carlos, whose picture she saw in a newspaper, will come and free her from her tragic fate of martyr. When Carlos does not come to rescue her, she blames her imaginary Jewishness, which, she hypothesises, made her unworthy of being saved in Carlos's eyes. Claire's fantasy about Carlos can be interpreted as a 'ligne de fuite' that performs a movement of deterritorialization and seeks a rupture with the family system. As Deleuze and Guattari acutely point out, however, a line of flight

> peut être recouverte par une reterritorialisation qui la compense, si bien que la ligne de fuite reste barrée : on dit en ce sens que la D [la fonction de

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[59] This was precisely the charge aimed at Binjamin Wilkomirsky for his 'fraudulent' *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* (1996).

> déterritorialisation] est *négative*. N'importe quoi peut faire office de reterritorialisation, c'est-à-dire « valoir pour » le territoire perdu ; on peut en effet se reterritorialiser sur un être, sur un objet, sur un livre, sur un appareil ou système... (1980, p.634, original italics)

This is precisely what happens in Claire's case: the line of flight she imagines fails to connect with other lines and only brings her back to a destructive pattern. Of these lines of flight that are almost immediately reterritorialized, Deleuze and Guattari write that '[e]lles dégagent elles-mêmes un étrange désespoir, comme une odeur de mort et d'immolation, comme un état de guerre dont on sort rompu : c'est qu'elles ont elles-mêmes leurs propres dangers qui ne se confondent pas avec les précédents.' (p.280). If Claire's fantasy about Carlos betrays a desire to connect outside and escape her family sphere, her filiation – even imagined – ultimately proves inescapable. Yet, this imaginary filiation nonetheless begins to unsettle the rigidity of genealogy.

However, what is at stake for Claire is not only her filiation to her father but also, through him, her filiation to Vichy and to the period of the Collaboration. The foreword, which takes the form of an intimate first-person confession to the reader, starts with the rather peculiar sentence 'Je suis née *de* Vichy' (2018, p.9, original italics), as opposed to the more conventional 'je suis née *à* Vichy'. While it is mentioned in the novel that Claire was born abroad 'loin de Paris, loin de Vichy; en somme, loin de la France' (p.98) in the late 1960s, the narrator powerfully states, still in the foreword, that,

> Je n'étais pas de ce monde, mais je le sais. L'homme qui a remis au maréchal Pétain les plans de la ville de Vichy, en 1942, c'était mon père. La capitale de la France occupée, mon nombril. La promulgation des lois raciales en 1940, la gangrène qui m'a pourrie lentement, mais sûrement. Les mutilations inévitables m'ont rendue semblable à ces corps disloqués au service desquels Pablo Picasso n'a pas ménagé

> son talent. Je ne peux contempler leurs sexes dépaysés, leurs crânes fendus, leur œil cyclopéen sans un sentiment troublant de mimétisme. Mon drame était tout intérieur. (p.10)

While the opening sentence 'Je suis née de Vichy' already suggested the existence of a metonymic linkage between Claire and Vichy, Claire being figuratively implied to be a part of Vichy, this passage, and especially the comparison of Vichy to the narrator's navel, further reinforces the idea of a filiation between Vichy and Claire. The navel is the remnant of the attachment site of the umbilical cord and the only scar that appears at birth. Thus, by likening Vichy to her navel, the narrator conveys once again the idea of a filiative link between her and Vichy but also the idea that she is scarred by events that precede her birth. Consequently, the narrator's connection to the past appears embodied: as the above passage demonstrates, she experiences a visceral connection to Vichy, to the extent that her body is described as rotting, dislocated and damaged. While postmemory tends to emphasise the psychic imprint of trauma, here it is the (violent) corporeal inscription of the past on her body that is underlined.[60]

Despite the spatial and temporal distance that separates her from Vichy and the period of the Occupation, Vichy evidently occupies a central place in Claire's sense of self, and, as the novel unfolds, it becomes clear that Vichy is a metaphor for the sexual abuse inflicted by her father. Bardet's text deconstructs Jakobson's framing of metonymy and metaphor in terms of opposites: as I will now demonstrate, Vichy, in addition to being a metaphor that links a traumatic collective history and a traumatic individual past,

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[60] The narrator's readiness to acknowledge the interconnections between her family history and Pétain's Vichy contrasts sharply with a widespread reluctance to acknowledge any sort of link with Vichy. In her doctoral thesis dedicated to the city of Vichy, Audrey Mallet demonstrates that the memory of the Vichy regime in Vichy is characterised by a politics of silence and that Vichy (the town) is thus a 'non-lieu de mémoire' (2017, p.2).

is also the start of a metonymic chain that links different pasts together and underlines the multi-layered nature of the past. While Vichy has become a well-known metonymy for France's Collaboration with Nazi Germany, in *À la droite du père*, Vichy also becomes a symbol of France's colonial Empire.

Claire's early memories of walks 'entre les séquoias, les ginkgos biloba, les grands cèdres du Liban, les araucarias acclimatés de force ou par la ruse du temps de Napoléon III' (p.13) – in other words trees that are not native to France but were brought to France and made to adapt to the climate[61] – are a reminder that traces of colonialism are visible in everyday landscape. It is important to recall here the special position the town of Vichy occupied within the French colonial empire. Vichy is a long-established thermal city and one of the most well-known 'villes d'eau' in France, whose mineral water is supposed to have healing properties. Vichy successfully targeted colonials living in colonies, with Vichy waters being promoted as the most appropriate to cure colonial ailments, thus becoming 'the capital of colonizers' in metropolitan France (Jennings, p.184, p.199, 2006). A substantial part of Vichy's clientele was made of colonial settlers and as Eric T. Jennings explains: '[Vichy] served explicitly as a re-whitening agent for those having lived so long among native others. Vichy was also believed to effect a powerful cleansing of the liver that could literally erase the internal scars of colonial life on French bodies' (2006, p.185). If, as Audrey Mallet (2017) has argued, Vichy is a 'non-lieu de mémoire' with regards to the Vichy regime, the same can be said about its place in the colonial Empire. Far from endorsing this positive reputation built on the alleged therapeutic nature of Vichy's water, Bardet subverts Vichy's reputation as a 'ville d'eau' by focusing instead on Vichy's waste-water: 'Cette ville *dont* je suis née est raccordée à un réseau

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[61] On the link between botany and colonialism, see notably Schiebinger, Londa, and Swan (2005).

souterrain où les eaux vives, les eaux sales et l'innommable sont forcés de cohabiter' (2018, p.14, original italics). In this sentence that ends the foreword, one can note the same insistence on the use of prepositions that echoes the opening sentence, which reasserts her statement that even though it is not the city in which she was born, she is nonetheless born *of* Vichy, which encompasses the city, the historical period of the Vichy regime as well as the colonial past. Claire's filiation to Vichy thus appears complex and multi-layered, including not only her father, but also the period of the Occupation and colonialism.

The importance of the interlinked themes of family, filiation, and genealogy is emphasised throughout Bardet's text through a mobilisation of a vegetal imaginary. One can, for instance, read descriptions of Claire's walks as a child under the shade of tall, ominous trees which are described as 'arbres tutélaires' (p.122). If one recalls the Latin etymology of the word 'tutélaire' – 'tutela' meaning both 'protection' but also 'surveillance' – the use of this phrase seems to allude to someone watching from above, which convey, once again, notions of hierarchy and verticality. Not only is there a proliferation of various trees ('marronniers', 'sapins', etc.) that surround Claire as she grows up; paternal figures – Gaston Robert and the Maréchal Pétain – also appear very tree-like.[62] This appears in the description of a photograph of Gaston Robert with Pétain – this photograph is displayed in a strategic place so that '[o]n ne pouvait entrer et sortir de l'agence sans passer devant' (p.107) – where the Maréchal is referred to as 'cet homme aux épaules massives, une couronne de cheveux blancs sévèrement plantée au bas du crâne, était *enraciné* face à Gaston Robert telle une vigie' (p.107, my italics). Described as 'enraciné' and compared to a 'vigie', Pétain appears very much like 'un arbre

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[62] Pétain, who promoted the values of 'travail, famille, patrie', was often depicted in visual propaganda as a paternal, tutelary figure, who watches over France.

tutélaire', as mentioned earlier. This description of Pétain also echoes a description of Gaston Robert who, in old age and plagued by illness, has lost some of his mobility and 'tentait d'escamoter l'enflure démesurée [de ses] membres inférieurs, ce lent travail de sape d'un sang qui ne se liquéfiait plus que sous l'effet d'une camisole chimique' (p.89). Just like Pétain, Gaston Robert appears to have taken root. Moreover, in the paragraph that follows this description, it is revealed that, rather than blood, it is 'sève' that appears to run through Claire's veins (p.90).

The rigidity and immutability of Claire's childhood environment, which is, as we have seen, dominated by vertical dynamics of hierarchy and religion, is reinforced by this arborescent imaginary, with characters described as tree-like. We are inevitably reminded here of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of the tree-root as the image of a centralised system that 'préexiste à l'individu qui s'y intègre à une place précise' (1980, p.26). With the overwhelming presence of paternal figures – Gaston Robert and Pétain – Claire's filiation seems inescapable. For Claire, who is described as growing up in the shade of 'grands arbres coloniaux' (2018, p.13), her family tree is entangled with France's collaborationist past and colonialism. In reaction, the young Claire attempts to rewrite this filiation and escape the arborescent system of the family by embracing the 'ligne de fuite', defined in *Mille Plateaux* as a movement of deterritorialisation (1980, p.10), that Carlos embodies. Claire's fantasy can be read as an attempt to connect outside of the static, oppressive assemblage that her family represents, and to free herself from her biological family. Even if verticality dominates in the narrative of Claire's childhood, different pasts are brought together through a play on metonymy. Through what one might term as 'metonymic filiations' the well-known metonymy of Vichy is complicated and reveals, in Bardet's text, not only the collaborationist past but also the links of the Vichy town with the French colonial Empire.

2.2.2 Seeking Affiliations Beyond the Biological Family

I have so far discussed the centrality of the theme of filiation, visualised through an arborescent imaginary, that runs throughout Bardet's novel (and especially in the part that focuses on Claire's childhood), a filiation that must be understood not only in relation to her father but also Vichy and the dark years of the collaboration and France's colonial past. In her adulthood, Claire has tried to escape her familial past and her traumatic experience and has moved to the South of France away from Vichy, where she has become a winegrower. She has seemingly put the past away, and adopts 'un mutisme décourageant toute approche [pour ce qui avait attrait à son passé]' (2018, p.271). Claire seems to be living a peaceful life as a successful winegrower, with only mysterious persistent acute vertigo crises (once again a reference to verticality), that compromise her sense of balance, disturbing her daily life; and already a sign that Claire cannot fully free herself from her past, the pulling force of gravity bringing her back to her past. In contrast to the narrative of her childhood in which Claire tried to reinvent her filiation but eventually proved unable to break free from vertical power dynamics, as an adult, Claire seeks to reinvent herself *outside* her filiation, by seeking horizontal connections.

In charge of a wine tasting event at the salon du livre francophone in Beirut, Claire pours Maksim a glass of a special cuvée, a wine that she describes as 'un saute-frontière, un sang-mêlé' (p.201); and the conversation she strikes up with Maksim – their first ever conversation – is the opportunity for her to articulate her newly-found vision of the notion of belonging:

- Je ne sais pas encore comment je vais l'appeler, admet Claire. Avec un nom, on peut remonter aux origines. Je trouve cette manie détestable. Sait-on jamais d'où l'on vient ?

- Si cet individu n'a pas d'identité, c'est peut-être qu'il est né sous X ? suggère Maksim, pris au jeu.

- Mais il en a une ! Ou mieux, plusieurs. Je préfère parler d'appartenances. Rien n'est jamais figé, non ?

Des images affluent brusquement.

« Les identités sont meurtrières », reprend Claire dans un souffle. (p.202)

In this key passage, Claire clearly expresses her refusal to being reduced to a single identity, instead preferring to talk of 'appartenances' that are always subject to change and evolution. Her understanding of identity appears plural (one can have multiple affiliations) and fluid (nothing is ever static). In sharp contrast to her childhood, where she was desperate to reinvent her filiation and her origins, Claire now articulates the conviction that one cannot go back to a single point of origin. Coincidentally, the phrase 'les identités meurtrières', used by Claire at the end of her conversation with Maksim, is also the title of a book by the French-Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf (2014), a book that explores the notion of identity and whose premise is that one's sense of identity is always plural. Maalouf interestingly resorts to notions of horizontality and verticality to discuss identity:

> En somme, chacun d'entre nous est dépositaire de deux héritages : l'un, 'vertical', lui vient de ses ancêtres, des traditions de son peuple, de sa communauté religieuse ; l'autre, 'horizontal', lui vient de son époque, de ses contemporains. C'est ce dernier qui est, me semble-t-il, le plus déterminant, et il le devient un peu plus encore chaque jour ; pourtant, cette réalité ne se reflète pas dans notre perception de nous-mêmes. (p.119)

Here, Maalouf draws a dichotomy between on the one hand, a vertical diachronic

inheritance and on the other, a horizontal and synchronic one. Such a reasoning rests on a constructed dichotomy between past and present, with the possibility of creating affiliations seemingly solely anchored in the present. To some extent, it presents a reductive vision of the past as it fails to take into account the possibility of forging connections across time, with others outside of one's own genealogy. It is certainly Claire's attitude, for she has seemingly discarded her past and is intent on living solely in the present.

However, after she starts her relationship with Maksim, who tells her of his own traumatic memories related to the civil war in Lebanon, but also after her meeting with Jeanne (a close friend of Annelise working initially for the Hirsch family, who, following George's death, starts working for the Morlet family), and indirectly through Jeanne, of Annelise (the daughter of George Hirsch who is shot in the first part of the novel, Annelise is then interned in Rivesaltes and eventually murdered in Auschwitz), Claire begins to perceive the entanglements of her family history with other histories and stories. From her childhood's attempt to reinvent her filiation, to her focus on forgetting her past and creating affiliation in the present, or in other words, from a vertical concept of belonging to a decidedly horizontal one, Claire eventually comes to realise the existence of different connections between different memories and to view past and present as fundamentally coexistent.

While Maalouf's conceptualisation of identity is certainly helpful in identifying vertical and horizontal dynamics, the more complex and nuanced understanding that Claire discovers resonates more with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome. As I described in this chapter's introduction, the rhizome is a hetereogeneous, organic whole that has no beginning or end, and whose points are connected by a multiplicity of lines, with no hierarchical order. Where it differs significantly from Maalouf's notion of

identity is that the rhizome, which resists linear chronology and links heterogeneous points together, can be understood as both spatial and temporal interconnectedness since 'n'importe quel point d'un rhizome peut être connecté avec n'importe quel autre, et doit l'être' (1980, p.13). Whereas in Maalouf's model, connections can only be made in the present, the rhizome is constituted of connections that transcend linear time. Here, the temporal heterogeneity – that I explored in relation to Binet's *HHhH* in the previous chapter, in which I demonstrated the coexistence of different temporal moments – is thus integral to the rhizome.

Such a complex temporal dimension is visible in *À la droite du père* through Claire's reflections on other female characters (and vice versa) across time, including Annelise Hirsch, Jeanne, and most strikingly Elsa Morlet (whose Pétainist father is a sex trafficker who uses his own daughter), all of whom are introduced in the first part of the novel set in Vichy in 1940. Even though Claire, born in the late 1960s, has no direct knowledge of either Elsa, Annelise or Jeanne, all these female characters appear as mirror images of Claire. For instance, Elsa who, like Claire, is sexually abused, also resorts to a religious rhetoric of sacrifice and pain to try and make sense of her traumatic experience (2018, p.30). These parallels between different characters across space and time are amplified thanks to the internal focalisation that shifts constantly from one character to the other and the use of free indirect discourse. For instance, when one reads 'Claire n'a-t-elle pas offert sa douleur au Seigneur ?' (p.112), one cannot help but recall Elsa's earlier thoughts such as 'N'apprend-on pas que la souffrance est un mal nécessaire ?' (p.30). More than underlining the similarity of their inner thoughts, the text becomes an echo chamber.

While the echoes between different female characters (dead and alive) only grow stronger as the text unfolds, through the use of free indirect discourse and a shifting internal focalisation, another element facilitates, each time, the encounters between

different characters (Claire, Jeanne and Maksim): the wine produced by Claire. The fact that these key meetings are facilitated by wine, and that, in the Eucharist, wine symbolises the blood of Christ, is ironic, since what Claire attempts to do is to forgo her blood ties to her father. As previously mentioned, Claire meets Maksim at the wine tasting event, and Jeanne contacts Claire after having seen her name on a bottle of 'le champs des asphodèles', the name of Claire's wine, a name that powerfully drew Jeanne's attention since her late friend Annelise mentioned this flower several times in the diary she wrote during her internment at Rivesaltes (p.237). The recurrence of this plant is highly symbolic, for in Greek mythology, the asphodel meadow is a section of the Underworld where the spirit of the dead dwell (Homer, 2014 [1756], 24. 10-14). It is also a rhizomatic plant whose roots spreads horizontally. This recurrent motif serves to show that it is actually the dead, the victims of the atrocities of the twentieth century – notably the Holocaust and the Sabra and Chatila massacre – who bring the various characters together.

The validity of such an interpretation is reinforced by the foreword that frames the text. In this foreword, the 'I' narrator is writing from her coffin:

> À présent que le cercueil est cloué, je vais pouvoir m'abandonner au lumineux travail de décomposition par lequel ce récit fera œuvre, ou ne sera pas. Je vais me mêler à la terre du cimetière. Confondre ma chair en putréfaction avec ce creux, pour ne pas dire ce trou, dans un paysage d'altitude que Vichy, ramassé sur sa cuvette, ignore. (2018, p.10)

If the novel starts with a first-person narrator writing from her coffin, it also ends with Claire left dying, hovering between life and death, which further emphasises the spectral dimension of the text. This peculiar enunciative position is of course reminiscent of that of François-René de Chateaubriand in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, who states that 'je

préfère parler du fond de mon cercueil ; ma narration sera alors accompagnée de ces voix qui ont quelque chose de sacré, parce qu'elles sortent du sépulcre' (1910, liii). If, for Dominique Rabaté, the spectral writer is 'la paradoxale figure de la modernité […] : l'écrivain s'imaginant fantôme, spectre de lui-même, corrigeant ses épreuves avant la mort' (1993, p.10), I shall demonstrate in Chapter 4 that the spectral figure is also a major, and paradoxical, figure in contemporary French Holocaust literature. For now, however, I just want to point to the fact that what is explicit in Chateaubriand's statement – that the spectrality of the narrator allows him to act as a conduit for the voices of the dead – is implicit in Bardet's text. In the passage quoted above from *À la droite du père*, it is through the image of the decaying process, her flesh mixing with the soil in which others are buried, that the first-person narrator of the foreword underlines her links with dead others. The passage is also playing on the very word 'décomposition', which also suggests the word 'composition', thus alluding to the fact that it is through the act of writing that connections between different characters are brought to light.

After attempting to rewrite her filiation during her childhood, the adult Claire endeavours to efface her filiation by actively forging new connections across time, which include connections not only with the living but also with the dead. By foregrounding a complex sense of identity in which plurality is valued and where one is not brought back to the question of the origin, the text articulates what can be called a rhizomatic sense of identity. In doing so, it confirms Inès Cazalas's diagnosis of the contemporary novel and its complex relationship with the question of origins:

> Le roman contemporain met donc à mal le principe de continuité généalogique en explorant les béances et les déchirures qui marquent chaque génération, en dévoilant la part de hasard et d'invention inhérente aux processus d'apparentement et de territorialisation. La puissance de l'origine étant ainsi relativisée, des greffes

> effectuées sur l'arbre généalogique viennent l'hybrider et remettre en question son évidence biologique. (2014, p.210)

Yet, as we will see, it is, paradoxically, through the very connections she builds while seeking to escape her past that Claire is eventually led to confront her own traumatic past.

2.2.3 Encountering One's Trauma Through the Other

One of the main questions raised in Bardet's novel consists of how to confront difficult legacies and traumatic memories; in the case of Claire, this entails the incest of which she was victim, but also her family's involvement with the Vichy regime, as well as France's colonial past. The various solutions Claire elaborates to cope with this difficult and complex legacy take the form of a reinvention of her filiation in her childhood and the creation of new affiliations in her adulthood. Framed in terms of verticality and horizontally that have guided our discussion so far, Claire moves from a vertical perspective (defining herself solely by her filiation, even when trying to escape it) to a horizontal one (seeking to create affiliations in the present). In this section, I will argue that these two dimensions interpenetrate, for it is only through the intertwining of her memories with others' that Claire is eventually able to confront her own traumatic past.

Throughout the novel, Claire appears reluctant to acknowledge the abuse she was victim of and it is only towards the very end of the novel that she eventually mentions it directly for the first time: 'Je ne voulais pas voir la Juive en moi car j'aurais été forcée de me reconnaître en victime. J'aurais été contrainte d'admettre que mes rapports avec mon père étaient contre-nature. En préférant Carlos, je faisais le choix d'une autre monstruosité' (p.269). It is only through her encounters with others – especially with Maksim – and their own traumatic memories that she is able to face her past:

> En s'engageant dans le pas d'une jeune fille [Annelise] rencontrée par l'intermédiaire d'un cahier d'écolier et d'une vieille femme que le passé obsède [Jeanne], Claire remonte à l'origine de ses troubles. D'une façon qu'elle ne pouvait prévoir, sa guérison passe par *cet enchevêtrement de mémoires*, elle en acquiert la conviction. L'enfance de Maksim et la sienne, celle de la jeune victime juive, se font écho, se répondent, par-delà l'espace, l'histoire et le temps, comme si elles parlaient d'une même voix. (2018, p.271, my italics)

Claire's realisation – that she can only relate her trauma to the trauma of others – is in keeping with Caruth's argument that one's trauma is always bound up with the trauma of another and that it may thus lead 'to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's words' (1996, p.8). Caruth's claim, that trauma can act as a vector of cross-cultural solidarity, is shown, in Bardet's text, to require the interpenetration of horizontal and vertical dimensions of belonging.[63]

This is where the vertical and horizontal dimensions that I examined earlier become visibly entangled: it is only through Claire making new connections and connecting with Maksim that she is able to confront her filiation. Recalling Roger Luckhurst's definition of trauma as akin to a knot, a 'hybrid assemblage' (2008, p.14), trauma appears here to be a hybrid assemblage of plural memories at the intersections of horizontal and vertical axes. If it is the intertwining of memories that allows Claire to belatedly gain some insight

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[63] Claire and Maksim's relationship is in many ways reminiscent of that of the two protagonists of Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) (with a script by Marguerite Duras). Resnais's film, set in Hiroshima in 1957, tells the story of the meeting between 'Elle', a French actress whose German lover is killed at the end of the war, and 'Lui', a Japanese architect whose family was killed by the bomb. It is also one of the films that Deleuze analyses in *L'image-temps*. For Deleuze, Resnais's film gives to show 'le paradoxe d'une mémoire à deux, d'une mémoire à plusieurs : les différents niveaux de passé ne renvoient plus à un même personnage, à une même famille où à un même groupe, mais à des personnages tout à fait différents comme à des lieux non-communicants qui composent une mémoire mondiale' (1985, p.153). The same analysis can be applied to Bardet's text..

into her traumatic past, the same applies to Maksim: while the reader is able to get an insight into Maksim's traumatic past in the second part of the novel, it is only through his meeting with Claire that he is able to share a fuller account of his past. The reader learns in the second half of 'Enfances' that Maksim's family (Maronite Christians and pro-Palestinian communists living in West Beirut near the Sabra and Chatila camp where Palestinian refugees live) has close ties with Carlos, Maksim's older brother being Carlos's godson. The reader also learns that when Carlos comes to take Maksim's older brother to train him as a soldier, Maksim's father sends Maksim instead, passing him as his eldest son. Maksim is then taken away by Carlos to Damascus where Carlos teaches him the handling of firearms. When Maksim eventually returns to Beirut, he finds out that his grandfather Chakib has been tragically killed during the Sabra and Chatila massacre on 17-18 September 1982.[64] However, it is only in the 'Mémoires' part of the novel that Maksim also confides in Claire that when, as a teenager enrolled in an armed group, one of his friends named Kassim is killed by Israeli soldiers, he, in retaliation, and while recalling Carlos's voice urging him never to hesitate, killed the Israeli soldiers (2018, pp.230-231). With Claire listening to him, 'des mois durant, l'enfant de Beyrouth s'était délivré d'un passé qui le hantait, l'enchaînant à des confidences dont les cercles allaient en se rétrécissant' (p.243). Claire's description of this imbrication of memories also underlines the polyphonic nature of her memory, which corroborates my earlier characterisation of Bardet's text as an echo chamber. If Claire appears accompanied by the voice of dead others, it is the same for Maksim: 'Maksim vivait avec ses morts' (p.232). The very structure of Bardet's text – the second part of the novel tells the childhoods of Claire and Maksim separately, while the third part entitled 'Mémoires' brings them and

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[64] Chakib Daher is not a fictional character, and Bardet's text 'Je veux mourir à mon nom' is a hommage to Chakib (2017).

their stories together – enacts on a structural level the intertwining of memories.

While for Claire, the intertwining of different memories helps her come to terms with her own traumatic past, Maksim, on the other hand, is a character who is deeply pessimistic about the positive outcome of such memory entanglements. When they visit the Rivesaltes camp where a memorial is being built, he points out to Claire the discrepancies in the way different memories are treated, using the examples of the Holocaust and the Lebanese civil war.[65] Maksim challenges what he perceives as the predominance granted to the Holocaust. While Claire is emotionally shaken by the visit, what Maksim sees is 'un projet coûteux qui a mobilisé des vedettes de l'architecture lors d'un concours international. Avec quelle intention ? Le devoir de mémoire ! Curieusement, il s'applique toujours aux mêmes, non ?' (p.265). Maksim conveys the difficulty of living in a world where, while a memorial is being built, elsewhere new refugee camps are built at the same time. Maksim also embodies another useful counterpoint to Claire's attitude towards filiation and the tree-root. While, throughout her life, Claire has attempted to escape her family's past, notably by seeking to create new affiliations, Maksim points to the fact that putting down roots can actually be understood as a privilege. Maksim explains to Claire that his dream is to build an architecture school in Beirut to help Palestinian refugees build their own homes. However, since a law passed in 2001, Palestinians living in Lebanon are banned from owning land and purchasing properties, and thus Maksim's dream is currently a utopia. Maksim's question about how

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[65] That Maksim and Claire's conversation about the interaction of different traumatic memories occurs during their visit to the site of the future Rivesaltes memorial is significant, for this site was used throughout the twentieth century as an internment camp. While during the Second World War, the Rivesaltes camp was used as an internment camp for the Jewish community, the site has a complex history as an internment camp for various communities of 'undesirables' including Spanish refugees fleeing Franco's fascist Spain, but also Algerian nationalists and members of the FLN, and, after the Evian Accords of 18th March 1962, Harkis.

one trauma gains legitimacy is precisely what Terri Tomsky seeks to elucidate in her article 'From Sarajevo to 9/11: Travelling Memory and the Trauma Economy' (2011). According to Tomsky, in order to shed light on the circulation of representations of trauma, one must take into account

> A system of trauma economy, [which includes] its intersection with other capitalist power structures, in a way that shows how representations of trauma continually circulate and, in that circulation enable or disable awareness of particular traumatic experience across time and space (pp.49-50).

Maksim's belief that one dead is as important as another – 'Est-ce qu'un mort n'en vaut pas un autre ? Ça n'a rien à voir avec le fait qu'il s'agisse de mon grand-père. Fais un effort. Ouvre les yeux, Claire. Est-ce que la différence de traitement ne te saute pas aux yeux ?' (2018, p.265) – is incompatible with such a system of trauma economy. It is precisely because of this capitalist system of commodification of trauma, which imposes a hierarchy of suffering and is organised along a vertical axis, that it is urgent to foreground other ways of relating to the trauma of others, ways, I argue, that understand the global circulation of trauma both vertically and horizontally at the same time.

2.2.4 Conclusion

In the light of the various economic, cultural and political structures that seek to perpetuate what Rothberg calls 'a zero-sum game of competing collective memory', elaborating models of memory and belonging that allow cross-cultural solidarity appears ever so urgent. By exploring the tensions between different dynamics – familial and affiliative, vertical and horizontal – Marie Bardet's *À la droite du père* subverts a static understanding of the notion of belonging, and foregrounds how different memories may

interact productively within a rhizomatic framework. From a rather rigid dichotomy between filiation and affiliation, the text, through the encounter between Claire and Maksim and their respective traumatic past, eventually fosters their interconnectedness, illustrating Deleuze and Guattari's statement that '[i]l y a des nœuds d'arborescence dans les rhizomes, des poussées rhizomatiques dans les racines' (1980, p.30). My analysis of Bardet's text has shown that the notions of distance and proximity cannot be easily located on either a vertical or horizontal axis. Instead, it has stressed the dynamicity of memory, always susceptible to transform in unexpected ways.

2.3 Entanglement of Violent Histories in Anouar Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* (2015)

The title of Anouar Benmalek's novel *Fils du Shéol* invites a dual reading, as it can be understood as 'Son of Sheol' or alternatively as 'Threads of Sheol'; while the former makes the theme of filiation dominant, the latter stresses instead a multiplicity of threads or lines woven together, perhaps already showing affinity with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome. In what follows, I shall demonstrate that these two dimensions intersect, with ideas of filiation and connection both playing a key part in Benmalek's text, allowing the author to powerfully draw connections between histories of atrocities while testing the limits of empathy in the case of filial as well as affiliative relationships. A story told through three different generations, *Fils du Shéol,* I will argue, can be read as a genealogy of genocidal violence. The trope of the family and of the succession of generations is used by Benmalek to underline the filiation between colonial atrocities committed in South West Africa and the Holocaust.

In Judaism, Sheol designates the place, neither hell nor heaven, where all the dead go; and it is precisely where Karl, a twelve-year-old boy, ends up after having been gassed in a concentration camp in Poland. Stuck in the Sheol, Karl falls in time 'comme une pierre qui tombe sans retour possible dans un puits' (2015, p.181), a comparison that implies a decidedly vertical movement.[66] In a reversal to chronological order, he is forced to bear witness to the deaths of his relatives. The novel is divided into four parts: *Pologne, 1943* (Partie Zéro) recounts the death of Karl, the ordeal of his father who is part of a Sonderkommando and has the excruciating misfortune of having to dispose of his wife's corpse before he ultimately gives in; *Berlin, 1941-1942* (Partie moins Un) sees Ludwig, Karl's grandfather, commit suicide in a last bid to help his relatives escape Germany, their failure to do so, and culminates with the fatal arrest of Karl's mother Elisa; in *Alger, 1929* (Partie moins Deux) Ludwig and Manfred travel to Algeria as Ludwig, forever haunted by his colonial past in German South West Africa, wishes to go back to Africa; it is also when Manfred meets his wife-to-be Elisa, a French-Algerian Jew. Finally, *Sud-Ouest africain, 1904* (Partie moins Trois) tells the meeting of Ludwig with Hitjiverwe, a Herero woman with whom he falls in love, an encounter which does not prevent Hitjiverwe from dying, along with hers and Ludwig's infant child, in a concentration camp established by German colonial forces at the end of the novel. Each part is interspersed with brief passages from the Sheol, where Karl is left alone together with another presence (identified only as 'une Chose') who is in turn mocking or sympathetic of his fate, and who confronts Karl's powerlessness to change the past.

Benmalek (b. 1956) is a French Algerian writer who has repeatedly explored transcultural relationships in his writing, for instance in *Les amants désunis* (1998) where the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) and the 'décennie noire' of the 1990s

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[66] Like the narrator of the foreword in Bardet's text, Karl is a spectral narrator.

form the backdrop to a love story between a Swiss woman and an Algerian man, or in *L'Enfant du peuple ancien* (2000) which features a Franco-Algerian couple caught in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War, the colonial conquest of Algeria and the British genocide of indigenous Tasmanians and Australians.[67] Although in *Fils du Shéol*, Benmalek turns again to this recurrent theme, this novel also marks the first time he tackles the Holocaust. Benmalek is not the only Algerian writer who has addressed the Holocaust in recent years, other writers include Boualem Sansal (*Le Village de l'Allemand*, 2008) and Salim Bachi (*Le Consul*, 2015). Olivia Harrison describes the increasing number of Algerian novels that are turning to events such as the Holocaust, but also 9/11 or the Arab Spring, as 'iterations of the transcolonial novel' (2016, p.104). Drawing on Françoise Lionnet and Shu Mei Shih's notion of 'transcolonialism', which 'denotes the shared, though differentiated, experience of colonialism and neocolonialism (by the same colonizer or by different colonizers), a site of trauma, constituting the shadowy side of the transnational' (2005, p.11), Harrison argues that the contemporary Algerian novel 'has become a laboratory for the transcolonial imagination in the twenty-first century' (2016, p.104). As my analysis will show, Benmalek's novel, which explores connections between colonialism and the Holocaust, can certainly be understood in this perspective.[68]

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[67] For an analysis of *Les amants désunis*, see Agar (2017). Agar argues that Benmalek's focus on a cross-cultural couple enables him to foster both the tensions that are a result of the violence of the colonial past that threaten the collapse of cross-cultural relationships and, at the same time, the possibility of love and compassion.

[68] Benmalek's novel could also be productively read in tandem with André Schwarz-Bart's novel *Le Dernier des Justes* (1959), which explores Jewish persecution over a millennium through successive generations of the Levy family. While both novels share an interest in the articulation of different histories, for Rothberg, even though Schwarz-Bart's novel is grounded 'in an openness to cultural and historical difference, […] it ultimately reinstates the same mythic structure that underlies the discourse of uniqueness' (2009, p.138). However, as I will show, where Schwarz-Bart ultimately fails, Benmalek's text manages to articulate memory's multidirectionality.
Alternatively, Benmalek's text could also be contrasted with Mauritian writer Natacha Appanah's novel *Le dernier frère* (2007), which tackles the internment of Jews in a colonial prison in Mauritius.

By analysing the articulation of links between the Herero and Nama genocide and the Holocaust in Benmalek's text, I shall demonstrate that, beyond parallels, these links are envisaged as filiation. Through an exploration of family ties, Benmalek retraces a genealogy of genocidal violence, on the one hand, and, on the other, recovers a genealogy broken by the violence of genocide. The novel also foregrounds several transcultural encounters and meditates on the possibility of forging solidarities with others. As we shall see, this is facilitated by the Sheol, which can be considered as a rhizomatic network.

2.3.1 Genealogy of Genocidal Violence

In a red font, two sentences from the back-cover blurb of the novel stand out: 'Trois histoires d'amour pour remonter à l'origine du mal… Trois générations, deux génocides.' Paratextual information clearly establishes the aim of the novel from the start: to unearth a connection between two historical phenomena – the Herero and Nama genocide and the Holocaust – that are relatively close in time (over the course of three generations), yet rarely considered together. In what follows I will demonstrate that Benmalek's choice to tell the story through three generations is motivated by the desire to demonstrate the existence of a filiation between the colonial atrocities perpetrated by German colonial troops in South West Africa (now Namibia) and the Holocaust.

By exploring the Holocaust's links to another historical event, Benmalek's project opposes a discourse advocating the uniqueness of the Holocaust; a very discourse that can prove dangerous as, according to Rothberg, 'it potentially creates a hierarchy of suffering (which is morally offensive) and removes that suffering from the field of

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Like *Fils du Shéol*, Appanah's novel explores the repercussions of the Holocaust beyond Europe through transcultural encounters. On Appanah's novel, see Lionnet (2010).

historical agency (which is both morally and intellectually suspect)' (2009, pp.8-9). There has been a significant paradigm shift in the debate on the uniqueness of the Holocaust from the 1980s, when emphasising the specificity of the Holocaust proved helpful in bringing attention of this event to the wider public, to the contemporary context when the articulation between different histories is more readily acknowledged (Rothberg, 2009, p.6).[69] Benmalek's text, which participates in a transcolonial imaginary, inscribes itself in this evolution and seems to embrace a horizontal, rather than vertical, view of history, highlighting the interconnectedness of different histories. But it is also through the vertical idea of successive generations that, as we shall see, Benmalek powerfully highlights a relationship of filiation between the Herero and Nama genocide and the Holocaust. Once again here, it is the interpenetration of horizontality and verticality that proves key in order to bring into proximity histories that have so far been kept apart.

It is primarily through the characters of Manfred and Hitjiverwe, who are both interned in concentration camps – though on two different continents and with several decades separating them – that striking parallels are drawn between the handling of native populations in Namibia by Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century and the Nazi genocide during the Second World War. For example, in the Shark Island concentration camp where Hitjiverwe is detained, the Herero prisoners are divided between the 'Arbeitsfähige' and the 'Arbeitsunfähige': those deemed apt to work and those inapt and who, considered useless, are left to starve. Prisoners are also given a number, though it is not tattooed on their bodies (2015, p.383). However, more than acknowledging mere parallels between colonialism and Nazism, Benmalek's text suggests a filiation between these two historical events; a filiation that has also been studied by

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[69] For a detailed historical overview of the debate on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, see Stone (2010).

historians, including Enzo Traverso (2002), Jürgen Zimmerer (2004; 2005), Mark Mazower (2009), Dirk Moses (2008) and Shelly Baranowski (2011). Zimmerer adopts a global perspective on the history of genocides and argues that the war conducted by the Nazis against the Soviet Union during the Second World War was a colonial war, a conquest for new space (*Lebensraum*) requiring the eradication of the indigenous – and supposedly inferior – population (2005, pp.200-202). That colonialism and Nazism were both motivated by the same rhetoric of space and race has been confirmed by Benjamin Madley (2005) who has shown that,

> [the] German terms *Lebensraum* and *Konzentrationslager*, both widely known because of their use by the Nazis, were not coined by the Hitler regime. They were minted years earlier in reference to German South West Africa, now Namibia, during the first decade of the twentieth century, when Germans colonized the land and committed genocide against the local Herero and Nama peoples. (p.429, original italics)

The increasing interest of historians in the links between colonialism and the Holocaust follows from earlier scrutiny of the links between colonialism and National Socialism by thinkers such as Hannah Arendt in the immediate post-war period (1951), Aimé Césaire (1955), and Frantz Fanon (1961) amongst others. For Silverman, these interconnections can be more powerfully articulated through works of literature, for '[r]epetitions, substitutions and transformations — the very substance of the literary imagination — open up an alternative history (though one announced by Arendt and others) which challenges the compartmentalized narratives that we habitually receive' (2008, p.421).

This rhetoric that underlies ideologies of colonialism and Nazism is endorsed by numerous characters in the novel. On the boat that is to bring Ludwig and other soldiers part of the German colonial troops, a missionary, exalting the soldiers, explains:

> L'Allemagne a un besoin vital d'espace pour grandir et se raffermir; l'Afrique, puis l'Europe le moment venu, le lui fourniront au moyen du courage et de la détermination de patriotes de votre trempe! (2015, p.319).

The German colonial project in Africa is here envisaged as the premise for a larger project which ultimately includes the conquest of a *Lebensraum* on the European continent. Such a view is again articulated a few pages later in the novel by an army veterinarian who cynically sums up the war against the Hereros as

> un simple massacre administratif: notre pays a besoin d'espace, et l'espace ici est occupé par des créatures sans utilité pour le reste du monde. Dans cette région, la mort se révèle être un facteur de progrès, car elle nous débarrasse des parasites noirs. Ne vous y trompez pas, le vrai amour pour l'humanité n'est rien de plus que l'amour pour la race blanche et, sans vouloir vous vexer, en particulier pour sa part aryenne. (2015, p.334)

Here, a direct connection between space and race is established: a vital space is needed for the superior race to prosper. At the same time, the veterinarian who addresses Ludwig, a German Jew, implies a racial distinction between Aryans and Jews. However, in what is conceived as a racial war of whites against blacks, this distinction is not yet preponderant but nonetheless anticipates the racial discriminations against the Jews that would be implemented in Germany later on. *Fils du Shéol* also explores the way these ideas were transmitted and came to reinforce existing racial stereotypes. In the novel, experiments are carried out on Herero prisoners and heads of Herero men and women are sent to German universities so that they can be studied and used to prove the superiority of the Aryan race (2015 p.403). Mention is also made of Eugen Fischer, a racial anthropologist, who is conducting research on African tribes using body parts

(2015, p.405) and would later become chancellor of Berlin University in 1933 (Zimmerer, 2005, p.213).[70]

By juxtaposing the Herero genocide and the Holocaust, structural parallels start to come into view. However, it should be noted that it is not Benmalek's intention (nor is it Zimmerer's) to conflate these two historical events. Indeed, both acknowledge that the extermination of the Hereros and Namas did not reach the cynical level of sophistication of the Nazi extermination (Zimmerer, 2005, p.211), where the incineration of bodies by the Sonderkommandos is compared in the novel to a 'boulangerie industrielle' (2015, p.79). It is, I argue, through the links that exist between the characters that Benmalek's text makes the most powerful and compelling connections between different histories of atrocities. As the reader progressively becomes aware, characters constantly echo one another through the language they use, highlighting as a result the proximity of their sufferings. For instance, they use similar imagery and lexicon to convey their respective ordeals, confirming Silverman's previously quoted comments that imaginative works may be better suited to unearthing links between colonialism and the Holocaust.

The extended metaphor of filth, which implies both the idea of moral and physical staining as well as that of disposability, runs throughout the novel and is used by several characters. For example, Karl describes himself as 'un tombereau d'ordures' (2015, p.49) and Manfred sees himself as an 'éboueur de la mort, prêt à être balayé à son

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[70] In 2004, the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, publicly apologised and recognised the responsibility of Germany in the genocide at a commemoration ceremony, and Germany began to return the skulls in 2011. In May 2021, Germany also agreed to pay Namibia €1.1bn in development aid in recognition of the genocide. Germany has however refrained from calling this settlement 'reparation' or 'compensation' and has refused to offer direct reparations to genocide victims' descendants.

tour' (p.59). Hitjiverwe speaks of the 'odeur répugnante' of the numerous corpses left to rot in the Omaheke desert (p.353), and is torn between the fear of becoming one and the fear of turning into 'une raclure' (p.330), were she to choose fleeing with Ludwig and thus disavowing her own people. This shared language creates a sense of solidarity at the lexical level and may also be seen as participating in a subversion of any sort of hierarchy. In addition to using similar lexical fields and devices, characters also face the same difficulties regarding the ability of language to reflect their experiences. Karl, for whom the referentiality of language is lost in the indefinite place that the Sheol is ('sanglot et poitrine ne sont plus que des métaphores creuses' (2015 p.46)), together with Manfred experience the limits of language. For Manfred, the religious imagery has lost its sacred dimension and is unable to describe his situation : 'Dégradé, enlisé de son vivant dans la damnation de cette mer de cadavres nus, aurait-il pu préciser, si le vocabulaire des croyants avait encore possédé un sens dans ce royaume de la démence meurtrière' (p.67). It is also the case for Hitjiverwe for whom what has unfolded in front of her eyes remains surreal. Her experience in the concentration camp in Shark Island, where she is forced to scrape the skin out of severed heads of fellow Hereros, is in this regard similar to Manfred's in the Sonderkommando as she is forced to do something that defies understanding: 'Hitjiverwe se livre à une occupation impossible: elle profane une tête humaine' (p.404). The profound sense of incredulity Manfred and Hitjiverwe experience is reinforced by the irreconcilable knowledge that the concentration camps are part of the mundane world: they only have to look through the fence or window to catch a glimpse of the outside world (p.64; p.399). Oxymoron becomes the norm. This vision of camps as anchored in the modern world is partly what David Rousset articulated in *L'Univers Concentrationnaire* (1946, p.181), or Robert Antelme in *L'Espèce humaine* (1999

[1957]).[71] However, by moving away from a Eurocentric perspective, Benmalek's text seeks to demonstrate that the seeds of the concentrationary universe were sown as early as the beginning of the twentieth century in Africa.[72]

So far, I have discussed how Benmalek draws links between colonial atrocities committed in South West Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century and the Holocaust. Benmalek's use of genealogy, with the focus on three generations that all fall victim to extreme violence, is in fact twofold: on one hand, it reinforces the idea of filiation between colonialism and National Socialism, and on the other, it endorses one of the aspects of Viart's 'récits de filiation': the attempt at recovering broken or occulted genealogies. Recalling Catherine Coquio's pertinent comment that 'Le génocide opère dans la population une coupe non seulement horizontale, mais verticale, c'est-à-dire vise les naissances et les filiations pour éliminer une lignée, éradiquer généalogiquement une sous-humanité' (1999, pp.48-49), the ethical dimension of Benmalek's project becomes apparent.[73]

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[71] Antelme notably writes: 'La mort était ici de plain-pied avec la vie […] La cheminée du crématoire fumait à côté de celle de la cuisine. Avant que nous soyons là, il y avait eu des os de morts dans la soupe des vivants, et l'or de la bouche des morts s'échangeait depuis longtemps contre le pain des vivants. La mort était formidablement entraînée dans le circuit de la vie quotidienne' (1999, p.23) ; or 'Au-delà du barbelé, au-delà de la carrière, sur la plaine d'Iéna, quelques lumières brillent faiblement. À l'opposé, derrière nous, la cheminée du crématoire.' (p.26).

[72] Camps were central to colonial warfare at the end of the nineteenth century with camps used not only during the Herero and Nama revolt (1904–07), but also in the Cuban War of Independence (1895–98), the Philippine War (1899–1902), the Boer War (1899–1902). For an historical overview of the use of concentration camps, see Scheipers, 2015.

[73] This dimension was also present, to a lesser extent, in Bardet's text with the character of Maksim, who argues that the ability to lay down roots is a privilege denied to refugees.

2.3.2 Transcultural Encounters

While I have demonstrated so far that Benmalek's text establishes connections between historical phenomena and characters across time and space, the question of whether these links articulate a sense of solidarity remains to be addressed. To answer this question, I return to the novel's back-cover blurb as a starting point, and elucidate its first part: 'trois histoires d'amour pour remonter à l'origine du mal'. Each main male character (Karl, Manfred and Ludwig) meets and falls in love with a woman (respectively Helena, Elisa and Hitjiverwe) and, as a result of this encounter, is profoundly changed. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Ludwig is eager to participate in the elaboration of a German national narrative where Jews would be fully recognised as equals and sees in the colonial endeavour a potentially unifying force (2015, p.320); that is, before he meets Hitjiverwe who upsets his racial beliefs. While first using his 'superior' position as a white man, he tries to force himself onto her but instead unexpectedly falls in love with her (p.309). If Ludwig previously tried to establish a solidarity between him, a Jew, and German people on the basis of their common efforts to bring civilisation to the 'primitive' people (pp.320-321), through his relationship with Hitjiverwe, he gradually realises that he in fact has more in common with her, and by extension with the Herero and Nama peoples. It is first Hitjiverwe who draws a parallel between herself and her lover by showing Ludwig that the sense of indignation he feels when someone calls him a 'youpin' triggers the same reaction for her when someone calls her a 'Hottentot', a term considered derogatory by Herero people (pp.316-317). Later on, Ludwig realises by himself the similarity of the Hereros' plight and the persecution of which the Jews were victims: 'quels serments d'amour ou d'avenir opposer, en effet, au malheur de la jeune femme, à ce… (Il se raidit de stupeur devant l'évidence du terme à utiliser, le mot tueur redouté de tous les Juifs d'Europe) à ce *pogrom* élargi à l'ensemble du peuple héréro ?' (p.337). Ludwig uses the term 'pogrom' that carries a powerful history of violence committed against the

Jews and applies it to another group of people and another set of extreme violence. It is by connecting it to something that bears personal significance for him (his great-aunt suffered a gruesome death in the Russian Empire during a pogrom (pp.338-339)) that he manages to understand Hitjiverwe's predicament. Such a connection between Hereros and Jews is reiterated a few pages later: '*toi et les tiens seriez-vous les Juifs de maintenant*?' (p.339, original italics). Despite the tragic irony of this statement, the fact that Ludwig endows the lexicon with which he is familiar with a broader reach, truly appears as multidirectional in nature. While he is unable beforehand to feel real empathy with Hitjivewe – 'Ce que l'armée de son pays infligeait aux Héréros l'indignait, mais de manière abstraite, extérieure à son âme' (p.330) – it is only now, with this realisation, that Ludwig is able to somewhat comprehend what has befallen her. Therefore, the novel, insofar as it weaves connections between characters across time and space, seems to conform to Rothberg's definition of multidirectional memory (2009, p.3). Karl plays an important role in this respect as he acts as the link between the different characters, and appears to be a character 'in-between'. Karl is born from a German Jew, Manfred, and a Jewish Algerian woman, Elisa, who sees her French citizenship annulled following the repeal of the Crémieux Decree in Algeria in 1940. His dual identity is in fact inscribed on his body, by being circumcised and bearing a tattoo of a Hamsa (or Hand of Fatima), a palm-shaped amulet from his Jewish Algerian mother. Without doubt these characteristics favour and contribute to the weaving of links between Karl and other characters in the novel.

At the same time as the novel explores the potential of such connections, it also makes their limitations visible. While Ludwig eventually rejects his racial beliefs, it is worth noting that Hitjiverwe does not appear too dissimilar from him. Indeed, she is the daughter of a tribal chief, has been educated by German Christian missionaries and speaks fluent German (2015, p.315). The question of whether Ludwig would have been

able to feel empathy and overcome his prejudices for someone radically different (a question that Hitjiverwe asks herself (p.325)) is left suspended. In the same manner, Hitjiverwe's response to a Nama woman who confronts her for being promiscuous with a white man, thus an enemy, is particularly interesting:

> Elle avait failli expliquer que son Ludwig était un Blanc singulier, qu'il était juif (est-ce que la Nama savait ce qu'étais un Juif ?), et que les Blancs ne considèraient pas les Juifs comme vraiment blancs. Peut-être que son ami allemand était-il, de ce fait, un peu noir dans sa tête, et que c'était pour cela qu'il était parvenu à l'aimer. (pp.362-363)

As the dynamics of Hitjiverwe and Ludwig's relationship demonstrate, the question of solidarity is far from being a clean-cut question. Complexity is also what seems to characterise relations of solidarity on the community level.

There are two other key moments of solidarity to be found in the novel. The first one happens when Manfred discovers the corpse of his wife. Struck by Manfred's grief and recognising that his misfortune could have been another's, the other inmates join in a sort of communion:

> Dans cette tour de Babel de malheureux ramenés de tous les coins d'Europe dans des wagons plombés, s'était élevé un murmure dans une langue incroyablement antique. Y avaient même pris part certaines des pires brutes parmi les esclaves du Kommando, celles qui, bien que vouées au feu, s'étaient laissées glisser hors de l'humanité en rossant à leur tour les arrivants qui renâclaient à se dénuder ou ne se hâtaient pas assez vers le 'sauna'. Un instant interdit devant cette synagogue improvisée en plein territoire des loups SS, un groupe de Russes et de Tsiganes s'étaient joints au recueillement des Juifs, lèvres murmurant d'autres prières, fronts dodelinant d'un semblable désespoir. (p.89)

The fear of SS retaliation and repression, however, still predominates and rapidly puts an end to this impromptu ceremony. During their trip to Algeria in '*Alger, 1929* (Partie moins Deux)', Ludwig and Manfred go to an Andalusian music concert where the audience and the orchestra (conducted by Elisa's father) consist of Jews and Muslims. Amid a context of racial tensions, these musical interludes are Elisa's father's attempt to 'rapiécer à son échelle le tissu déchiré de sa chère Algérie' (p.161). However, once again this moment of solidarity crumbles as an orphan boy named Ibrahim-Abraham, who acted as a link between the Muslim and Jewish communities, is in a life-threatening condition after a car accident. This accident clearly has an allegorical dimension – 'avec ce…cet "accident", j'ai l'impression qu'on a coupé directement dans la chair de l'Algérie' (p.288) – and foreshadows the deterioration of relations between the two communities.

By foregrounding aborted movements of solidarity, *Fils du Shéol* emphasises the frailty of such movements and the ambivalent nature of relationality. Furthermore, while I have highlighted a complex web of echoes between the different protagonists that creates a sense of solidarity – even if short-lived – it is also the case that they echo one another through the prejudices and stereotypes they hold about others. When Karl asks his father if black people are the same as them (though Karl is unable to define what 'they' are), his father is unsure of his answer but concludes that 'probablement que non' (p.221). In a similar fashion, when Manfred asked his own father about the condition of Muslims, Ludwig was unable to provide a satisfactory answer: 'Je ne sais pas, répondit le père en haussant les épaules, des indigènes, c'est-à-dire des pas-grand-chose, comme partout ailleurs sur ce continent' (p.269). After leaving Ludwig and while trying to escape from German colonial violence, Hitjiverwe is taken in, together with her newly-born child, by the San people, hunter-gatherers who are scorned by others, including by the Hereros and Namas (p.375). When Elisa loses her French citizenship, as a consequence of the repeal of the Crémieux Decree under the Vichy regime, she realises, almost against

herself, that 'les Juifs d'Algérie, sur ordre des autorités locales, venaient d'être déchus de leur nationalité française, ravalés d'un seul trait de plume au rang de vulgaires indigènes – à l'instar d'Arabes sans droits, prend-elle conscience soudain avec un sentiment de répulsion effrayée' (p.161). While she considered herself French, it appears she also unconsciously felt superior to Arab people. All the above examples demonstrate that characters hold racial prejudices and it is only when they can link the sufferings of others to their own that they are able to adopt a different perspective, though in *Fils du Shéol*, this connection entails tragic consequences for them. As it becomes clear, all the characters are victims of extreme forms of violence which mark them as Other and undesirables. It is only by coming into contact with Others from different cultures – and from different time and space – that the characters of Benmalek's text become aware of similarities between their predicament and that of Others.

2.3.3 Sheol as a Rhizomatic Space

Connections between characters and events in the text are drawn mainly by Karl who is trapped in the Sheol. Here I discuss the temporality of this in-between space – a non-linear temporality that allows the articulation of solidarities across time and space – and argue that it can be seen as a rhizomatic space.

Apart from Karl, all the other characters long for a return to a more peaceful, idyllic past. However, as the reverse temporality of the narrative shows, such a past does not exist, and it is precisely what Karl discovers as he delves deeper and deeper into the past and encounters new sites of atrocities. Locating 'l'origine du mal', as stated on the blurb, appears as equally illusory. At the end of the novel, Karl's journey seems to come to an end with his grandfather's secret revealed – his love affair with Hitjiverwe – and the death of Hitjiverwe. However, his fall in time does not stop, and he is joined in the

Sheol by another presence, this time by the infant son of Hitjiverwe and Ludwig who died in the Shark Island concentration camp. Karl then has to endorse a guiding role for the felicitously named Petit-Dieu and accompany him in what is to be another fall in time. What stems from this narrative structure is the impossibility to break the chains of time, with Karl and Petit-Dieu being trapped in what appears to be the absurdity of history. While reverse chronological order does not necessarily preclude linearity, in the present case, linearity does not apply as the characters are caught in what appears to be a spiralling structure. The belief that history does not repeat itself, professed by Manfred throughout the novel in an almost incantatory manner, is cruelly dismissed.

While the novel explicitly identifies connecting points between the Herero and Nama genocide and the Holocaust, it remains up to the reader to seek intersections between different moments of history. This search is facilitated by the mysterious presence that first welcomed Karl in the Sheol. Indeed, no explanation is given regarding the circumstances that have led this spectre to dwell in the Sheol but it can be extrapolated from the structure of the novel that it comes from a past closer to us in time, or possibly from a future to which we do not yet have access. Because 'la Chose' is also presented as a victim of history, the question is to determine what tragedy of history has led it there. Another level of reading is thus required: while the narrative first focused on the past, the reader is invited to actively look for other overlapping moments of history and for other traces of the concentrationary universe in a post-Herero genocide, post-Holocaust world. While 'la Chose' comes from the future describing itself as 'un autre malheur…[qui] advient bien après ta mort' (2015, p.374), Petit-Dieu comes from a past that precedes Karl's lifetime. There is not one starting point but rather multiple entry points to Sheol, just like in Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome. The movement of falling appears never-ending and it proves impossible to pinpoint the origin of Sheol.

Hence, Sheol is presented as a rhizomatic space: it has no beginning nor end, and it connects three different entities from across time and space.

The three beings that find themselves in Sheol – the Shadow who first welcomes Karl into Sheol, Karl himself, and then Petit-Dieu – thus appear to all be victims of historical atrocities but from different historical moments, with Sheol being conceived in the novel as a crossroads between past, present and future. Here the peculiar temporality of the Sheol can be approached in light of Achille Mbembe's argument that

> [l]e temps de l'existence africaine n'est ni un temps linéaire, ni un simple rapport de succession où chaque moment efface, annule et remplace tous ceux qui l'ont précédé, au point qu'une seule époque existerait à la fois au sein de la société. Il n'est pas une série, mais un *emboîtement* de présents, de passés et de futurs qui tiennent toujours leurs propres profondeurs d'autres présents, passés et futurs, chaque époque portant, altérant et maintenant toutes les précédentes. (2005 [2000], p.36, italics in original)

The entanglement of past, present and future is illustrated by the coexistence within the space of the Sheol of characters who all come from different, but interconnected, times.

To establish these connections, memory and imagination appear necessary:

> Seul son grand-père, celui dont l'Afrique avait débridé l'imagination, […] aurait-il expliqué que c'était sa trop grande mémoire qui avait rapproché, sans prendre de gants, des éléments de savoir dont sa conscience éveillée n'avait pas clairement connaissance, allumant ainsi, en son ventre, cette inquiétude hors de proportion avec la réalité… (2015, p.187)

Such a description of the working of memory is reminiscent of Benjamin's famous statement that,

> Faire œuvre d'historien ne signifie pas savoir 'comment les choses se sont réellement passées'. Cela signifie s'emparer d'un souvenir, tel qu'il surgit à l'instant du danger. Il s'agit pour le matérialisme historique de retenir l'image du passé qui s'offre inopinément au sujet historique à l'instant du danger. (2000 [1942], p.431)

In Benmalek's text, seizing hold of this memory that flashes up in a moment of danger goes hand in hand with the ability to bring into proximity elements that have seemingly little to do with one another. When Karl, from Sheol, desperately tries to warn his past self of the dangers of staying in Germany – a warning that materialises in an acute sense of anxiety – the then alive Karl comes close to understanding his alter ego's signal but ultimately fails to act upon it, for he has not yet understood memory's potential for creating rhizomatic connections. The sense of anxiety experienced by Karl is one that needs to be recognised and sustained, so that the tragedies of the twentieth century are not allowed to repeat themselves. In this perspective, the vision of memory advocated by Benmalek, one that is attentive to connections across time and space and seeks to decipher traces, is similar to the notion of 'concentrationary memory' defined by Pollock and Silverman as:

> a memory that purposively erodes divisions between past and present, using specific histories to become a constant probe with which to interrogate the present for any current affinities with absolute horror and aspirations towards total domination. It is a memory aimed at activating the vigilant defence of the dream of a full democracy still to come, one that attends to all the assaults on human dignity, safety and, above all, our defining human plurality. (2014, p.1)

In *Fils du Shéol,* connections between different historical events are drawn through an exploration of three different generations – Karl's, his parents' and his grandfather's – which ultimately leads Karl to reconsider his family genealogy as he comes to accept Hitjiverwe and Petit-Dieu as part of his extended family (2015, p.398). On the other

hand, these connections are also created through Sheol that embodies a rhizomatic space in which past, present and future intertwine. Karl, 'la Chose' and Petit-Dieu form alliances of their own, with other victims of historical atrocities beyond family ties. From Sheol, Karl has access to an intersubjective memory that can be qualified as rhizomatic. Faced with this overwhelming memory, he is first incredulous: 'Me rappeler des évènements que je n'ai pas vécus ? Mais c'est absurde, la mémoire n'est pas une folle, elle se rappelle uniquement ce dont elle a été témoin !' (p.257). While at first burdened by this overwhelming memory, Karl eventually realises that it is this extraordinary memory that allows him to connect heterogeneous points together. Here, Karl appears akin to the speaker of Baudelaire's poem 'J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans' in *Les Fleurs du mal*, in which the speaker says of his 'triste cerveau' that it is 'une pyramide, un immense caveau,/ Qui contient plus de morts que la fosse commune' (1917, p.128). As in Bardet's text, connections between the dead are made by a spectral narrator and the text becomes an echo chamber.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Through the prism of generations, Benmalek explores the links between the colonial atrocities in South West Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century and the Holocaust and pursues a twofold aim: underlining a relationship of filiation between these atrocities and recovering broken genealogies. Across different continents and moments in time, multiple characters echo one another, highlighting both the similarities and differences in their experiences and avoiding a reductive dualism that opposes verticality to horizontality. Key to Benmalek's text is the articulation of a rhizomatic memory that weaves multiple threads across time and space and foregrounds the possibility of forging new solidarities amongst victims of extreme violence.

2.4 Chapter Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have explored the way Bardet's *À la droite du père* and Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* bring into proximity seemingly disparate histories and stories. While they consequently unearth connections between those different histories, they never conflate them. These texts deploy an ethics of comparison in which a dialectic between distance and proximity is at play: even as similarities between different traumatic experiences come into view as the result of the encounter with the Other, there is no assimilation or appropriation of the Other's traumatic experience. While memory's relationality has been shown to always be ambivalent to a certain extent, it is the connective nature that allows the protagonists of both texts to recognise and relate to the suffering of others.

Both texts also reconfigure the binary opposition between filiation and affiliation, albeit in radically different ways. Filiation's association with rigidity and linearity is unsettled in Benmalek's text: the arrival of Ludwig and Hitjiverwe's infant child into the rhizomatic space of the Sheol participates in the extension of the family tree to include those whose existence had been otherwise erased by genocidal violence. Furthermore, because within the Sheol several generations coexist (Karl, la Chose, Petit-Dieu), the idea of linearity associated with the idea of generation (in the sense of genealogy) is further challenged. Within the Sheol, the horizontal idea of generationality and the vertical genealogy intersect. While Benmalek's text can then be described, to a certain extent, as recovering broken genealogy, Bardet's text, through the character of Claire, is premised on a clear opposition between filiation and affiliation. As I demonstrated, however, Claire's encounter with others (especially Maksim, but also, to a lesser extent, Jeanne, and Annelise via her diary) and their own traumatic memories ultimately leads her back to

confront her filiation to Vichy. The metaphorical nature of 'Vichy' (that it actually stands for the sexual abuse inflicted by her father) only becomes clear at the very end of the novel, after an exploration of a metonymical chain that links Vichy to the Occupation and French imperialism.

The two texts I will be analysing in the following chapter, Marianne Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* and Ivan Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus,* share a commitment with Benmalek's text to recover and potentially repair broken genealogies by genocidal violence. In order to do so, these texts turn to the archive, but this entails, as we shall see, its own set of challenges.

Chapter 3

Poetics of the Archive in Marianne Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* (2009) and Ivan Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* (2012)

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the postmemorial generations' engagement with the archive. For the postmemorial generations who lack first-hand experience and direct memories of the events that haunt them, the archive is envisioned as potentially offering a mnemonic, and affective, link with this missing past. I analyse Marianne Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* (2009) and Ivan Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* (2012), two texts which use archival documents in unconventional and creative ways. Rubinstein and Jablonka both belong to what is often called the third generation – they are both grandchildren of Holocaust victims – and they both seek to find out more about their grandparents. Due to the silence of their fathers, who were themselves very young when they were tragically separated from their parents, they have very little knowledge of their grandparents' lives and the archive therefore represents for them an important means through which to gain more information about their relatives. I argue that their texts exemplify the tension between on the one hand, the need for critical distance vis-à-vis the archive and its inherent violence, and, on the other hand, the affective proximity that the archival encounter generates. In their texts, Rubinstein and Jablonka navigate this tension through a simultaneous acknowledgement of the violent nature of the archive and a reconfiguration of archival fragments in poetic, affective ways, thereby unsettling the principles of detachment and objectivity that are conventionally associated

with the archive. While the archive is often conceived as a storage space, these texts are interested not only in what is contained within the archive, but also in what is absent from the archive and what spills over the archive's edges. I argue that through their careful negotiations of affective proximity and critical distance, Rubinstein and Jablonka elaborate what I call a poetics of the archive.

I use here the notion of poetics as an echo of Jacques Rancière's notion of 'poétique du savoir' that he elaborates in his essay *Les Noms de l'histoire (*1992). Retracing the evolution of historical writing, Rancière points to the paradoxical way in which history has constructed itself as a science, and sought to establish itself in opposition to literature, through literary means. For Rancière, elucidating the homonymous ambivalence of the word 'histoire' (both history *and* story) requires a poetics of knowledge that he defines as

> l'étude de l'ensemble des procédures littéraires par lesquelles un discours se soustrait à la littérature, se donne un statut de science et le signifie. La poétique du savoir s'intéresse aux règles selon lesquelles un savoir s'écrit et se lit, se constitue comme un genre de discours spécifique. Elle cherche à définir le mode de vérité auquel il se voue, non à lui donner des normes, à valider ou à invalider sa prétention scientifique. (p.21)

In a parallel to Rancière's poetics of knowledge then, a poetics of the archive brings into view the very conditions of its emergence and therefore, critically, of the violent power dynamics that characterises its constitution. At the same time, I also use the notion of poetics to suggest that a poetic or literary treatment of the archive is able to reconfigure the archive in affective terms. The tension between these two dimensions of a poetics of the archive is to be negotiated through a dialectic of critical distance and affective proximity.

In what follows, I discuss the specificity of the archive in the postmemorial context. The postmemorial subject's engagement with the archive is deeply affective, but must also face the ambivalent epistemological status of the archive that has been underlined by Derrida among other thinkers.

For the postmemorial subject, the archive often appears, at least at first, as a potential key to gaining access to the past that haunts them and of which they have no direct memories or experience. Archival images, especially family photographs, are often used in postmemorial practices; well-known examples include the works of W. G. Sebald, Patrick Modiano and Christian Boltanski among others. Marianne Hirsch, through her concept of postmemory, has underscored the potent power of family photographs to serve as a basis for postmemorial narratives and foster an emotional connection between the photographed subject and the viewer (or in Barthes's terms, between the Spectrum and the Spectator). For the postmemorial generations, it is the dimension of what Barthes has called the punctum that is especially valued. As Barthes explains, the punctum is a 'piqûre, petit trou, petite tache, petite coupure — et aussi coup de dés. Le *punctum* d'une photo, c'est ce hasard qui, en elle, *me point* (mais aussi me meurtrit, me poigne)' (1980, p.49, original italics). With the punctum, it is the affective power of the image that comes to the fore. Hirsch has herself reframed Barthes' notion of the punctum in terms of 'points of memory', which 'produce *touching, piercing insights* that traverse temporal, spatial, and experiential divides' (2012, p.62, original italics). Here, Hirsch goes further than Barthes, suggesting that the archival photograph, through its affective power, has the potential to impart some kind of affective knowledge (or 'piercing insights'). As will become apparent in my close reading of *C'est maintenant du passé* and *Histoire des grands-parents*, Rubinstein and Jablonka yearn not only for information about the fates of their

ancestors and their pre-war lives, but for a more intimate form of knowledge and sense of connection.[74]

The affective power of the photograph comes from its peculiar temporality that Barthes describes in terms of 'ça-a-été'. The indexical nature of the photograph testifies to the fact that what has been captured on film did exist, which is why, for Barthes, '[t]oute photographie est un certificat de présence' (1980, p.135). This is of paramount importance for the postmemorial subject who sets out on a quest to find traces of their ancestors who were murdered during the Holocaust, since genocidal violence entails the will to erase the traces of the crime and of its victims. Rubinstein and Jablonka themselves frame their narratives with an ethical aim – to retrieve traces of family members that have been erased by the violence of History. In the very first pages of his book, Jablonka states 'Il est […] urgent, avant l'effacement définitif, de retrouver les traces, les empreintes de vie qu'ils ont laissées, preuves involontaires de leur passage en ce monde' (2013, p.10) and in Rubinstein's text one can read a similar statement: 'tout n'avait pas pu disparaître. Des traces de leur vie, mêmes infimes, devaient subsister ici ou là' (2009, p.29). By finding traces of their grandparents in various archives, Rubinstein and Jablonka hope to find a sense of what Barthes has called 'ça-a-été' and that, he argues, is what constitutes the noeme (or essence) of photography (1980, p.120). Importantly, this sense of 'ça-a-été' conveyed by the photographic image also implies that 'l'effet qu'elle produit sur moi n'est pas de restituer ce qui est aboli (par le temps, la distance), mais d'attester que cela que je vois, a bien été' (p.129). Beyond the evidential force of photography, the 'ça-a-été' signals a tension between distance and proximity: while a photograph seemingly offers direct

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[74] It is clear here that the postmemorial approach to the archive inscribes itself in a radically different dynamics than that of the immediate post-war context when the atrocity photographs taken during the liberation of the camps helped bear witness to and spread awareness of the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany. See Zelizer's *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (1998) for an overview of the evolving reception of these images over the years.

access to the past, this is only an illusion, for one is always reminded of the unbridgeable distance that separates us from the temporal moment when the photograph was taken – that what existed then no longer exists now. This is what Hirsch herself observes when she writes that

> [photographic images] enable us, in the present, not only to see and to touch that past, but also to try to reanimate it by undoing the finality of the photographic 'take'. The retrospective irony of every photograph consists precisely in the simultaneity of this effort and the consciousness of its impossibility. (2012, pp.36-37)

While archival photographs are undoubtedly powerful vectors of postmemory, other types of archival documents, but also other traces or sites that would not conventionally be considered as part of the archive, are also able to evoke similar affective responses. In fact, according to Sven-Erik Rose, the postmemorial subject 'does not simply explore a given archive, for the archive is, precisely, never simply given. Its edges remain difficult to establish; the archive may be nowhere, and is potentially anywhere' (2008). In postmemorial narratives, the city is often approached as an archive; this is the case in Modiano's work, for instance, and as I will show later on, it is also the case in Jablonka's text. While postmemorial writers explore alternative archives (even creating their own, as I will discuss later on), given the scarcity of traces left in the wake of genocidal violence, they also, on the other hand, tend to rely heavily on official records.

The archive is, however, fraught with violence, and the bureaucratic archive even more visibly so. Thus, while I have so far underlined the potential of the archive to generate a kind of intimate, affective knowledge about the past, as I will now discuss with reference to Derrida's reflections on the archive, any engagement with the archive must acknowledge that the archive is implicated in violent power dynamics. As Derrida reminds us in *Mal d'archive*, the very etymology of the word 'archive' ('arkhè') conveys

both notions of commandment and commencement (1995, p.11). Etymologically, the archive refers to a point of primary origin, but also to the place ('arkheîon') where the archive is constituted, organised, and regulated by the archons, the magistrates who held political power and could make the law in Ancient Greece (1995, p.12-13). For Derrida, the archive is thus a site of power and a system of authority organised according to what he calls the 'principe archontique' (1995, p.148). Though trace and archive are two interrelated concepts, it is important not to conflate the two. As Derrida explains,

> [i]l n'y a pas d'archive sans trace, mais toute trace n'est pas une archive dans la mesure où l'archive suppose non seulement une trace, mais que la trace soit appropriée, contrôlée, organisée, politiquement sous contrôle. Il n'y a pas d'archives sans un pouvoir de capitalisation ou de monopole, de quasi-monopole, de rassemblement de traces statutaires et reconnues comme traces. Autrement dit, il n'y a pas d'archives sans pouvoir politique. (2014, p.59)

While every living being produces traces, not all of those traces become part of the archive. For a trace to become part of the archive, it must undergo processes of selection and hierarchisation, which are at the same time processes of exclusion and erasure. In a parallel to the Freudian death drive, Derrida therefore talks about a 'pulsion d'archive', a compulsive desire to retain traces of the past but which paradoxically contributes to the erasure of those same traces (1995, pp.38-39). Furthermore, the constitution of the archive is overseen by someone, whether an individual or an institution, who decides whether traces are worthy of keeping for the future and who can get access to the archive, and who therefore holds considerable political power.

Despite the ethical dimension of Jablonka's and Rubinstein's projects, their writing is thus confronted with a dilemma: how to recover filiations broken by the extreme violence of the twentieth century through the archive, given that '[L'archive] ne se livre donc jamais au cours d'un acte d'anamnèse intuitive qui ressusciterait, vivante,

innocente ou neutre, l'originalité d'un évènement' (Derrida, 1995, p.2), and given that the archive is itself indissociably linked to violent power dynamics. In the 'prière d'insérer' of *Mal d'archive*, Derrida underlines the archive's role in facilitating destruction and stresses the radical ambivalence of the archive: '*Mal d'archive* rappelle sans doute un symptôme, une souffrance, une passion : l'archive du mal mais aussi ce qui ruine, déporte ou emporte jusqu'au principe d'archive, à savoir le mal radical' (1995, p.3). This question of the violence and ambivalence of the archive is one that has been recently addressed by Dora Osborne in contemporary German memory culture through her concept of the 'post-Holocaust archive'. For Osborne,

> (t)he fact of the Holocaust archive implies the *post-Holocaust archive*: in the twenty-first century we rely more than ever on the material remains that might tell us something about the Third Reich and its legacy, but in the knowledge that the status of these remains is compromised by the very violence to which they bear witness. (2020, p.11, original italics)

This paradox also applies to the French context. One such illustration can be found in Jablonka's text, when Jablonka finds his grandfather's file in the archive of the Sûreté nationale (2013, pp.168-169). While this file proves to be an invaluable resource, Jablonka must also face the realisation that at the same time as holding the promise of finding more information about his grandfather's life, the archive is contaminated by the violence of the anti-Semitic Vichy State. Indeed, as he acknowledges, these files constituted 'un instrument efficace – microscope et scalpel – pour qui veut épurer le corps national' (2013, p.169) and were indeed used with that end in mind by the Vichy state with the creation of 'un fichier juif' censuring the Jews living in France, a source of information

which was used to target and deport Jews.[75] The narrator of Modiano's *Dora Bruder* (who uses archival documents including police files, or the Tourelles register) makes a similar observation: 'On vous classe dans des catégories bizarres dont vous n'avez jamais entendu parler et qui ne correspondent pas à ce que vous êtes réellement. On vous convoque. On vous interne. Vous aimeriez bien comprendre pourquoi' (1997, pp.37-38). While consulting or using the archive, one then has to bear in mind that one cannot simply recover traces of the past, but that one must also take into account those power dynamics and violence out of which the archive emerges. This, I argue in this chapter, constitutes the challenge the postmemorial generations confront in their texts.

3.2 Marianne Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* (2009): Archival Fragments, Silence, and Poetry

Marianne Rubinstein's text *C'est maintenant du passé* (2009) is her second text that explores her family heritage, after the previously published *Tout le monde n'a pas la chance d'être orphelin* (2002). The latter is made up of interviews with members of the '2.5 generation' (Barjonet, 2014, p.220), in other words, people whose father or mother (or both) are child survivors (who belong to what Susan Suleiman has called the '1.5 generation'). In this work, Rubinstein parallels the experiences of her interviewees with her own experience – her father Serge Rubinstein having lost his parents, Chaim and Ryfka, during the Holocaust. Whereas *Tout le monde n'a pas la chance d'être orphelin* is anchored in the present (it focuses on the difficulties of having one (or two) parent(s) who are themselves orphans), in *C'est maintenant du passé,* Rubinstein investigates her paternal family's past.

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[75] For an historical overview of the creation of the 'fichier juif' and its afterlives, see Eric Conan's article 'Les fichiers de la honte' (1996).

The text is built around archival fragments. As she explains, her project emerged with the realisation that some traces of the existence of her grandparents must remain:

> Sans doute voulais-je mieux cerner l'emprise d'une histoire que nous n'avions pas vécue, et qui pourtant pesait sur nos vies. Mais il y avait autre chose. J'avais cru, moi aussi, que toute trace des miens avait été anéantie. Ce n'était pas seulement qu'ils avaient été assassinés : leur monde avait été englouti, effacé de la surface de la terre. De cette béance, il n'était resté que mon père, à vif. À la lecture des *Disparus* [de Daniel Mendelsohn], je compris alors quelque chose qui, auparavant, était resté *impensé* : tout n'avait pas pu disparaître. Des traces de leur vie, même infimes, devaient subsister ici ou là. (2009, p.29, original italics)

In *C'est maintenant du passé*, Rubinstein also develops a more innovative narrative form, notably with the inclusion of Japanese poems (mostly haikus) as well as archival documents recovered from a little blue tin box – her father's 'boîte aux souvenirs' (p.34) – that contains diverse documents (mostly bills, letters, a few photographs, and administrative papers) her father collected over the years. Rubinstein also includes parts of her email exchanges with her father about her investigation into her grandparents' lives, her own reflections on her writing process and her relationship with her father, and also intertextual references to other texts about the Holocaust (notably Charlotte Beradt's *Rêver sous le IIIe Reich*, or Georges Perec's *W ou le Souvenir d'enfance*). It is therefore a hybrid, heterogeneous text, structured around those diverse fragments and a text that resists clear-cut categorisation.

While I have chosen, in this chapter, to read Rubinstein's text alongside *Histoire des grands-parents* by Jablonka, who, in many ways, writes from a similar standpoint as Rubinstein, Evelyn Ledoux-Beaugrand (2013) has proposed a comparative analysis of Rubinstein's text and Haenel's *Jan Karski*. Ledoux-Beaugrand demonstrates that the differences in positionality between Rubinstein and Haenel, whom she describes in terms

of official and cultural heirs respectively (p.151), erodes when considering their texts through the use of intertextuality. As a result of the temporal distance that applies regardless of the nature of their connection to the event, 'chez Haenel comme chez Rubinstein, le rapport à la mémoire de la Shoah s'instaure à partir de ses traces et restes textuels' (p.152). For Ledoux-Beaugrand, the intertextuality of Rubinstein's text is reflected in its fragmentary form: '[l]e récit postmémoriel pratiqué par Rubinstein ne s'engendre qu'à partir d'autres textes qu'il intègre, laissant visibles les marques de cet emprunt sous forme de références et de fragments' (p.151). The fragmentary nature of Rubinstein's text has also been noted by Noémi Kila, for whom it conveys the incompleteness of Rubinstein's memory (2012, p.38). Whilst the critical literature on Rubinstein's text to date has rightly paid attention to the fragmentary form of Rubinstein's text, in what follows I will argue that the aesthetics of the fragmentary developed by Rubinstein can be understood, not only as a by-product of intertextuality as suggested by Ledoux-Beaugrand, or as reflecting the lacunary nature of memory as suggested by Kila, but as a way of making visible the ambivalence of the archive that I discussed in the introduction of this chapter and that I here further relate to the thoughts of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, and to the postmemorial perspective Rubinstein's text adopts. I show that by adopting a fragmentary aesthetics, Rubinstein's text avoids replicating and distances itself from the totalising violence that can be found in the bureaucratic archive. I then argue that Rubinstein's poetic reconfiguration of the archival documents can be understood as part of a postmemorial process of working through.

3.2.1 An Aesthetics of the Fragmentary

I begin my analysis of *C'est maintenant du passé* by pondering the reasons that motivate Rubinstein to develop an aesthetics of the fragmentary. I argue that, by refusing to

incorporate the fragments gleaned from various archival sources into a totalising narrative, Rubinstein seeks to defuse the violence that underlies the archive.

The question of form and genre is a theme that Rubinstein repeatedly returns to throughout her text. She confesses that in the early stages of her project, her initial ambition was to produce 'une saga familiale' (2009, p.38). However, as she explains,

> [a]u fur et à mesure que j'avançais dans mes recherches, j'en perdais l'envie, je n'en voyais plus le sens. De la vie de ma famille paternelle – celle que je voulais raconter – il ne restait que des fragments qu'il aurait fallu romancer, modifier et, surtout, compléter pour écrire une saga. (pp.39-40)

The golden age of the genre of the family saga, which chronicles the lives of a family over several generations, can be dated to the nineteenth and early twentieth century, of which Emile Zola's cycle of *Les Rougon-Macquart* (published between 1871 and 1893, with the subtitle 'Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire') or the roman-fleuve *Les Thibault* (1922–1940) by Roger Martin du Gard, are prime examples. For Inès Cazalas, such a form of familial narrative rests on the figure of the genealogical tree, which reflects 'la forme cyclique de l'histoire naturelle' and 'offre à la fiction un double principe de linéarité et de totalisation' (2014, p.211). Rubinstein herself rejects the figure of the genealogical tree at the end of her narrative, preferring instead to provide a list of the family members of whom she was able to find some traces: 'il ne s'agit pas, ici, de la représentation exhaustive d'une famille, c'est pourquoi je n'ai pas voulu faire d'arbre généalogique' (2009, p.159). While, according to her, a genealogical tree would convey a sense of exhaustiveness, the list can easily be expanded and does not convey the same sense of totalisation and closure. As was the case in the texts examined in the previous chapter, Rubinstein here signals her desire for a relational memory that extends beyond the rigid boundaries of a strictly familial framework. Her rejection of the symbol of the

genealogical tree, in favour of a list, which has no clear beginning nor end and that can potentially always be expanded, sketches here a rhizomatic web of connections.[76]

As we shall see, it is precisely against linearity and totalisation that Rubinstein is writing, hence why the genre of the family saga ultimately proves incompatible for her project. The very title of her book, *C'est maintenant du passé,* alludes to a critique of linear time. As Rubinstein explains in her book, it comes from the *Konjaku Monogatari*, a collection of Japanese tales dating from the late Heian period (794–1185), in which every tale begins with the phrase 'C'est maintenant du passé' (**今は昔**). She contrasts this with the French tradition:

> [A]lors que notre *Il était une fois* met le passé à distance, le *C'est maintenant du passé* japonais, comme les deux caractères chinois à l'origine du titre le révèlent (*kon*/*jaku*, littéralement présent/passé), entremêle passé et présent, le passé mordant sans cesse sur le présent, et le présent, à peine vécu, devenant passé à son tour. (2009, p.37)

By framing her text with this phrase, Rubinstein departs from a linear understanding of time. The double temporal movement she describes – the past overlapping the present and the present becoming past – strikingly resonates with the disjunction of time into two jets that is central to the philosophies of time and memory proposed by Bergson and Deleuze that I explored in Chapter 1.[77] Just like in Binet's *HHhH* and Bayard's *Aurais-je*

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[76] Though to a lesser extent, this idea is also present in Jablonka's text. Retracing the history of his family in the Polish town of Parczew from the middle of the ninenteenth century onwards, Jablonka comes across several figures of the Jewish community of Parczew and writes 'il y a d'autres vieux que je voudrais rattacher symboliquement à mon arbre généalogique comme ses plus noueuses racines : le grand-père de Feyguè Chtchoupak […] ; Rakhmiel le bourrelier […] : le "pieux apostat" de Parczew […]' (2013, p.40). However, in contrast to Rubinstein, Jablonka does include a genealogical tree of his family in the appendix of his book.

[77] It also echoes Walter Benjamin's description of his methodology in *The Arcades Project* as 'the process of splitting the atom [which] liberates the enormous energies of history that are bound up in the "once upon a time" of classical historiography. The history that showed things "as they really were" was the strongest narcotic of the century' (2002 [1982], p.463).

été résistant ou bourreau ?, the rejection of linear time at play in *C'est maintenant du passé* is to be understood together with a critique of a unified, totalising narrative that necessarily fails to take into account the victims of History, whose existence has been purposefully erased and where only fragments remain. But the phrase 'C'est maintenant du passé' also resonates closely with Barthes's 'ça-a-été' in its evocation of a sense of proximity with the past that is ultimately denied.

Rubinstein's decision to give up on her initial project is presented not as a choice but as the inevitable result of the devastating nature of the loss that is a consequence of the Holocaust:

> Il y aurait eu tout cela dans ma saga : des amours, des conflits familiaux, des enfants vivants et d'autres morts, des battements de cœur, des gens détestables. Des drames, des joies et des rivalités amoureuses […]. Bref, le sel de la vie, et le ressort de la fiction. Tout ce qui fut annihilé par la Shoah. (p.39)

Here, Rubinstein seems to be implicitly referring to Adorno's infamous statement that 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (1981, p.34),[78] and its common interpretation as a proscription of poetry and art – except that for Rubinstein, rather than poetry, it is fiction and the form of the family saga that are no longer acceptable as the consequence of the devastating nature of the loss. However, as Rothberg demonstrates in his close reading of Adorno's statement, rather than a condemnation of and ban on artistic creation, for Adorno,

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[78] The longer passage from which Adorno's sentence is taken reads: 'The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation' (1981, p.34).

> [t]he barbarism or irrationality of 'poetry after Auschwitz' is that, against its implicit intentions, it cannot produce knowledge of its own impossible social status. This impossibility is neither technical nor even moral, for Adorno clearly does not see barbarism as the result of individual abilities, actions, or attitudes; it results instead from an objective and objectifying social process that tends toward the liquidation of the individual. (2000, p.36)

Therefore, what Adorno is alluding to is the fact that poetry (and by extension art and culture), by the very fact of being subject to reification, was and remains complicit with the historical process of modernity that led to Auschwitz. That art is not immune to barbarism is also what Walter Benjamin (like Adorno, a member of the Frankfurt School, albeit a peripheral one) famously argued in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. According to Benjamin, '[t]here is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, neither is the process of transmission whereby it is passed down from one to another' (2003, p.391). In his examination of Adorno's dictum, Rothberg also contrasts and analyses the various (mis)interpretations that seek to grapple with Adorno's dictum - including George Steiner's, whom Rubinstein quotes in her text and who appears to be an influence for her own writing. For Steiner, the name 'Auschwitz' is less considered as the result of a long process than as an event that transcends history. As Rothberg argues, there is therefore a sense of 'nostalgia for a glorious culture [before Auschwitz] where language approximated light or music' (2000, p.32) that permeates Steiner's writings (notably in *Language and Silence*). Such longing for Yiddish (a language that she does not speak) and Yiddish music can be found in Rubinstein's as she writes: 'J'aurais voulu qu'il y ait de la musique dans ce livre et que certaines pages s'ouvrent, comme ces cartes-anniversaires pour enfants, sur des chansons de Chava Alberstein ou d'Hilda Bronstein' (2009, p.99).

While Adorno's and Steiner's views differ, they are both reflected in Rubinstein's text, with, respectively, a sense of ambivalence concerning the status of the archival fragments she cherishes and a sense of longing for the culture and everyday life that was annihilated by the extreme violence of history. It is this twofold dimension of the project that I will now turn to. In the following quote, Rubinstein appears fully aware of the complicated status of the archive:

> 'Le complet, c'est le mensonge', disait George Steiner en citant Adorno, et il poursuivait : 'L'écharde, le fragment ne captent-ils pas l'essentiel ?' Au fur et à mesure que j'avançais, je me suis mise à aimer ces fragments, non seulement pour ce qu'ils révélaient de ma famille, mais pour leur fragilité même, leur incomplétude, qui témoignait de la violence de l'anéantissement, de cette volonté qu'il ne reste rien d'eux, et de ce qui avait subsisté malgré tout. (2009, p.40)

While a key aspect of the Nazi project was the erasure of witnesses and deliberate destruction of records and traces,[79] with Shoshana Felman describing the Holocaust as 'an absolute historical event whose literally *overwhelming evidence* makes it, paradoxically into an *utterly proofless event*' (1992, p.211, original italics), some traces nonetheless remain and the key question for Rubinstein is how to deal with those traces in her text. On the one hand, she values the archival fragments she finds in her father's 'boîte aux souvenirs', for they attest to her relatives' existence who were murdered in the Holocaust. On the other hand, they also testify to the violence of the Nazi project that sought the extermination of European Jewry as well as the erasure of this very extermination, hence their

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[79] We may think here, for example, of the scene in Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved* when a SS scornfully declares to the camp inmates: 'However the war may end, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world will not believe him. There will perhaps be suspicions, discussions, research by historians, but there will be no certainties, because we will destroy the evidence together with you' (1988 [1986], pp.11-12).

ambivalent status. It is this very ambivalence that Rubinstein struggles to come to terms with and that, as mentioned earlier, Osborne identifies as the underlying paradox of the post-Holocaust archive.

Yet, while the archival fragment can be described, in Walter Benjamin's words, as a 'document of barbarism' (2003, p.392), it also has, paradoxically, the potential to rescue victims of atrocity from oblivion. But this potential can only be realised provided a totalising narrative – that would otherwise artificially complete these fragments, situate them in a linear continuity, and erase the violence of History out of which they emerge – is denied. Here her rejection of fiction to complete the fragments found in the archive or fill in the gaps in her family history appears motivated by the very fact that to do so would mean occulting the fact that those very gaps were left by genocidal violence. Because it distances itself from the totalising nature of the bureaucratic archive, the fragmentary is embraced by Rubinstein as what is able to convey the extreme violence of history.

One can find an example of the ambiguity at play in the archive when Rubinstein includes a picture of Ryfka Cukier, one her grandfather's first cousins who emigrated to Belgium before the war, and whose existence she discovered shortly after starting her investigation. Rubinstein includes a reproduction of Ryfka's identity card, which bears the stamp 'JUIF – JOOD' that takes up as much space as the identity picture below, together with a picture of her grandfather, a photograph that is the same format as Ryfka's identity picture (2009, p.43). This juxtaposition highlights 'un air de famille : même bouche fine, même nez fort et droit, même regard clair, même visage fier' (p.42), but at the same time, it also creates a sense of cruel irony, for both Ryfka and Rubinstein's grandfather (Chaim) were murdered in Auschwitz. The ambivalence of this archival fragment is conveyed here by the coexistence of an emerging sense of familial connection

and the knowledge of the genocidal violence of which both Chaim and Ryfka were victims.

The incomplete and ambivalent nature of the archive that has survived is reflected on the overall structure of the text, which is non-linear and fragmentary. It is through employing an aesthetics of the fragmentary that Rubinstein, I argue, is able to attend to the ambivalence of the archive. In *Aesthetic Theory* (1997) (the same text that Rubinstein was implicitly referring to, through Steiner, in the previously quoted passage),[80] Adorno declares that '[f]ragmentariness is the intrusion of death into a work' (p.362). In other words, the fragment figures the presence of an absence. The fragmentary nature of Rubinstein's text, together with its empty spaces created between the different fragments, convey such a sense of absence but also of silence.

> As the Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot has shown,
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> > Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded. There is no perfect closure of any event, however one chooses to define the boundaries of that event. Thus whatever becomes fact does so with its own inborn absences, specific to its production. (2015, p.49)

In Rubinstein's text, the empty spaces between the fragments of different kinds visualise the absence that, as Trouillot makes clear in the quote above, structures the archive. But for Rubinstein, the question of silence is also all the more critical since she grew up with silences regarding the history of her paternal family, and silence acted as the main means of transmission and source of intergenerational trauma. Her experience is in keeping with 'l'emprise du silence' that Nadine Fresco (1981) describes in relation to children of

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[80] Adorno's sentence which Rubinstein, through Steiner, is quoting is from *Aesthetic Theory*: 'the fragment is that part of the totality of the work that opposed totality' (1997, p.45).

survivors, and that here appears to reverberate throughout the third generation. It is therefore not surprising that silence occupies a central place in Rubinstein's text.

Rubinstein draws on Jacques Lacan's distinction between silence as *silere* and *tacere*: 'Deux verbes latins expriment l'acte de faire silence, note Lacan. L'un, *silere,* correspond à un état passif, celui d'être silencieux. L'autre, *tacere*, exprime l'acte de taire quelque chose, le silence actif' (2009, p.81, original italics). For Rubinstein, this distinction becomes a way of differentiating between the different generations: the former type of silence (silere) is the one she wants to achieve through her text while the latter (tacere) corresponds to her father's silence. This suggests that there would therefore be a difference in kind between the silence of her father, and hers, a member of the third generation, and links back to the diverging roles assigned to the different generations. Her father is described as a gate-keeper and his silence, which for him preserves the memories of his parents, also makes difficult the transmission of memory to his own children and explains the feeling of exclusion experienced by Rubinstein. But, as the epigraph from Goethe's *Faust* – 'L'héritage qui t'est venu de ton ancêtre,/ Il te faut l'acquérir pour le mieux posséder' – indicates, what is at stake for Rubinstein, who grew up in the shadow of her father's traumatic memories, is a creative investment in her family history, as she states: 'J'écris parce que j'ai un problème de place' (p.26).

It is also the ability of haikus to convey silence that draws Rubinstein to this poetic form. As she explains, '[l]a littérature et la poésie japonaises savent exprimer le fragmentaire, le quotidien ; elles savent utiliser le silence pour donner aux mots une résonance particulière, une vibration qui persiste alors que l'archet a quitté la corde' (p.116). In this sentence, silence is to be understood not as the absence of sounds or as muteness but rather as what is inaudible. Here, it seems therefore that a different kind of silence to the one Trouillot emphasises is at play. Rather than the silence of the archive that is the consequence of violent power dynamics, here a different type of silence

emerges. Following Edith Wyschogrod, I want to suggest that silence becomes a speech act that highlights the alterity of the other. As Wyschogrod explains, '[b]y bringing forth the silences of the other rather than by forcing silence into speech, by devising strategies of encounter that simultaneously attest and preserve that silence, silence itself becomes a speech-act' (1998, p.32).

This fragmentary aesthetics, as it relates to a reflection on the archive, also applies, as Natalie Piégay-Gros has shown, to the broader contemporary imaginary of the archive, which emphasises what she calls the 'négativité de l'archive' (2012, p.47). The negativity of the archive refers to the fact that the archive in contemporary literature is often depicted as lacking and incomplete and tends to reveal absence rather than presence. As I have argued, this phenomenon, even though Piégay-Gros does not make this link explicit, can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the extreme violence that has marked the twentieth century. For Piégay-Gros, this negativity of the archive also encompasses an emphasis on the 'minuscule' (p.37), an aspect that plays an important role in Rubinstein's writing, with the focus of her narrative being on the mundane aspects of her grandparents' lives. This scale of the minute is in keeping with the Benjaminian critique of dominant historiographical discourses insofar as it signals a departure from grand narratives written from the perspective of those who hold political power toward greater attention paid to the anonymous and the victims of History. This aspect relates to the other dimension of Rubinstein's project, which entails not only a confrontation with the violence of the archive, but also an attempt to retrieve traces of her grandparents. This can helpfully be framed in terms of distance and proximity: if the archive is to allow, to a certain extent, the finding of material (administrative documents, photographs, etc.) allowing for a greater sense of proximity to her grandparents, this very knowledge must be accompanied with a sense of critical distance that reflects on the conditions of emergence of that very archive.

Finally, when discussing an aesthetics of the fragmentary, it is crucial to discuss how such a characteristically modernist aesthetics has been understood as able to convey, through the non-linear, fragmented narratives it produces, traumatic experiences, as seen in the work of trauma studies scholars such as Caruth, Felman or LaCapra among others. Trauma studies' emphasis on modernist-style texts has been criticised by Craps (2013) or Luckhurst (2008), who both denounce a bias towards a reductive Western understanding of trauma. For Craps, this results in the creation of 'a narrow canon of valued trauma literature, consisting of high-brow, avant-garde works by mostly Western writers' (2013, p.5). That Rubinstein chooses to integrate fragments of Japanese literature and poetry (primarily haikus, a form which developed in 13th century),[81] nuances Craps's criticism of a narrow canon, for, by exploring the potential of non-Western literary forms to convey the traumatic impact of the Shoah, she undermines the binary West/non-Western that Craps maintains.[82]

3.2.2 A Poetics of the Archive

In the previous section, I discussed the ethical considerations that led Rubinstein to embrace an aesthetics of the fragmentary, which helps her navigate the violence of the archive. Rubinstein's text, however, is not merely a collection of archival fragments but a complex assemblage of archival documents, which include administrative documents and family photographs, but also haikus, emails exchanged between her father and herself, and self-reflexive comments on her text. In what follows, I demonstrate that

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81 Rubinstein's main references are Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), Sei Shōnagon (c. 966 – 1017 or 1025), and Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973 or 978 – c. 1014 or 1031) the author of *The Tale of Genji*.

82 On the other hand, one must also be reminded here that the haiku became a source of inspiration for modernist artists and writers like W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, who in turn participated in the popularisation of the haiku in the West (Hakutani, 2009).

Rubinstein encourages a poetic mode of reading the various fragments that make up her text, which emphasises their evocative and affective power.

In what follows, I investigate the place of archival documents in Rubinstein's text and the articulation between images (whether they be photographs, or reproduction of postcards, bills, etc.) and text. But first, I briefly discuss the different ways documents have been used in literature and art. According to Piégay-Gros, a twofold heritage should be considered: on the one hand, that of naturalism which developed a method of investigation in which such documents played a central role; and on the other, that of Dadaism and Surrealism, in which documents were granted an autonomous status, thereby challenging the very notion of 'work of art' (2014, pp.74-75). I will argue, however, that Rubinstein highlights a third use of documents, one that specifically responds to the challenges of the post-Holocaust archive. The documents to be found in *C'est maintenant du passé* include photographs but also reproductions of bills, and, while the text refers to these images, there is most often a *décalage* introduced between the text and the image. In other words, a photograph of a distant relative might be found without first being able to establish the identity of that family member. In that way, there is a certain autonomy granted to both the text and the reproductions of archival documents: just as the text is not just a mere description of the images, the images are not mere illustrations. It could therefore be argued that the status granted to these archival remains by Rubinstein is that of 'monument' in the Foucauldian sense rather than that of 'document'. This distinction between document and monument introduced by Michel Foucault in *L'Archéologie du savoir* (1969, pp.14-15) needs to be understood as part of Foucault's attempt to think about what he perceives as the 'mutation épistémologique de l'histoire' (p.21). Whereas a monument has its own internal logic, a document – the object of traditional history – is subjected to the logic of the larger narrative into which it is incorporated. In other words, while traditional history reduces monuments to

documents, by trying to 'faire parler ces traces qui, par elles-mêmes, souvent ne sont point verbales, ou disent en silence autre chose que ce qu'elles disent' (pp.14-15), archaeology (in the Foucauldian sense) adopts the reverse attitude: it examines the monument for itself, no longer trying to make it subservient to a larger, totalising narrative.

In Rubinstein's text, it is through the inscription of archival remains as monuments that their alterity and status as fragments can be preserved. Though Rubinstein does not refer to Foucault, she does however compare her approach to the relation between text and image to that adopted by Roland Barthes in *L'empire des signes* (1970), which features text, photos, illustrations and captions. She quotes Barthes:

> Le texte ne 'commente' pas les images. Les images n'"illustrent' pas le texte : chacune a été seulement pour moi le départ d'une sorte de vacillement visuel, analogue peut-être à cette perte de sens que le Zen appelle un *satori*; texte et images, dans leurs entrelacs, veulent assurer la circulation, l'échange de ces signifiants: le corps, le visage, l'écriture, et y lire le recul des signes (2009, p.116, quoted in Rubinstein, original italics)

Read in those terms, the misalignment of text and image in *C'est maintenant du passé* can be interpreted as a desire to preserve irreducible otherness. This otherness is central to Foucault's conceptualisation of the archive. It is important to note, however, that rather than equating the archive with the totality of past texts preserved or with archival institutions, the archive, for Foucault, refers to a set of rules that governs the emergence, transformation and disappearance of 'énoncés' (both 'évènements' and 'choses') in a given culture at a given time (1969, p.170). Such a definition of the archive is highly relevant to the present discussion since, as I have argued, examining the conditions of emergence of archival documents is necessary in order to address the violence of the post-Holocaust archive. This analysis is therefore in alignment with Derrida's, in which

power dynamics are shown to be constitutive of the archive. According to Foucault, the study of the archive, or what he names 'archéologie', is concerned with 'une région privilégiée : à la fois proche de nous, mais différente de notre actualité, c'est la bordure du temps qui entoure notre présent, qui le surplombe et qui indique son altérité, c'est ce qui, hors de nous, nous délimite' (p.172). If, as Foucault notes, it is impossible to describe the totality of the archive, and equally impossible to talk about one's own archive (p.171), what the study of the archive can reveal is the element of otherness that haunts the archive as well as a complex temporality, since,

> [L'archive] nous déprend de nos continuités ; elle dissipe cette identité temporelle où nous aimons nous regarder nous-mêmes pour conjurer les ruptures de l'histoire ; elle brise le fil des téléologies transcendantales ; et là où la pensée anthropologique interrogeait l'être de l'homme ou sa subjectivité, elle fait éclater l'autre, et le dehors. (p.172)

Rather than a totalising linear temporality, the temporality of the archive is therefore characterised, for Foucault, by discontinuity and rupture. If archaeology cannot recover what has now irremediably become other to us, it does not cease, however, to underline the qualitative difference that separates us from the past. Those reflections echo Barthes's analysis of the 'ça-a-été' he developed in relation to photography, but that, Hirsch has suggested, characterises more broadly the postmemorial experience.

The otherness of archival fragments is visualised in the text through typography: notably with the use of italics and a textual layout that features empty spaces, thereby reinforcing the fragmentary nature of Rubinstein's text. Therefore, it is not only that *C'est maintenant du passé* includes some archival fragments, but it is also the very structure of the text that is itself fragmented and heterogeneous, mirroring the absence/presence dichotomy at play in the archive. While the linearity of the main narrative – that of Rubinstein's investigation – is disrupted by the inclusion of photographs, and other

reproductions of archival documents, it is also disrupted by the inclusion of haikus. Because haikus are, according to Barthes, 'bref[s], mais non pas fini[s], fermé[s]' (2003, p.67), or in other words, because haikus are at once opaque and alien to a sense of closure, they seem particularly well suited for Rubinstein's project. The use of haikus in *C'est maintenant du passé* is linked to a sense of incompleteness and of suspension of any definite meaning. However, what is most interesting in Rubinstein's text is the fact that archival fragments themselves are transformed into poems. For instance, one can find some information about the weight, height and dental condition of Rubinstein's grandfather, information that she found on the 'acte d'engagement dans la Légion étrangère', but the way this information is presented strikingly departs from the typical dryness of administrative paperwork. Instead, we have what resembles a haiku:

Poids : 56 kg

Taille : 1,65m

Dentition : Passable (2009, p.18, original italics)

This process, which operates a defamiliarisation and calls for another mode of reading, is repeated throughout the text. It does not only apply to archival documents per se but also to the everyday conversation between Rubinstein and her father. For instance, an email sent by her father has an undeniably poetic tone, highlighted by the typography:

marianne

rien de mieux qu'une exhumation

pour créer une insomnie, quelle douleur,

une violence à peine contenue de mon oncle à mon père

dans des difficultés qui sont celles d'aujourd'hui

comment subvenir à une vieille mère

quand on est soi-même dans la misère

et dans des circonstances si extrêmes.

Les morts parlent

et ce qu'ils disent est de tous les temps,

mais pour eux l'horrible nuit du nazisme

fait ces lettres encore plus douloureuses.

Mais il faut savoir regarder cela en face.

Nous verrons. (p.53, original italics)

The heterogeneity that characterises Rubinstein's text ultimately finds a name – Rubinstein talks of her book as 'un patchwork' (p.154), a patchwork made up of small heterogeneous elements: archival fragments, snippets of Rubinstein's and her father's daily lives haunted by the past, and empty spaces on the page that serve to visualise a sense of absence and silence. The fact that Rubinstein defines her work as a patchwork reveals its rhizomatic nature. When, in *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari describe a patchwork as 'une collection amorphe de morceaux juxtaposés, dont le raccordement peut se faire d'une infinité de manières' (1980, p.595), they are talking in rhizomatic terms. A patchwork can then be considered a kind of rhizome, one that can always expand, and is characterised by non-linearity and a lack of centre. What my discussion has shown so far is that Rubinstein's text, which is characterised by non-linearity and resists totalisation, corresponds to such a definition. What also emerges from this process is the lack of closure of the text. After Rubinstein's concluding remarks, in which she comes to the conclusion that the text she has created is a patchwork, the reader can read a postscript (2009, pp.157-158). This postscript is an email sent by Rubinstein to a man named Abraham Rubinstein, inquiring whether he might be related to her family. It shows that

even after her investigation has seemingly ended, she is still hopeful she might discover other familial connections, leaving open the possibility of expanding and including other fragments into her text.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome complicates the binary between filiation and affiliation, verticality and horizontality. This binary is likewise problematised by Rubinstein, who struggles to find her place with regards to her paternal family history. The fragments from her family archive help her forge a connection with her paternal family, for instance, when she finds a picture that reveals a striking family 'resemblance avec cette grand-mère morte' (p.109). On the other hand, as a direct consequence of her father's reticence to talk about the past, other texts and writings that deal with the Holocaust become all the more important. For instance, Georges Perec, who is, like her father, part of the 1.5 generation, becomes a key reference in Rubinstein's text (as I will discuss later in this chapter, Perec is also an important figure for Jablonka). The intertextual dimension, detected by Ledoux-Beaugrand (2013) in her analysis of Rubinstein's text mentioned previously, must here be understood as connecting the filiative and affiliative dimensions of postmemory.[83]

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83 Therefore, even though the concept of the archive is closely linked to notions of hierarchy and vertical power, as Derrida underlines in *Mal d'archive*, the kind of archival memory mobilised in Rubinstein's text, though closely linked to the family sphere, does not appear inherently antagonistic to the model of memory developed in this thesis that has so far emphasised non-chronological time and a plurality of heterogeneous connections across time and space. One could in fact argue that, rather than the archive, the form that shows the closest affinity with the type of memory developed by Rubinstein would be that of an atlas, as conceptualised by Aby Warburg. Warburg's 'Mnemosyne Atlas' (1921-1929), though made up of about a thousand images, actually allows for the creation of infinite new associations and connections thanks to a system of combination and permutation. Rubinstein's text, I suggest, undermines the binary horizontality and verticality, atlas and archive, stressing instead their coexistence. This is in keeping with Didi-Huberman's argument that the very existence of atlases is contingent on the archive: 'il n'y aurait bien sûr pas d'atlas possible sans l'archive qui le précède: l'atlas offrirait en ce sens le 'devenir-voir' et le 'devenir-savoir' de l'archive' (2011, p. 290).

Rubinstein's text is also a patchwork in the sense that it merges poetry and history. Such a link between poetry and archive had been made by Foucault in his essay 'La vie des hommes infâmes' (1994). In this text, which was initially meant to serve as the introduction to a collection of archival fragments from eighteenth-century records of internment, a project that eventually never came to fruition, Foucault demonstrates how the existence of these archival fragments and the conditions of their accessibility in the archive stem from complex power dynamics that sought to impose control on 'l'ordinaire de la vie' (p.245). If the traces of these lives have been recorded in the archive, it is due to the fact that they have collided with power structures, that these lives are 'des vies qui ne survivent que du heurt avec un pouvoir qui n'a voulu que les anéantir ou du moins les effacer' (p.243). The very presence of these fragments in the archive thus acts as a powerful reminder of the violence of the archive, an analysis which resonates strongly with that of the post-Holocaust archive developed earlier. Once again, this violence disproportionately targets those who lack political power.

Perhaps even more striking, however, is the fact that Foucault, like Rubinstein in *C'est maintenant du passé,* envisions these fragments as poems. Indeed, in 'La vie des hommes infâmes' Foucault talks about '[d]es vies singulières, devenues, par je ne sais quels hasards, d'étranges poèmes, voilà ce que j'ai voulu rassembler en une sorte d'herbier' (1994, p.237). Rubinstein's patchwork – made up of archival documents, poems, prose text – finds here an equivalent in Foucault's herbarium of poetic archival fragments. The attractive force of poetry might stem, to some extent, from the fact that notions of discontinuity and rupture, which are central to Foucault's conceptualisation of the archive, are also often associated with poetry. However, what seems to prevail for Foucault is the affective and evocative power these poetic fragments hold, and that only

a poetic form would be able to convey.[84] For Foucault, it is the fragments' condensed form and inexhaustible meaning (what Foucault calls 'le resserrement des choses dites') that is able to convey their intensity – an intensity whose origin is difficult to decipher, whether from 'l'éclat des mots ou [la] violence des faits qui se bousculent en eux' (1994, p.237). Restoring this intensity, this vibration, through historical analysis is, according to Foucault, impossible (1994, p.238).[85] Rubinstein and Foucault both highlight the inability of a strictly historical discourse to convey the intensity or affective power of archival fragments. Instead, a poetic mode of reading of archival documents appears best suited to convey the absence and silence generated by the archive as well as testify to the violence of the archive, for it allows both critical distance and affective proximity.

Such a mode of reading has been described by Marie-Jeanne Zenetti, in reference to the American poet Charles Reznikoff and his work *Testimony, The United States, 1885-1890, Recitative*, as the effort to:

> sortir le document de ses usages (juridiques, historiques) qui auraient tendance à lire le témoignage pour les informations qu'il présente, afin de le rendre à son épaisseur, à sa densité émotive et sonore. Privilégier une autre écoute du document, une écoute qui serait de l'ordre du poétique. Cette poésie, cependant, ne serait aucunement séparée du réel et de l'histoire, mais ne prend sens qu'en ce qu'elle témoigne de ce qui a eu lieu. (2012, p.34)

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[84] Rather than affect, Foucault talks of 'intensité' and 'vibration' in 'Les vies des hommes infâmes'.

[85] By stressing, in this text first published in 1977, the affective dimension of archival encounter, Foucault underlines here an aspect of the archive – its affective dimension – that has since been further explored, notably by Arlette Farge in *Le goût de l'archive* (1989).

Perhaps then, *C'est maintenant du passé* could be best described as a 'poème-archéologie', a term used by Deleuze in his book on Foucault (1986). Deleuze provides the following explanation: 'le poème-archéologie [se forme] dans tous les registres de multiplicités, mais aussi dans l'unique inscription de ce qui est dit, en rapport avec les événements, les institutions et toutes les autres pratiques' (p.28). A 'poème-archéologie' would then, on the one hand, sustain a rigorous examination of the conditions of emergence of the archive – in the context of the post-Holocaust archive, bureaucratic and legal violence – and, on the other hand, preserve the irreducible otherness of the past and let resonances of silence be heard.

Rubinstein's displacement and reconfiguration of archival fragments into poems, which infuses them with new meanings and opens them up to the possibility of affective engagement, is for Hirsch characteristic of postmemorial practices. Indeed, for Hirsch, it is 'only when [Holocaust photographs] are redeployed, in new texts and new contexts, that they regain a capacity to enable a postmemorial working through' (2001, p.29). Rubinstein's creative assemblage of archival fragments can be related, I argue, to a tentative of 'working-through', as opposed to 'acting-out', the past. Rather than seeking to repeat a traumatic past, Rubinstein's text can be seen as engaged in an active process of working-through, which also involves, to a certain extent, a dimension of mourning.[86] *C'est maintenant du passé* can, ultimately, be interpreted as what Felman, following de Certeau, calls 'a tombeau for the dead' (an idea that I will return to in my analysis of Jablonka's text), in the sense of both 'the symbological construction of a burial place, the circumscribing of the space of the tomb or a construction of sepulchre, and the creation of a poem, a commemorative literary creation, as part of a collective mourning labour'

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[86] This is in keeping with LaCapra's distinction between the processes of working-through and acting-out.

(2014, pp.64-65).[87] We arrive here at the twofold dimension of a poetics of the archive, at once acknowledging the violence that lies at the heart of the post-Holocaust archive and reconfiguring that archive through poetic means as part of a postmemorial process of working through.

3.2.3 Conclusion

By carefully crafting a fragmentary and poetic text, Rubinstein successfully addresses the ambiguity that lies within the archive. Simultaneously acknowledging the violence out of which the archive emerges and the archive's potential of forging affective connections with a past of which she has no direct memories, a dialectic of distance and proximity – in which the need for critical distance towards the archive and the conditions of its emergence is held in productive tension with the affective proximity evoked by archival fragments – ultimately starts to emerge.

3.3 Critical Distance and Affective Proximity in Ivan Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* (2012)

In *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus*, which was published in 2012, Jablonka pursues a similar goal to that of Rubinstein in *C'est maintenant du passé*: recovering traces of his (paternal) grandparents who were murdered during the Holocaust. Like Rubinstein, Jablonka is also a member of the so-called 'third-generation', a term used to designate

[87] In French the word 'tombeau' can refer to a burial chamber but also to a piece of music or poem(s) composed in commemoration of a notable or close individual.

grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and victims, or more precisely of the '2.5 generation' as his father, just like Rubinstein's father, was a hidden child during the Holocaust. As Gary Weissman argues, these terms that seek to define a whole generation rest on a rather homogeneous vision of a generation and are therefore unable to grasp the diversity of experiences and backgrounds of the individuals that make up this generational group (2016, p.162). Nonetheless, in the case of Jablonka and Rubinstein, some striking similarities can be noted: both grew up in families where silence about the fate of their paternal grandparents prevailed, and both have overall comparable life trajectories.[88] Just like Rubinstein's father, Jablonka's father was an infant when he was separated from his parents, and he knows very little about them and thus does not have many, or any, memories and knowledge to transmit to his own children. Even though no narrative about the grandparents was transmitted, their absence was acutely felt, and thus one could say there was transmission of trauma, through silence, as we have seen in Rubinstein's case. As Jablonka explains:

> [D]ans mon cas il n'y a pas eu de révélation : personne ne m'a jamais assis pour m'apprendre la 'terrible vérité'. Leur assassinat, j'en suis familier depuis toujours – il y a des vérités de famille comme il y a des secrets de famille. (2013[2012], p.10)

While for Hirsch, in such a situation, gaps and lacunae are filled by invention and imagination, postmemory being first and foremost a creative process, for Jablonka, it is not imagination that can help him obtain a memory of his grandparents, but rather a thorough investigation which mobilises the methodological tools of the historian and where the archive plays a central role. However, as I shall demonstrate in my close reading

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[88] Both are now established academics in their own fields. Jablonka is currently Professor of Contemporary History at the University Paris XIII, while Rubinstein is Associate Professor of Economics at Paris 7; they therefore embody, to a certain extent, successful republican trajectories.

of Jablonka's narrative, his initial rejection of imagination is complicated as the text unfolds and, more specifically, as Jablonka comes to yearn earnestly for a sense of affective proximity to his paternal grandparents.

Despite their common goal and interest in the archive, Rubinstein and Jablonka produce radically different texts. While Rubinstein proposes a poetic archival montage or what she calls a 'patchwork' – a fragmentary collage of archival documents, poems and narrative – *Histoire des grands-parents* is a much less fragmented text. As opposed to Rubinstein's refusal to incorporate archival documents into a grand narrative, Jablonka seemingly attempts to provide as comprehensive a narrative about his grandparents' lives as he can. Where Rubinstein and Jablonka's texts seem to converge, however, is in the hybrid genre of their texts, which cut across generic boundaries. Jablonka describes his text as 'à la fois comme une biographie familiale, une œuvre de justice et un prolongement de mon travail d'historien' (2013, p.11). On the one hand, *Histoire des grands-parents* retraces Matès and Idesa's trajectories, from Poland, where they were persecuted because of their communist activism, to France, where, as illegal immigrants, they were under state surveillance, before being deported to Auschwitz where, as Jews, they were eventually murdered. This dimension of his work, with the focus on two single individuals, is of microhistory as it has been developed and popularised notably by the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg's book *Le fromage et les vers* (1993, [1976]). If most of the narrative is devoted to shedding light on Matès and Idesa's lives, *Histoire des grands-parents* also provides a historical analysis of the tragedies of the twentieth century. Jablonka's text also bears a strong self-reflexive dimension as it is also the narrative of his investigation, which he conducts both as a grandson *and* as a historian.

I first analyse the implications of Jablonka's claim that *Histoire des grands-parents* can be situated at the crossroads between history and literature. I show that Jablonka's challenge of historiographical conventions reflects his attempt to combine affective proximity and

critical distance towards the object of his historical and personal investigation and can also be related to wider ethical concerns about historiography to account for the alterity of the Others. I then demonstrate that the equilibrium between critical distance and affective proximity that is required in order to negotiate the violence of the archive and its affective potential is threatened in moments when Jablonka discovers archival materials that relate to his grandparents. Finally, I will argue that Jablonka's investigation of the urban environments of Parczew and Paris highlights the relationship between place and postmemory, the two cities becoming markers of the archival dynamics of erasure and inscription, visibility and invisibility. In reaction to the bureaucratic archive's inability to become a source of affective knowledge of his grandparents, the city (and especially Paris and the alleyway where Jablonka's grandparents lived) is recast as an imaginary repository of affects. My analysis of *Histoire des grands-parents* aims to demonstrate that, although Jablonka uses different means and strategies, he, like Rubinstein, participates in a poetics of the archive, in which the violence of the archive is both acknowledged and reconfigured.

3.3.1 Historiography and Literature

In this section, I argue that Jablonka's attempt to establish 'une écriture plus juste' (2014, blurb), which would combine critical distance and affective proximity, leads him to reconsider the relationship between historiography and literature. As I further show, the necessity of finding a new way of writing history, one that resists totalisation and preserves the alterity of the Other, is made urgent by the atrocities of the twentieth century. I discuss the extent to which Jablonka subverts historiographical conventions.

Far from being a conventional history book, *Histoire des grands-parents* is also an experiment that seeks to reconcile history and literature. According to Jablonka, crossing

the disciplinary boundaries that exist between history and literature would allow for 'une écriture plus juste' (2014, blurb). Jablonka's reflections on the complex relationship between history and literature can be found in a manifesto provocatively titled *L'histoire est une littérature contemporaine* that he published in 2014 and that he considers as the theoretical counterpart of *Histoire des grands-parents* (p.17).[89] On the blurb of this book, Jablonka writes that 'concilier sciences sociales et création littéraire, c'est tenter d'écrire de manière plus libre, plus originale, plus juste, plus réflexive, non pour relâcher la scientificité de la recherche, mais au contraire pour la renforcer' (2014, blurb). In *Histoire des grands-parents,* Jablonka formulates this in terms of a simultaneous gesture of distance and proximity:

> J'ai cherché à être non pas objectif – cela ne veut pas dire grand-chose, car nous sommes rivés au présent, enfermés en nous-mêmes –, mais radicalement honnête, et cette transparence vis-à-vis de soi implique à la fois la mise à distance la plus rigoureuse et l'investissement le plus total. (2013, p.368)

Jablonka's attempt to find 'une écriture plus juste' that performs a balancing act between maintaining critical distance while assuming one's subjective investment recalls Ricœur's notion of 'la juste distance'. In *Parcours de la reconnaissance* (2004), Ricœur argues that it is by embracing dissymmetry between the self and the other and the mutual character of their relation that a just distance can be preserved:

> L'aveu de la dissymétrie menacée d'oubli vient d'abord rappeler le caractère irremplaçable de chacun des partenaires de l'échange ; l'un n'est pas l'autre ; on échange des dons, mais non des places. Second bénéfice de cet aveu : il protège

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[89] His theoretical manifesto is not only a counterpart to *Histoire des grands-parents*, but also to his book *Laëtitia ou la fin des hommes (2016)*. It is important to note that there have been other attempts at redefining the relationship between history and literature in recent years, notably by Judith Lyon-Caen in *La Griffe du temps. Ce que l'histoire peut dire de la littérature* (2019).

> la mutualité contre les pièges de l'union fusionnelle, que ce soit dans l'amour, l'amitié et la fraternité à l'échelle communautaire ou cosmopolite ; une juste distance est préservée au cœur de la mutualité, juste distance qui intègre le respect à l'intimité. (pp.376-377)

For Jablonka, if a just distance is to be cultivated, it needs to resist both the illusion of objectivity and a total emotional investment that could lead to an over-identification with the Other, and this requires a rethinking of historiography.

In *L'histoire est une littérature contemporaine*, Jablonka provides an historical perspective on the gradual evolution of boundaries between literature and history – from *belles lettres*, to the construction of history as an objective science, to the linguistic turn – and demonstrates that the relationship between literature and history has a long history of entanglement. If his reflections take into account, to a certain extent, the change of paradigm brought about by the linguistic turn – with Hayden White's *Metafiction* and in France the work of Paul Veyne (*Comment on écrit l'histoire*), Michel de Certeau (*L'écriture de l'histoire*) or Paul Ricœur – it is striking to note that the history of atrocities of the twentieth century does not play a significant part in his advocacy for a renewed writing of history. An example of the latter position would be that of Saul Friedländer who, in *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (1993), voices the dilemma historians face when dealing with the Holocaust in these terms: 'we are confronted with an insoluble choice between the *inadequacy* of traditional historiographical representation and the need to establish as reliable a narration as possible' (1993, x).

Thus, to add to Jablonka's own reflections on the need to re-evaluate the historian's task, one could argue that this is made even more urgent in the aftermath of the Shoah. For Friedländer, it is primarily the language of the historian, as well as his detached position towards its subject matter, that ought to be re-invented, hence prompting the need for new means of expression (1984, p.92). In other words, Friedländer is pointing

out the need to re-evaluate the dynamics between objective distance and affective proximity. The history of extreme violence of the twentieth century requires the arrival of a new historian, whom, following Wyschogrod (who herself is heavily inspired by Levinasian ethics), one could name the 'heterological historian'. According to Wyschogrod, the historian is now writing from a void, a non-place created by the Holocaust's cosmological impact and bears an ethical responsibility to the dead Others. The heterological historian is defined as the historian who is 'driven by the eros for the dead and the urgency of ethics, and who speaks from out of the cataclysm that she cannot name' (1998, xiii). The heterological historian must reconcile paradoxical injunctions: she promises to tell the truth of the dead Others while recognising their irreducible alterity; she is also aware that recounting the past 'as it were' is impossible. Furthermore, she is caught in a double-bind, for she cannot speak on behalf of the Other, but, at the same time, cannot stay silent either, for this would condemn the voiceless to oblivion (p.38). For Wyschogrod then, the question of how to preserve the irreducible alterity of the Other thus represents the main challenge the historian must respond to in the post-Holocaust world. This is the same question that, as I showed in Chapter 1, agitates Binet's and Bayard's texts. As I demonstrated in that chapter, Binet and Bayard navigate this very question through literature's potential to unsettle linearity and foreground the past as a space holding infinite virtual possibilities, which was set in contrast to conventional historiography. In what follows, I discuss, with reference to de Certeau's theory of historiography, the extent to which Jablonka actually subverts or endorses historiographical conventions in *Histoire des grands-parents* and how the question of otherness plays out in his text.

In *L'écriture de l'histoire* (1975), Michel de Certeau provides the following definition of historiography:

> La seule quête historique du 'sens' demeure en effet celle de l'Autre, mais ce projet, contradictoire, vise à 'comprendre' et à cacher avec le 'sens' l'altérité de cet étranger, ou, ce qui revient au même, à calmer les morts qui hantent encore le présent et à leur offrir des tombeaux scripturaires. (p.8)

If indeed the object of historiography is not merely the past, but rather the dead Others, then the contradictory nature of such a project, de Certeau underlines, is that the very act of making sense of the past through writing reduces and buries the Other at the same time. By likening historical writing to a burial rite, de Certeau argues that absence and loss are exorcised through writing. In an important passage, where Jablonka provides the transcription of two postcards, sent from Drancy and written on behalf of Matès and Idesa by a prisoner fluent in French, – what would ultimately become their last words to their children Suzanne and Marcel – , he informs the reader: 'Il [celui qui a écrit les cartes postales pour Matès et Idesa] fait quelques fautes d'orthographe, que je corrige dans la retranscription, comme on lisse le visage des défunts lors de la toilette mortuaire' (2013, pp.293-294). While it is unclear here whether it is as a historian or as a grandson that Jablonka performs what is effectively a ritual act that lays the dead to rest, this passage certainly points to the text approximating a tomb. If it honours the dead, by inscribing death in words, de Certeau argues that it also, at the same time, exorcises it:

> D'une part, au sens ethnologique et quasi religieux du terme, l'écriture joue le rôle d'un *rite d'enterrement* ; elle exorcise la mort en l'introduisant dans le discours. D'autre part, elle a une fonction *symbolisatrice* ; elle permet à une société de se situer en se donnant dans le langage un passé et elle ouvre ainsi au présent un espace propre […] (1975, p.118, original italics)

De Certeau's view of historiography as a form of mourning resonates with LaCapra's notion of 'working through' that was evoked previously with regards to Rubinstein's text. Despite the fact that Jablonka's text can be considered, to some extent, as conforming to

the functions described by de Certeau, Jablonka also maintains throughout his text that he is trapped in the past:

> Voilà ce que c'est que d'être bloqué au XXe siècle : on aperçoit les coquelicots parmi les blés, mais broyés par les chenilles des Panzer ; on ne profite pas du ciel d'été parce qu'on essaie de se représenter un déluge de fer et de feu ; on se demande s'il faut jouer dans l'herbe avec les enfants ou essayer de leur faire comprendre. (2013, p.204)

If 'calmer les morts' involves laying them to rest, it also involves establishing strict boundaries between past and present, something which Jablonka appears, at times, unable to do. In the next chapter, I will explore the spectral imaginary that is to be found in many contemporary texts that deal with the Holocaust and will go back to this question with reference to Derrida's concept of hauntology. For now, I want to emphasise that Jablonka depicts his grandparents as ghostly figures, describing them for instance as '[des] silhouettes évanescentes errant dans le grand hall du temps' (p.31). In creating a textual space that appears haunted, Jablonka leaves open the possibility of the overall linearity of his narrative being disrupted by the spectral apparitions of his grandparents. This signals here a significant departure from conventional historiography. According to de Certeau,

> La psychanalyse et l'historiographie ont donc deux manières différentes de distribuer l'*espace de la mémoire*. Elles pensent autrement le rapport du passé et du présent. La première reconnaît l'un *dans* l'autre ; la seconde pose l'un *à côté* de l'autre. (1987, pp.98-99, original italics)

Historiography appears based on the idea of past and present being separate, while in psychoanalysis, and one can, I contend, add here literature, past and present intertwine. While most of *Histoire des grands-parents* is devoted to recounting Matès and Idesa's lives,

Jablonka also shares his reflections and emotions during his investigation. In other words, while most of the narrative is devoted to the result of the historical research, the process is an integral part of the narrative and is as equally important. This echoes the structure of Laurent Binet's *HHhH* that was studied in Chapter 1. However, whereas the two different narrative lines intertwine to the point of overlapping in *HHhH*, in *Histoire des grands-parents*, present and past remain separate. There are however brief moments in Jablonka's text when boundaries between past and present become blurred, as the result of the affective power of the archival fragments Jablonka recovers from the judicial and bureaucratic archives he explores. It is to those moments that I will turn in the next section.

Another element of the scriptuary representation that de Certeau identifies is that it is ' "pleine" elle comble ou oblitère les lacunes qui constituent au contraire le principe même de la recherche, toujours aiguisée par le manque' (1975, p.102). While the reader of a history book can expect to be presented with the historian's archival findings, it is less common for a discussion regarding what is absent or has been erased from the archive to be included. As shall be demonstrated, however, the interplay between absence and presence is crucial to Jablonka, and from this perspective, his text departs from traditional historiography. Besides, if it is common to find a conclusion at the end of a historiographical text that provides a sense of closure, the ending of Jablonka's book is unusual in that regard, since it ends with Jablonka admitting that '[a]près avoir brassé, réuni, comparé, recousu, je ne sais rien' (2013, p.369).[90] The lack of closure Jablonka's narrative offers – with his refusal to tell the deaths of his grandparents, stating that '(l)eur

[90] The narrator of *Dora Bruder* reaches a similar conclusion: 'J'ignorerai toujours à quoi elle passait ses journées, où elle se cachait, en compagnie de qui elle se trouvait pendant les mois d'hiver de sa première fugue et au cours des quelques semaines de printemps où elle s'est échappée à nouveau. C'est là son secret. Un pauvre et précieux secret que les bourreaux, les ordonnances, les autorités dites d'occupation, le Dépôt, les casernes, les camps, l'Histoire, le temps - tout ce qui vous souille et vous détruit - n'auront pas pu lui voler.' (1997, pp.144-145)

mort n'appartient qu'aux disparus' (p.373) – illustrates his acknowledgment that some things must remain unintelligible. One can therefore argue that the tension between literature and history displayed in *Histoire des grands-parents* allows Jablonka to counter the potentially totalising nature of history and that it is this very tension that thus enables him to convey the irreducible singularity of his grandparents. While historiography as described by de Certeau abolishes the alterity of the dead Others, *Histoire des grands-parents* fully embraces it.

In *Histoire des grands-parents* and *L'histoire est une littérature contemporaine* Jablonka puts forward another way of writing history: one where the historian assumes his subjectivity without relinquishing rigorous methodology. This is visible from the very first sentence of *Histoire des grands-parents* – 'Je suis parti, en historien, sur les traces des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus.' (2013, p.9) – which aptly sums up his project while clearly asserting his positioning as a historian. Indeed, this sentence highlights the originality of his project: an attempt to recover and tell the story of his own grandparents, thus entailing a very intimate dimension, itself reinforced by the use of the first-person pronoun – while mobilising his expertise as a professional historian. Due to the very personal nature of his project, Jablonka uses a first-person narrative which makes him step into the intradiegetic world, and thus assumes a departure from the traditional writing of history. In this respect, one may say that he transgresses previously established boundaries and forgoes the emotional distance that historians usually seek to preserve towards the object of their study for the sake of what is termed as objectivity. But here the use of the first-person pronoun is conceptualised by Jablonka as the guarantee of objective research insofar as it allows Jablonka to convey his doubt, hesitations, reasoning, and hypotheses in a transparent manner – rather than hiding behind an authoritative third-person narrator or the passive voice. The use of the first person is therefore a way for Jablonka to ally empathic proximity to scientific distance.

Therefore, while there are undeniably elements of conventional historical writing (the overall linearity of the narrative, the presence of extensive footnotes), there are also other elements that subvert these conventions (the use of the first-person pronoun, the emphasis on the complex interplay between absence and presence, the lack of closure, and above all, the articulation of a dialectic between critical distance and affective proximity) which, I argue, serve to preserve the alterity of the past. If I have argued that Jablonka endeavours to negotiate between critical distance and affective proximity, I now look more specifically at how this relationship unfolds with respect to Jablonka's engagement with the bureaucratic and judicial archive. Confronted with documents found in the archive that testify to the extreme violence to which his grandparents fell victims, the archive also becomes the site of an affective encounter that punctures Jablonka's narrative and partakes in a dialectical movement of distance and proximity.

3.3.2 Archive and Affect

Having established how Jablonka's text, which seeks to establish a balance between critical distance and affective proximity, challenges conventional historiography, I now investigate how the discourse proposed by Jablonka, that aims at reconciling history and literature, affects the way the archive is tackled in *Histoire des grands-parents*. Is this hybrid discourse able to convey the ambiguity and complexity of the archive, highlighting its possibilities as well as its violence? Framing the premise of his book on the existence of traces of his grandparents – to be found mainly in the archive – Jablonka articulates his goal in the following terms (which are very similar to how Rubinstein frames her project):

> Vivants, ils [Matès et Idesa] étaient déjà invisibles ; et l'histoire les a pulvérisés. […] Il est donc urgent, avant l'effacement définitif, de retrouver les traces, les

> empreintes de vie qu'ils ont laissées, preuves involontaires de leur passage en ce monde. (2013, p.10)

In these sentences, Matès and Idesa appear to be amongst the anonymous, the victims of History, that Walter Benjamin describes in his 'Theses on the Concept of History'. Inconspicuous during their lifetimes, genocidal violence, which entails the erasure of its victims, eventually condemned them to invisibility. Jablonka's statement here implies that it is the task of the historian to bring them back to visibility. The question that arises is whether this can be achieved whilst relying on traces that are contaminated by genocidal violence. That the materials the archive is made of are 'compromised by the very violence to which they bear witness' is the paradox that, as we have seen, defines the 'post-Holocaust archive' according to Osborne (2020, p.11), and that needs to be addressed. While Rubinstein addresses this paradox in her text through a fragmentary aesthetics and a poetics of the archive that foregrounds the violence of the archive while at the same time resisting it through her poetic reconfiguration of archival fragments, Jablonka, as we shall see, chooses a different path.

In the first chapter of *Histoire des grands-parents*, Jablonka travels to Parczew, the birthplace of his grandparents in Poland. There he consults various local archives, but what he finds in the archive is, rather than documents attesting to the existence of the Jewish community, the erasure of the long-standing Jewish presence in the region. What the archive of Parczew, in which only catholic names feature, tells is that 'les Juifs de Parczew n'ont jamais existé' (2013, p.51). Instead of attesting to the presence of the Jewish community to which his grandparents belonged, the archive only tells of its erasure. This process of erasure is reflected in the urban landscape of Parczew, where the Jewish cemetery has been turned into a public garden, the old synagogue has become a second-hand clothing store, and the Jewish study hall a 'salle des fêtes' (pp.16-18). Jablonka is able to find birth certificates and marriage records in the Rabbinical registry,

but most of the information he finds comes, in fact, from his grandparents' judicial records. Indeed, as communist activists, Matès and Idesa were persecuted, and there is therefore a detailed record of their activities, their arrests and trials. '[D]errière la platitude bureaucratique' of these documents (p.77), Jablonka, hopes to get a glimpse of his grandparents' personalities and motivations.

Throughout *Histoire des grands-parents*, judicial and State archives remain undeniably Jablonka's main source of information. It is in the files of the National Security that Jablonka finds valuable documents related to his grandparents. The presence of documents pertaining to his grandparents in this archive is explained by the fact that, as illegal immigrants, the French state considered Idesa and Matès as a potential threat. These files were later used to facilitate the arrest and deportations of Jews and can thus be considered a reminder of the violence of the State. One is here once again reminded of Walter Benjamin's words that 'there is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism' (2003, p.391). Considering the discrepancy between the use he makes of the archive – as a means to retrace his grandparents' lives and saving them from oblivion – and what it had previously been used for – the very opposite of his quest – Jablonka feels mixed emotions:

> Les rapports que la Sûreté nationale accumule au sujet de Matès et d'Idesa constituent un matériau historique irremplaçable, et les faire défiler sur mon ordinateur m'émeut ; mais ils annoncent surtout les persécutions à venir. (pp.168-169)

By visiting over twenty different archives in Poland, France and Israel, Jablonka's primary goal is to gain some knowledge of his grandparents' lives. When he describes the inception of his project, he says: 'je vais écrire un livre sur leur histoire, ou plutôt un livre d'histoire sur eux, fondé sur des archives, des entretiens, des lectures, une mise en contexte, des raisonnements sociologiques, grâce auxquels je vais *faire leur connaissance*'

(p.95, original italics). His initial premise is thus that his background as a professional historian will enable him to gain some cognitive knowledge about his grandparents. But Jablonka's use of the phrase 'faire leur connaissance' also crystallises the tension between the affective and the cognitive modes. This phrase eloquently sums up Jablonka's twofold project: to gain some factual knowledge of his grandparents' lives, but also to literally make the acquaintance of his grandparents, to get to know them on a more intimate level.

Earlier in the text, Jablonka guards himself against emotion, for instance when he finds in the files of the Sûreté nationale, accompanied by his father, ID photographs of his grandparents. For Jablonka's father, these photographs are 'reliques', while for Jablonka, these are pieces of evidence, archival material. The emotional distance that Jablonka manages to keep, his father cannot : 'Mon père est prêt à voler ses reliques, alors que pour moi ce sont des archives à respecter comme telles : le temps a fui, hélas, entre sa génération et la mienne' (p.134). However, when looking for Matès's criminal court ruling (he physically resisted his arrest by police officers in 1940), Jablonka cannot, this time, hide his emotion: 'Nous tournons les pages fébrilement. Émotion : *il est là*' (p.164, my emphasis). Jablonka's emotion runs counter to the dehumanising logic behind these administrative documents. As Zygmunt Bauman shows in *Modernity and the Holocaust,* the nature of modern bureaucratic culture 'prompts us to view society as an object of administration, as a collection of so many "problems" to be solved, as "nature" to be "controlled", "mastered" and "improved" or "remade", as a legitimate target for "social engineering", and in general a garden to be designed and kept in the planned shape by force' (1989, p.34). This moment of archival encounter is therefore highly ambivalent. On the one hand, it is a source of emotion for Jablonka whose primary aim is to retrieve some traces of the existence of his grandparents – and here we are reminded of Gregory Seigworth and Melisa Gregg's description of affect as 'synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*' (2010, p.2, original italics) – but on the other, one cannot ignore that the very

presence of Matès in this archive is the product of the bureaucratic gaze that sees Matès (and Idesa) as undesirable objects, and threats to French society.

Similarly, Jablonka also 'encounters' his grandmother:

> *Je la vois*, en proie aux premières contractions, soutenue par Matès à nouveau en civil, déclinant son identité a l'employé ; *j'ai sous les yeux* la page du registre d'entrée à la date du 29 avril 1940, photographiée aux Archives de l'Assistance publique en présence de mes parents. (p.185, my emphasis)

Here, a correlation between looking at the archival document and seeing his grandmother is established. In other words, at the same time as Jablonka looks at the intake registry of the Rothschild hospital, more than merely extrapolating a mental picture of his grandmother, the archive seems to become the site of an embodied encounter for Jablonka.

In the first example, flipping through the judicial archive, it seems as if Jablonka was able to find his grandfather, rather than a trace of him. One could certainly argue here that Jablonka falls into a fetishisation of the archive, whereby, as LaCapra explains, the archive becomes 'a literal substitute for the "reality" of the past which is "always already" lost for the historian' (1985, p.92). Or alternatively, that instead of recognising the 'ça-a-été' of the photograph, Jablonka momentarily entertains the illusion of the photograph being able to provide a direct access onto the past. The vivid image of his grandmother conjured up by the archive is akin to a sudden irruption of the past into the present that formulates a sense of 'cela est' as opposed to 'ça-a-été'. However, this moment of temporal suspension is short-lived as Jablonka eventually acknowledges that, as previously mentioned, despite his effort, his investigation did not yield any result (2013, p.369); or when he writes that 'À la vérité, il n'y a pas de vérité, pas de lieu, pas de fait, seulement un no man's land entre la vie et la non-vie, une absence soudaine, une

volatilisation dont on ne prend conscience qu'une fois la paix revenue : *Matès Jablonka n'est plus là*' (p.360, my emphasis). I suggest that it is in this realisation of the 'ça-a-été', of the irretrievable loss and the unbridgeable temporal distance that separates him from the dead Others that lies the affective power of the archival fragments he recovers from the bureaucratic archive. Commenting on Alexander Gardner's 1865 photograph of Lewis Payne taken shortly before his execution, Barthes argues that this photograph reveals time itself as a kind of *punctum*: 'Ce nouveau punctum, qui n'est plus de forme, mais d'intensité, c'est le Temps, c'est l'emphase déchirante du noème ("ça-a-éte"), sa représentation pure' (1980, p.148). Here, we in fact witness the same dialectic of distance and proximity that we observed in Binet's text: Jablonka's attempt at fostering a sense of affective proximity with his grandparents is eventually what reveals their irreducible otherness and a distance that cannot be compensated. Such a dialectical movement of distance and proximity is conveyed by Jablonka towards the end of the text with the image of poppies in a field:

> On remarque les coquelicots qui affleurent çà et là, au milieu des épis autochtones, à cause des taches qu'ils composent, mais on ne prend jamais la peine de les respirer ou de les cueillir ; et, de fait, ils n'exhalent aucun parfum, leurs pétales sont informes et un souffle suffit à les faire tomber. En guise de connaissance, je n'ai pas cueilli grand-chose. (2013, p.371)

Beyond a memorial symbol, Jablonka uses here the image of the poppies, whose petals fall off upon the slightest touch, as a metaphor for this complex interplay of distance and proximity, but also for the vulnerability of the Other.

What is at play here in these two examples is an affective and tactile encounter with the archive. It is precisely in those terms that historian Arlette Farge describes her archival experience. Farge's focus is also the judicial archive, albeit that of the eighteenth-century, and she is aware, as is Jablonka, of the violence that underlies judicial archives.

Indeed, the very presence of the people they investigate in such an archive is the result of violence. She describes the archive as 'trace brutes de vies qui ne demandaient aucunement à se raconter ainsi, et qui y sont obligées, parce qu'un jour confrontées aux réalités de la police et de la répression' (1989, p.12). The judicial archive contains some details of their existence, but it is also a record of their persecution. Nonetheless, for Farge, those traces are a source of 'plaisir physique' (p.89). Yet, the moments when the historian is caught up in the affective power of the archive remain brief and illusory, for, ultimately, the past cannot be brought back to life. Indeed, as Farge indicates, 'Le réel a beau sembler être là, visible et préhensible, il ne dit en fait rien d'autre que lui-même et c'est naïveté de croire qu'il est ici rendu à son essence' (p.19). In the examples discussed previously, if the archive appeared to foster the possibility of an affective encounter between Jablonka and his grandparents, it acts in fact, above all, as a reminder of the alterity of the dead Others. The archive can in fact only be the site of a one-sided textual encounter. We are thus reminded of Derrida's description of the archive:

> La structure de l'archive est *spectrale*. Elle l'est *a priori* : ni présente ni absente 'en chair et en os', ni visible ni invisible, trace renvoyant toujours à un autre dont le regard ne saurait être croisé, pas plus que, grâce à la possibilité d'une visière, celui du père de Hamlet. (1995, p.132, original italics)

While for Farge the archive can only refer back to itself, what is also at play in the archive, and what Derrida highlights in the above quote, is an asymmetrical relationship to the dead Others. This asymmetry is the same as that to be found in Levinas's philosophy of alterity, the Levinasian Other being conceptualised as exceeding understanding and pointing to the impossibility of totalisation (1990, p.46).

I have thus far demonstrated that, by subverting historiographical discourse, Jablonka is able to lay bare the complex mechanism of the archive, thereby reconfiguring it as a complex site where absence and presence, violence and affect entangle. By asserting

the affective power of the archive, that runs contrary to its inherent violence, the archive appears able to create and rework memories. Rather than considering the archive only as a source that anchors the discourse into the real and provides validation, the archive becomes a way to foreground the alterity of the dead Others, who do not reciprocate the historian's gaze and resist totalisation.

3.3.3 The City, the Everyday, and the Archive

In this final section of my analysis of *Histoire des grands-parents*, I demonstrate how the city becomes an archival space. More specifically, I suggest that, as a consequence of the violence of the bureaucratic archive that prevents the formation of an affective connection to the past, Jablonka turns to the Parisian topography, which becomes an archive, not in the conventional sense of the term, but rather as what Ann Cvetkovich has called a 'repository of feelings and emotions' (2003, p.7).

According to Michael Sheringham, 'to think of a city as an archive is to think in terms of dynamic process, restless motion, multiple chronologies and levels of meaning' (2016, p.519). Unlike the often-used metaphor of the archive as storehouse, from which fragments of the past could be retrieved at will, the city as a form of archive emphasises processes of erasure, rewriting and juxtaposition. Furthermore, to view the city as archive is also to acknowledge its palimpsestic nature.[91] There is a rich tradition of association between the exploration of urban space and problematics of memory, from Baudelaire's *flâneur* to Walter Benjamin. However, as will be shown, it is the work of Georges Perec, and especially *La vie mode d'emploi* (1978), which is a key influence for Jablonka. As Sheringham notes in *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (2006),

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[91] See Silverman (2013, pp.111-113) for an analysis of the urban layering of traces in Paris in Modiano's *Dora Bruder*.

this tradition is also closely linked to the work of thinkers – such as Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau – on the notion of the everyday.

Two cities occupy a central place in *Histoire des grands-parents*: Parczew and Paris. Even though he was born and has always lived in Paris, Jablonka (and his father) are 'liés affectivement, viscéralement' to the town of Parczew in Poland, the birthplace of Idesa and Matès (2013, p.13). Before his first-ever visit to Parczew, Jablonka associated Parczew with lush greenery, the same green of Chagall paintings (p.14). However, the town he visits is far from the one he had imagined. What he finds instead is a 'bourgade de province comme on en trouve des milliers partout dans le monde, avec sa rue principale, sa supérette, ses boutiques de cadeaux hideux ou de vêtements déjà démodés, ses bâtiments administratifs, ses antennes paraboliques, ses ménagères qui font la causette sur le trottoir' (p.29). Annelise Schulte Nordholt detects in the works of Perec, Modiano, and Raczymov 'un mouvement paradoxal : de l'absence d'un univers disparu à la présence des lieux comme ancrages de la postmémoire' (2008, p.245). As Schulte Nordholt demonstrates, faced with the impossibility of recovering a lost universe – in the cases of Raczymov and Perec, this is pre-war Jewish Poland, and the Mediterranean Orient for Modiano (whose father was an Italian Jew born in Alexandria, Egypt) – they turn to places they are familiar with – the Belleville of the 1950s for Raczymov, the rue Vilin for Perec, the Place de l' Étoile and the boulevard Ornano, among others, for Modiano – which help them articulate their postmemorial positions. This is a paradox that Jablonka also experiences with the failure of his trip to Parczew where he had gone in search of a lost place of origin and his conceptualisation of the urban Parisian landscape (the passage d'Eupatoria in particular) as a powerful postmemorial space. While Jablonka thought he could bridge the distance to a past he has not experienced by travelling to the birthplace of his grandparents, his trip only results in the temporal remove from that past being more acutely felt, no return to a Jewish life before the war being possible. What Jablonka

experiences instead is thus '[the]condition of exile from the space of identity, this diasporic experience, [that] is characteristic of postmemory' (Hirsch, 1996, p.662).

Furthermore, as I mention above, when travelling to Parczew, Jablonka can only observe the erasure of the existence of a Jewish community. This erasure is reflected in the change of street names, the formerly 'rue des Juifs' is now the 'rue Neuve' (2013, p.28). Some traces still remain, however. While the synagogue has been turned into a second-hand clothing store, one can still notice the tablet shaped windows. Most of the passers-by would be oblivious to those subtle traces; however for Jablonka, the Jewish buildings are now entirely new hybrids: 'synagogue-friperie', 'cimetière-parc' (p.49). Rather than erasing the history of these buildings and designating them by their new functions, Jablonka, by making up these new compound nouns, points to the coexistence of these two dimensions, and the violence that underlies it. Here the traces of Jewish pre-war life only appear, paradoxically, through their disappearance. Once again here, one can draw a parallel between Jablonka's experience of the urban landscape and that of *Dora Bruder*'s narrator who notes the interplay between absence and presence within the urban fabric of Paris: 'On se dit qu'au moins les lieux gardent une légère empreinte des personnes qui les ont habités. Empreinte : marque *en creux* ou *en relief*. Pour Ernest et Cécile Bruder, pour Dora, je dirai : en creux. J'ai ressenti une impression d'absence et de vide, chaque fois que je me suis trouvé dans un endroit où ils avaient vécu' (1997, p.29, my emphasis).

According to de Certeau, 'les lieux sont des histoires fragmentaires et repliées, des passés volés à la lisibilité par autrui, des temps empilés qui peuvent se déplier mais qui sont là plutôt comme des récits en attente et restent à l'état de rébus' (1990, p.163.) De Certeau's conceptualisation resonates with Jablonka's own interactions with the town of Parczew. In order to unfold the multiplicity of meanings a place holds and be able to perceive the palimpsestic nature of the city, a specific mode of attention is required, one

attuned to the coexistence of past and present and to the otherness of the past. Andreas Huyssen, who develops a model of the urban palimpsest, comments, in a similar vein to de Certeau, on the complex temporality of the city: 'an urban imaginary in its temporal reach may well put different things in one place: memories of what there was before, imagined alternatives to what there is' (2003, p.7). In what follows, I take Huyssen's line of argument further and argue that Jablonka's exploration of the Parisian urban landscape generates an imaginary record of affects.

Unlike Parczew, that Jablonka visits as a tourist, Paris is the city where Jablonka works and lives. Despite his familiarity with the Parisian environment, after having located the various places where his grandparents, his father and aunt lived, his vision of the landscape is profoundly changed as a consequence. As Jablonka discovers, Idesa, after a police visit on 16th July 1942, fled the place she was staying with her two children in the rue Désirée in the 20th arrondissement and found refuge in a dental practice on the other side of Paris. Unsure of exactly which itinerary she took from her home to the dentist's, Jablonka walks in Paris, exploring different itineraries. After this episode, he begins to see his daily life and the Parisian landscape in a different light.

> Cette fuite éperdue d'Idesa avec mon père et ma tante, j'y pense parfois en empruntant la ligne 2, tandis que les stations défilent comme autant de jalons dans leur vie : Ménilmontant, c'est là qu'il faut descendre pour aller rue du Pressoir ou passage d'Eupatoria ; Couronnes, pour remonter la rue du même nom où Matès échoue, sans visa ni passeport, en août 1937 ; Colonel Fabien, héros de la Résistance communiste, aujourd'hui siège du PCF ; Stalingrad, que cette victoire est longue à venir ; Barbès, où le même colonel Fabien abat un aspirant de marine allemand le 21 août 1941, deux mois après l'invasion de l'Union soviétique.

> Mais si le quartier est infesté de policiers, Idesa préfère peut-être, avant de prendre le métro, marcher l'air de rien, marcher dans les rues au hasard, vers nulle part… (2013, p.240)

Here, each stop's name is associated with both the wider history and the more intimate history of his grandparents. In addition to being a spatial marker, each stop also becomes a temporal marker, of both personal and wider history, hence disrupting the difference between the personal and the collective.[92] As he retraces Idesa's footsteps, Jablonka speculates as to how she felt. His speculations, of course, cannot be corroborated by the bureaucratic archive that Jablonka has explored so far. As we have seen, in this archive, Idesa and Matès are dehumanised; the idea of them being affective beings is alien to and denied by the violence of the archive. Acknowledging the importance of this absent archive, Anne Gilliland and Michelle Caswell (2016) put forward the concepts of 'impossible archival imaginaries' and 'imagined records'. They explain,

> [w]hat we are calling *impossible archival imaginaries* and the affect associated with the *imagined records* produced within those imaginaries, offer important affective counterbalances and sometimes resistance to dominant legal, bureaucratic, historical and forensic notions of evidence that so often fall short in explaining the capacity of records and archives to motivate, inspire, anger and traumatize (pp.55-56, original italics)

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[92] Jablonka's method of retracing the geographical itinerary of his grandmother in Paris is reminiscent of the approach adopted by Amel and Omar, two of the protagonists of Leïla Sebbar's novel *La Seine était rouge* (1999), who, in 1996, retrace the footsteps of the Algerians who took part in a peaceful demonstration on 17th October 1961, and which ended in bloody repression by the French police ('the bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history' according to Jim House and Neil MacMaster (2006, p.1)). In both Jablonka's and Sebbar's texts, it is the interconnectedness of the Parisian topography and memory that is emphasised.

Jablonka's postmemorial response to the challenge posed by the post-Holocaust archive is the elaboration of an imagined record of everyday life and affect that crystallises in Jablonka's proposition of a 'Passage d'Eupatoria, mode d'emploi' (2013, p.246). Consulting the census figures pre and post war from the archives of the City of Paris to find the names of the inhabitants of the small alley, Jablonka then tries to contact them or their relatives. Drawing on information found in the archive as well as testimonies, he presents the results of this research over twenty pages (pp.246-265), in a form inspired by Georges Perec's *La vie mode d'emploi.*[93] Divided into sections entitled 'Passage d'Eupatoria: les abords' or 'Passage d'Eupatoria: les escaliers et les intérieurs', '17 Passage d'Eupatoria, deuxième étage : Mme Erpst', etc., Jablonka proposes a partial reconstitution of the small passage in 1942-1943.[94] However, this narrative does not

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[93] This strategy has also been used by Ruth Zylberman in her documentary, *Les enfants du 209 rue Saint-Maur Paris X^e^* (2017). Zylberman has subsequently written a book that expands on her documentary, *209 rue Saint-Maur Paris X^e^, Autobiographie d'un immeuble* (2020). The film follows Zylberman as she tries to retrace the lives of the residents, mostly Jewish people who had immigrated from Germany and Eastern Europe, of a single apartment building located 209 rue Saint Maur in the 10th arrondissement of Paris during the Occupation. In a moving scene, Henri Osman, an orphan of the Shoah who lived with his parents at 209 when he was a toddler, returns to the building. During his visit, he asks Zylberman a series of questions 'Est-ce qu'il est possible alors que mes parents aient touché cette poignée [de la porte cochère] ?', 'Et est-ce qu'il est possible que mes parents aient marché ici [sur les pavés de la cour] ?'. In this scene, the doorknob and the flagstones become affective conduits of memory. When Henry is touching the doorknob or walking the flagstones, it is as if he could almost touch a past he does not remember, longing for an intimate connection with his parents. However, as his question 'Vous savez, vous, si mes parents ont été heureux ici ?' that remains unanswered shows, such knowledge remains out of reach. The apartment building is transformed, in Zylberman's film, into an archive of its own, as a repository of affect and feelings.

[94] In *La vie mode d'emploi*, each chapter describes a room of a fictional Parisian apartment block, along with the lives of past and present inhabitants. Among the multitude of occupants that populate the apartment building of *La vie mode d'emploi*, a significant number are fascinated by and perform acts of collecting, classifying, cataloguing. There is, for instance, Serge Valène the painter, whose ambition is to paint the whole apartment building, in other words, to gather all the fragments that are the occupants' lives into one totalising picture. There is also Percival Bartlebooth, who dedicates his life to a self-erasing archival project: after travelling across the world to paint 500 marine watercolours, he has them glued onto boards and turned into puzzles by Gaspard Winckler, puzzles that he then spends the rest of his life solving. Once a puzzle is solved, the watercolour is detached from the board and dissolved to be turned back into a blank page at the very same place where it had been painted. Like Valène's project, which in the end only barely results in a sketch, Bartlebooth's enterprise is bound to fail. Given his compulsive desire to return to the origin, Bartlebooth seems to embody the archive fever. It is revealing that Jablonka draws inspiration from such a novel that reflects and reworks archival discourse, one

present only the result of Jablonka's archival research, for instance, in the passage dedicated to the '17 passage d'Eupatoria, troisième étage' (pp.255-260) where Matès and Idesa lived; Jablonka also includes family anecdotes, such as the following:

> Sarah tapote le ventre de Marcel [le père d'Ivan Jablonka] : '*Vuss iz duss ? A barl, duss ?*' ('Qu'est-ce que c'est ? Un bidon ?', littéralement une petite poire). Le garçonnet répond : '*Yo, a barelè !* ('Oui, un petit bidon !'). Il ne parle que yiddish. L'appelle-t-on plutôt Moyshelè ou Marsl ? (p.260, original italics)

Further, the narrative of the Passage d'Eupatoria, unlike the bureaucratic archive, makes visible the absence of those who have been erased from the archive by the violence of history, with the inclusion of the acknowledgment, under the heading 'passage d'Eupatoria: les autres locataires', of 'Tous ceux dont je n'ai pas connaissance, français et étrangers, juifs ou non, les bons, les méchants, les drôles, les renfermés, les pessimistes, les familles nombreuses, les ouvriers, les enfants, tous ces fantômes' (p.265). The absence of those that have been left out of archival records is here presented *en relief* rather than *en creux*. Jablonka can thus be said to take up Perec's definition of writing in the conclusion of *Espèces d'espaces* (1974) as 'essayer méticuleusement de retenir quelque chose, de faire survivre quelque chose : arracher quelques bribes précises au vide qui se creuse, laisser, quelque part, un sillon, une trace, une marque ou quelques signes' (p.123). Directly confronted by the instability of space – there are no physical remains of the building his grandparents lived in – it is eventually through his writing that Jablonka is able to make absence visible, even as the account he produces of the Passage d'Eupatoria remains, inevitably and necessarily, fragmentary.

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that Marco Codebò defines as an 'archival novel' that 'criticises the archive through the archive itself' (2010, p.136).

3.3.4 Conclusion

If the question as to whether Jablonka's text manages to reconcile history and literature remains up for debate, where it is successful, I have argued, is in its elaboration of a poetics of the archive, which, conscious of the violence that has contaminated the archival documents, underlines the need to find ways of resisting this very violence. Jablonka's text's challenge to historiographical conventions can thus be read as an implicit critique of the totalising nature of traditional historiography that is unable to preserve the alterity of the Other. Jablonka's text simultaneously foregrounds the limits of the archive, but also its affective power.

3.4 Chapter Conclusion

Both Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* and Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents* reflect the increasing significance given to the archive by the postmemory generation. While the archive is first envisaged as a potential way to access a distant past they did not experience, what Rubinstein and Jablonka find instead in the archive are traces of genocidal violence that necessarily taint any knowledge they can gain of their family members' lives. Confronted with the violent power dynamics of the archive, Rubinstein and Jablonka come up with innovative devices and strategies to reveal and resist this violence. If archival documents cannot be separated from the conditions of their very existence – they emerged out of modernity's dehumanising and bureaucratic nature – they also prove to be the only material evidence that attest to their grandparents' existence. It is only when foregrounding this ambivalence that lies in the archive, in other words, by unearthing the dialectic between absence and presence, visibility and

invisibility, erasure and inscription, that they are able to reconfigure the archival fragments they recover in their postmemorial narratives. As we have seen throughout, Rubinstein and Jablonka tackle the ambivalence of the archive in radically different ways: Rubinstein by producing a fragmentary narrative which makes visible the silences of the archive and using a poetic mode that allows her to reinvest the archival documents; Jablonka by unsettling the boundaries between literature and history, knowledge and affect, and presenting the urban topography of Paris as a repository of affects.

Chapter 4

Spectral Justice in Lydie Salvayre's *La Compagnie des spectres* (1997) and Jean-Claude Grumberg's *Rêver peut-être* (1998)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the significance of a spectral imaginary in contemporary French writing about the Holocaust, and more specifically in the novel *La Compagnie des spectres* (hereafter *La Compagnie*) (1997) (together with its companion text *Quelques conseils utiles aux élèves huissiers* (hereafter *Quelques conseils*)) by Lydie Salvayre and *Rêver peut-être* (1998), a play by Jean-Claude Grumberg. Throughout this thesis, I have often noted the spectral dimension of the texts that constitute my corpus, for instance when describing Marie Bardet's *À la droite du père* as an echo chamber in which the voices of different spectres come together, or when noting the spectral nature of her narrator as well as that of Anouar Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* in Chapter 2. Similarly, part of my argument in Chapter 3 – that postmemorial texts such as Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* and Jablonka's *Histoire des grandsparents que je n'ai pas eus*, function as what Felman, following de Certeau, calls 'a tombeau for the dead' (2014, p.64) – certainly brings to mind spectrality. However, unlike the previously analysed texts, in which, though important, the spectral presence remained in the background, the two texts I will be analysing in this chapter both feature spectres prominently, to the extent that it is the spectres that drive the action. The spectres come to disturb the daily lives of the protagonists, initiating change, especially regarding the protagonists' attitude to the past and memory, but also, and this will be the focus of this chapter, provoking a reckoning with justice. I argue that, through the figure

of the spectre, these texts elaborate a postmemorial mode of justice that reconfigures the binary between distance and proximity: they stress the urgency of justice with regards to distant others, who are not presently here. Such a spectral mode of justice, it will be shown, exceeds a legal framework that is deemed profoundly dehumanising, and requires a reshaping of our perception so that both the absent presence of spectres and the insidious traces of the concentrationary universe that persist in post-war everyday life can be detected.

While the idea upon which postmemory is based – that of a past that returns to disrupt the present of those of later generations, akin to the dead who return to haunt the living – certainly has an undeniable haunting quality, this quality remains latent in Marianne Hirsch's elaboration of her theoretical model. Likewise, how the work of postmemory might contribute to a rethinking of justice has not been substantially explored by Hirsch, although she does stress the reparative potential of postmemory (2012, p.24).[95] In recent years however, growing attention has been paid to the question of what our responsibility is towards events that seem distant to us and in which one's participation is indirect. Through his concept of the 'implicated subject' Rothberg (2019) explores our entanglements or 'implication' in past histories of violence ('diachronic implication') and events that are still unfolding ('synchronic implication'). For Rothberg, confronting one's implication in historical and contemporary structures of violence may

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[95] Hirsch's belief in the reparative potential of postmemory is controversial. While I have for instance argued in the previous chapter that Jablonka and Rubinstein engage in a process of postmemorial working through, they both stress the impossibility of repairing the past, and recognise that their desire to do so cannot be fulfilled. As opposed to Hirsch, Patrice Loraux has argued that, in the wake of the irreparable nature of the loss of the Holocaust, the long-held belief in the idea of reparation and, more specifically, in the reparative power of justice must now be challenged. He writes: '[c]e qui m'étonne, c'est qu'on ait tant de mal à pouvoir penser sans qu'il y ait un peu de réparation, et l'Idée n'est pas autre chose que le pouvoir réparateur lui-même. Nous avons été habitués à l'idée que l'Idée nommait un mode de réalisation et que, par conséquent (à moins d'être ouvert à tout autre chose qu'un accomplissement), l'Humanité devait avoir lieu, la Justice devait avoir lieu en réalisant leur Idée. Or la Justice est peut-être entamée dans son Idée et l'Humanité entamée dans la sienne' (2001, p.53).

help foster 'long-distance solidarity' that is 'premised on difference rather than logics of sameness and identification' (p.12) and must be thought of as integral to the pursuit of justice (p.2). The question of implication, it thus appears, can only be addressed if the binary between distance and proximity is dissolved. If Rothberg's category of the implicated subject, which complicates the binary between victims and perpetrators, is helpful for thinking about our collective sense of responsibility with regards to past histories of violence that are temporally distant, I argue that it needs to be accompanied by a more sustained reflection as to how the recognition of one's implication occurs. I contend that, in order to confront one's implication in legacies of historical violence, one must first acknowledge the present absence of spectres that haunt our contemporary reality. This is in keeping with Stephen Frosh's argument that the 'utility of haunting [is to] ensure that we cannot remain at ease with ourselves. It is a *reminder* as much as it is a *remainder*; what is left over and uncared for insists on justice and reparation' (2013, p.166, original italics).

If ghosts, phantoms and spectres have long constituted an abiding presence in French literature, which certainly testifies to the long-standing fascination writers and artists have had for ghostly manifestations,[96] in the last few decades, spectrality has noticeably received further critical attention – a phenomenon that some scholars have referred to as a 'spectral turn' (Luckhurst, 2002; Blanco and Peeren, 2013). This recent and seemingly ever-expanding field of spectrality studies is often said to have emerged in the 1990s with the publication in 1993 of Derrida's influential *Spectres de Marx*. However, as Colin Davis (2007) has shown, equally important in bringing to light a problematisation of spectrality was the earlier work conducted by the Hungarian émigré psychoanalysts

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[96] As David Evans and Kate Griffiths point out, the figure of the ghost (taken either on a literal, metaphorical or metatextual level) has traversed different genres, media, schools and eras, including medieval poetry, Renaissance theatre, Classicism, Romanticism as well as twentieth and twenty-first century literature, theory, photography and film (2009, pp.2-3).

Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in *Le verbier de l'homme aux loups* (1976), whose preface is written by Derrida, and then subsequently in *L'écorce et le noyau* (1978), a collection of essays written between 1959 and 1975 and published after Abraham's death. [97] In the following discussion, I draw out the link between spectrality and justice, a link made explicit by Derrida in *Spectres de Marx* (1993). I argue that the spectre, as conceptualised by Derrida, performs a double movement of injunction and disjunction, opening up the present to the haunting of the past and to the 'à-venir', in other words, to the possibility of justice and of a different future.

Derrida makes clear early on in *Spectres de Marx* that the spectre is first and foremost a question of justice when he writes: 'Si je m'apprête à parler longuement de fantômes, d'héritage et de générations, de générations de fantômes, c'est-à-dire de certains *autres* qui ne sont pas présents, ni présentement vivants, ni à nous ni en nous ni hors de nous, c'est au nom de la *justice*' (1993, p.15, original italics). With Bernard Stiegler in 'Spectographies', Derrida goes even further, arguing that any attempt at thinking justice must include a consideration for what exceeds a binary logic of absence and presence, namely the spectral:

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[97] In their account of the workings of the unconscious, Abraham and Torok develop the interlinked notions of the crypt and the phantom. The crypt designates a psychic region where the subject, as a result of shame or a traumatic loss, has repressed and buried an unspeakable event they have experienced – in psychoanalytic terms, instead of *introjecting* the loss object as part of the work of mourning, it is *incorporated* within the self. The type of repression involved in the creation of a crypt, where a part of one's experience is erected as a secret tomb, is, as Nicholas Rand has pointed out, fundamentally different from the Freudian type of repression: 'Because the aim is to conceal an actual occurrence even from oneself, rather than restrain desires, [Abraham and Torok] draw a sharp distinction between the dynamic nature of the repression described by Freud and their conception of a non-dynamic preservative repression' (1990, p.59). Importantly, the crypt has intergenerational consequences, and it is those consequences that Abraham and Torok tackle with their concept of the phantom. For Abraham and Torok then, 'ce ne sont pas les trépassés qui viennent hanter, mais les lacunes laissées en nous par les secrets des autres' (2009, p.427). The phantom's most important characteristic is perhaps the fact that it is intergenerational: it can be transmitted from one subject's unconscious to that of another, most often within the same family.

> Il n'y a pas de respect, donc pas de justice possible, sans ce rapport de fidélité ou de promesse, en quelque sorte, à ce qui n'est plus vivant ou n'est pas encore vivant, à ce qui n'est pas simplement présent. Il n'y aurait pas d'exigence de justice, ni de responsabilité sans ce serment spectral. (1996, p.139)

In establishing a clear link between justice and spectrality, Derrida points here to the existence of a spectral injunction tied to notions of inheritance and radical otherness. By emphasising a spectral promise of justice, Derrida makes clear that justice does not concern only the living and deconstructs the binary between presence and absence, distance and proximity. The spectral promise of justice can be said specifically to address the memory of 'the anonymous' in Benjamin's phrase – those who have fallen victims to totalitarianism (Benjamin, 1999, p.248) but also more generally those who have been oppressed, or forgotten by the totalising discourse of history, as well as those who have not been born yet. Derrida talks of:

> les fantômes de ceux qui ne sont pas encore nés ou qui sont déjà morts, victimes ou non des guerres, des violences politiques ou autres, des exterminations nationalistes, racistes, colonialistes, sexistes ou autres, des oppressions de l'impérialisme capitaliste ou de toutes les formes du totalitarisme. (1993, p.16)

The spectral injunction is a response to the call of the dead Other as well as of the Other to come. For Colin Davis, this ethical injunction is at the centre of Derrida's concept of 'hantologie'. In Davis's words:

> Hauntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. Attending to the ghost is an ethical injunction insofar as it occupies the place of the Levinasian Other: a wholly irrecuperable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available

> intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving. (2007, p.9)

This ethical injunction is inseparable from a correlated movement of disjunction brought about by the spectre and epitomised by Hamlet's observation that 'the time is out of joint' – a phrase which Derrida repeatedly comes back to in *Spectres de Marx*. It is after talking with the spectre of his father, who revealed that he was poisoned by Claudius, that Hamlet becomes aware of the disjointedness of time. For Hamlet, if time is out of joint, it is because of the enduring presence of injustice that disrupts a harmonious order of the world. If here disjuncture appears in a negative light, as a sign that testifies to the presence of injustice, it does not necessarily mean that disjuncture is all negative, for disjuncture is also the very condition of justice: the realisation that the present is out of joint with itself opens up a time and space for justice. Derrida further explains:

> ne faut-il pas cette disjointure, ce désajustement du 'ça va mal' pour que le bien s'annonce, ou du moins le juste ? La disjointure, n'est-ce pas la possibilité même de l'autre ? Comment distinguer entre deux désajustements, entre la disjointure de l'injuste et celle qui ouvre la dissymétrie infinie du rapport à l'autre, c'est-à-dire le lieu pour la justice ? (1993, p.48).

In addition to underlining the intertwining of injustice and justice, disjuncture, Derrida argues, also holds the possibility of welcoming the irreducible, asymmetric Other. The irreducible alterity of the spectre is illustrated in *Spectres de Marx* through what Derrida calls 'l'effet de visière', the idea that, even as we can feel the spectral gaze upon us, we are unable to return it (p.26). The underlying idea behind the notion of 'effet de visière' – that even as we are aware of the proximity of the spectre, the distance to it can never be nullified – echoes my previous discussions that highlighted the complex relationship between distance and proximity at play in our relationship to the past and the Other.

While for Derrida, the spectre is thus a figure of irreducible alterity, for Abraham and Torok, the phantom is a deceiving figure, whose secrets can be brought to light thanks to psychoanalysis. According to Davis, this difference is the reason why Derrida does not engage critically with Abraham and Torok's theory in *Spectres de Marx* despite the fact that he was aware of their work (2007, p.88). As Davis explains,

> Derrida […] wants to allow the ghost to return, both as a legacy from the past which has yet to be settled and as the promise of a future which remains to be conceived. Abraham and Torok's ghosts are liars to be denounced. Derrida's ghosts cannot lie because they cannot tell the truth, but they may be the mediators of new forms of knowledge. To put it schematically, deconstruction is about learning to live with ghosts, psychoanalysis is about learning to live without them. (pp.88-89)

As I will show, Salvayre's and Grumberg's texts, in their problematisation of justice, are both concerned with the question of how to do justice to the otherness of the spectre and highlight the challenge, but also the necessity, of learning to live with ghosts as a condition of justice. They therefore endorse a decidedly Derridean perspective on spectrality, as opposed to the psychoanalytic approach adopted by Abraham and Torok. In their firm rejection of the exorcism of ghosts, they also oppose both conventional historiography (which, as we have seen with de Certeau in the previous chapter, 'calm[e] les morts qui hantent encore le présent' (1975, p.8)) and the law that condemns spectres to oblivion.

A final point that I want to raise in relation to Derrida's conceptualisation of justice, and that will prove important later on in my reading of Salvayre's and Grumber's texts, is the question of the temporality of justice. The disjunction emphasised by Derrida as what simultaneously results from the presence of injustice but also as what enables the very possibility of justice is a temporal movement that opens up linear time to what is 'to

come'. This 'to come' is a peculiar temporality that should not be equated with the future: while the future could be a repetition of the present, the 'à-venir' exceeds any sort of calculation, is unpredictable, undecidable. Unlike the law that is calculable and predictable, justice is always to come. Derrida, in a documentary released in 2002, further defines this temporality in those terms:

> Le futur c'est ce qui, demain, tout à l'heure, au siècle prochain, deviendra, *ce qui est* deviendra. Il y a le futur des programmes, le futur prévisible, 'predictable, programmes, prescriptions' de ce qui en quelque sorte peut être 'scheduled' donc prévu. Et l'avenir, je préfère l'appeler l'à-venir**,** 'to come', parce que ça se réfère à quelqu'un qui vient et qui, venant, arrivant n'est pas prévisible. Pour moi c'est ça le vrai futur. Ce qui est imprédictible. Et l'autre qui vient sans que je puisse même l'attendre, d'une certaine manière, sans que je puisse m'y attendre. Donc s'il y a du vrai futur au-delà du futur, c'est l'à-venir en tant qu'il est la venue de l'autre… Là où je ne peux pas le prévoir. (*Derrida*, 2002, 00:00:22-00:01:34)

Derrida's notion of the 'à-venir', characterised by its unpredictability, thus strongly resonates with the notion of the possible as conceptualised by Bergson and Deleuze and that I discussed in Chapter 1.

If the figure of the spectre emerged as a theoretically fruitful concept in the work of Derrida, it had already been reconfigured in French Holocaust literature when a powerful spectral imaginary took form as a reaction to the concentrationary universe, especially in the work of Mauthausen-Gusen survivor and poet Jean Cayrol. Cayrol's take on the figure of Lazarus (the man brought back to life by Jesus in the Bible), is inseparable from the notion of the concentrationary universe, a term which was first conceptualised by David Rousset, a returning political deportee from the concentration camp of Buchenwald. As mentioned in this thesis's introduction, in Rousset's analysis, the concentrationary universe and its dehumanising logic, far from being confined to the

Nazi concentration camp system, has infiltrated post-war everyday life, with notably the relation between horror and everyday life having been normalised in post-war culture. Jutta Fortin and Jean-Bernard Vray suggest that such an imaginary belongs to a first generation of writers, 'revenants' themselves from the camps, whose influence can still be felt today in contemporary literary works (2012, pp.7-8). Silverman similarly highlights Cayrol's enduring influence on contemporary writers, including Modiano, W. G. Sebald and Jorge Semprun, arguing that Lazarean art 'provides an early blueprint for what we now call "spectral" literature, in which ghosts of the past haunt the landscape of the present' (2019, p.13). In my analysis of Salvayre's and Grumberg's texts, I will show that their denunciation of dehumanising practices can be understood as a continuation, to a certain extent, of Rousset's and Cayrol's project of alerting us to the enduring presence of the concentrationary in post-war everyday life.

Although Derrida and Cayrol never directly engaged with one another's work, I argue that productive connections between Derrida's hauntology and Cayrol's 'concentrationary art' or 'Lazarean art' can be drawn.[98] Silverman (2013) has already noted the similarity between Derrida's thought and that of Cayrol with regards to their respective conceptualisations of the trace and the figure of Lazarus,[99] but I want to underline here how both Derrida's hauntology and Cayrol's concentrationary art are engaged in questions of memory and justice.

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98 Although Cayrol often use the terms 'concentrationary art' and 'Lazarean art' interchangeably, Patrick ffrench has helpfully outlined their different genealogies in his article 'Lazarean Writing in Post-war France' (2019, pp.65-92).

99 Silverman argues that 'Derrida's version of the trace as a way of undoing the self, subverting the metaphysics of presence, and incorporating the anxiety of its own disappearance is remarkably close to Cayrol's vision […] of the Lazarean hero estranged from his 'self' because permanently haunted by his own death' (2013, p.148). Given the closeness of the notions of trace and spectre, which both participate in the same dialectical interplay of presence and absence, 'spectre' can arguably be substituted for 'trace' in Silverman's comment. In *De quoi demain…* (2001), Derrida himself acknowledges an overlap between the notions of trace and spectre: 'si loin que je remonte, la thématique du fantôme ou plutôt du revenant traverse […] la plupart de mes textes, elle n'est pas loin de se confondre avec celle de la trace même…' (pp.256-257).

As I will show, implicit in Silverman's definition of Cayrol's concentrationary art as 'a reminder and warning against forgetting, and art that can draw together the concentrationary reality and the post-war world of renewed normality to show their interconnections' (2019, p.5) are the same ideas of injunction and disjunction which, as I showed in my discussion of Derrida's *Spectres de Marx*, characterise the spectral presence. While the similarity of the ideas of concentrationary art as a warning against forgetting and the spectral injunction of memory discussed earlier easily comes into view, the idea of disjunction in relation to the concentrationary requires further clarification. As Silverman further explains,

> [c]oncentrationary art is […] premised on the idea of the present as haunted by a past that has not passed, the present as hiding another reality that is present but not visible, the notion of 'doubling' that captures this uncanny co-presence of the normal and the strange in the post-war world, the breakdown of the separation between the concentrationary universe and the normal world (and, consequently, a redefinition of the idea of the concentrationary itself), and the protean nature of the concentrationary universe that is present in the most unlikely of places. (p.5)

I wish to suggest here that the idea of the concentrationary as haunting post-war everyday life,[100] which Silverman describes as enacting a doubling effect, resonates with Derrida's idea of disjunction as being both what testifies to the presence of injustice and as what is

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100 The haunting of post-war everyday life by the concentrationary is famously brought to the fore by the final words of the voice-over commentary of Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* (1955): 'Il y a nous qui regardons sincèrement ces ruines comme si le vieux monstre concentrationnaire était mort sous les décombres, qui feignons de reprendre espoir devant cette image qui s'éloigne, comme si on guérissait de la peste concentrationnaire, nous qui feignons de croire que tout cela est d'un seul temps et d'un seul pays, et qui ne pensons pas à regarder autour de nous et qui n'entendons pas qu'on crie sans fin'.

also susceptible of opening up the possibility of justice. If the dislocated state of the world is the result of the spectral presence of the concentrationary, I argue that becoming aware of the hidden presence of the monstrous double haunting contemporary life – of the wound, opened up by the camps, that has not closed but instead festered – is to become aware of the disjointedness of time, a realisation that paradoxically allows for the possibility of justice. To identify and make visible the insidious presence of the concentrationary beneath the varnish of normality, so that we may resist it, is the task of concentrationary art. In this chapter, I will further argue that key to the normalisation of the concentrationary in post-war everyday life is the indifference towards the spectres – the very same spectres that have been produced by the extreme violence of the twentieth century. As I shall demonstrate, the protagonists of *La Compagnie* and *Rêver peut-être* challenge the hegemony of a system based on the omnipotence of the law, which values the mechanical, the predictable and in which spectres have no place, not even the right to exist, and that perpetuates the concentrationary logic. Ultimately, I will show that they resist a dehumanising logic through both their refusal to expel the spectral presence and their reassertion of their own humanity. While it is through solidarity and spontaneous action that Rose and Louisiane in *La Compagnie* affirm their own humanity, it is through framing the act of dreaming as quintessentially human that Gérard in *Rêver peut-être* opposes the oblivion forced upon spectres.

4.2 Lydie Salvayre's *La Compagnie des spectres* (1997): Towards Spectral Justice

Born of Spanish Republican refugees in 1948 in the South of France, Lydie Salvayre has, since the publication of her first novel *La Déclaration* in 1990, authored over twenty novels, including in 2014, *Pas Pleurer*, for which she was awarded the Prix Goncourt.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Salvayre worked as a psychiatrist, specialising in paediatric psychiatry, and she wrote *La Compagnie* and *Quelques conseils*, both published in 1997, when she was still a practising child psychiatrist.

In Salvayre's novel *La Compagnie*, set in the 1990s, two women, a mother and her daughter – named Rose Mélie and Louisiane – live in a flat in poor living conditions in Créteil. Their daily routine is interrupted by the visit of a bailiff, Maître Échinard, who comes to make an inventory and estimate the value of their belongings with a view to seizing them as the two women are in rent arrears. Rose and Louisiane are haunted by numerous spectres, and especially the spectre of Jean, Rose's brother and Louisiane's uncle, who was brutally killed by two members of the Milice during the Occupation. Because of her traumatic experience during the war, Rose remains trapped in the past. As such, she is convinced that the bailiff has been sent by Joseph Darnand, the leader of the infamous Milice during the Second World War. While *La Compagnie* focuses on Rose and Louisiane, *Quelques conseils* consists of a lecture given by Maître Échinard to aspiring bailiffs and provides an insight into his beliefs and his understanding of what constitutes justice.

In her critical overview of Salvayre's novels, Marie-Pascale Huglo argues that the recurrent target of Salvayre's texts is:

> the violence that is sure of its rightness and its reason, blind to the flaws and the 'fuzziness' that governs it. The struggle that is taken up repeatedly from one novel to the next comes down to a struggle for life: on the one hand, the destructive, alienating forces that seek to control, reduce, contain or destroy the *élan vital*, and on the other hand, the creative, excessive, bursting, uncontrollable forces of life. (2006, p.39, original italics)

In my analysis of *La Compagnie* and *Quelques conseils,* I will demonstrate that the object of Salvayre's critique is more specifically the oppressive element of the law, which, unaware of its violence, threatens the spectres with oblivion and the living with dehumanisation. *La Compagnie* sees the conflict between the law's destructive force, embodied by the bailiff whose mechanical application of the law and bureaucratic language denies the singularity of the (dead) Other, and Rose and Louisiane, who live with spectres and use an exuberant language that transgresses norms and conventions. Focusing first on the character of the bailiff, I will examine, with reference to Derrida's discussion of the problematic relationship between justice and the law in *Force de loi* (his other key text with *Spectres de Marx* about justice), his flawed understanding of justice. Turning my attention to Rose, who claims to be able to see spectres and to speak on behalf of the dead, I will demonstrate that her temporal experience, described by her daughter as 'constamment déphasée' (1997a, p.30) can be elucidated through the link drawn by Jean Améry between resentment and a dislocated temporality. In particular, I will argue that Rose's choice to live amongst spectres can, at least to a certain extent, be understood as a political gesture that seeks, by highlighting a sense of proximity to the spectres, to counter the distance that condemns the spectres to oblivion. Rose also represents, as I shall demonstrate, the difficulty of living with ghosts: her attention being solely devoted to the dead and the past, she neglects the living. While Louisiane, Rose's daughter, first appears caught up in a traumatic past she did not experience and that threatens to swallow her whole, it is eventually only at the very end of the novel, through a moment of solidarity between the two women that opens up time, that spectral justice is performed.

4.2.1 Échinard or the Violence of the Law

It is significant that Échinard is a 'huissier de justice': although his job title implies that he is an agent of justice, he is in reality an agent of the law sanctioned by the State. While in *La Compagnie*, Échinard speaks only to introduce himself to the two women and ask

them a few questions about their furniture and belongings for his estimation, in *Quelques conseils*, Échinard's voice is the only one that can be heard as he delivers a lecture – what he calls 'une véritable leçon de philosophie' (1997b, p.44) – to aspiring bailiffs. Lecturing these students, Échinard states: 'nous avons la conviction que toute attaque contre nous ne vise rien moins que de faire vaciller la Justice. Or nous sommes la Justice, n'hésitons pas à l'affirmer, et qui nous discrédite, discrédite la Justice' (p.7). Conveying his view that the authority bestowed upon him by the State makes him a representative of justice, and that anyone challenging him thereby undermines justice, Échinard appears to conflate justice with the law. We can note here his use of the first-person plural pronoun 'nous', which can be read as Échinard seeking to create a feeling of kinship with the aspiring bailiffs, or alternatively as a 'royal we', thus emphasising his megalomania and tyrannical nature. While he pictures himself as embodying justice, he will be shown to be instead a representative of the violence of the law. Throughout his lecture, he mobilises a violent language when describing his method, notably comparing himself to a 'chasseur embusqué' (p.10), or describing how, once the winter ban on evictions ends, 'dès le 16 mars à l'aube, les huissiers passent à l'attaque !' (p.23). Recounting some of his professional experiences, he also appears to harbour a profound disdain for those whose house he visits, calling them 'ignares' (p.17), 'pour la plupart analphabètes' (p.11), and so on. He also appears racist, at some point feeling the need to add 'des familles, d'origine étrangère, je le précise' (p.18), and misogynistic, shaming Louisiane for her clothing, describing her as 'cette traînée, comme on en trouve fréquemment dans nos cités, cheveux rouges ongles noirs et jupette affriolante' (pp.30-31). Further, when he tells of his visit to Rose and Louisiane's place, he complains of their attitudes, and especially of Rose's, who in *La Compagnie*, accuses him of working for Joseph Darnand and the Maréchal Pétain, whom she calls 'Maréchal Putain'. Importantly, his outrage is directed towards the fact that Rose insults Pétain, who remains for Échinard one of the 'grandes

figures de notre histoire' (p.28), 'celui qui dignement gouverna notre pays de 1940 à 1944' (p.28); while Darnand is for him merely a 'personnage discutable' (p.27). To describe Darnand, the head of the Milice – the brutal police force created in 1943, emblematic for Jean-Pierre Azéma of the totalitarian nature of the Vichy regime (1990, p.100) – as a 'questionable character' is a violent euphemism.

While the violence of his language is visible in his choice of vocabulary, Échinard also embodies what Derrida has described in *Force de loi* as the performative violence of the law.[101] Drawing on Walter Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* (2007 [1921]), in which Benjamin argues that violence is inherent to and inseparable from the law,[102] Derrida explores the complex relationship between justice and the law. For Benjamin, the law is problematic because of its self-validatory nature: at the moment of foundation, which takes place outside legality, law cannot be said to be either legal or illegal; since it cannot justify itself, it resorts to violence to legitimise itself. This performative violence that founds the law is what Derrida, in a reference to Montaigne, terms the 'fondement mystique de l'autorité' (1994, pp.32-33). By emphasising the mystical nature of the authority of law, Derrida reminds us that it is through an act of faith that the law gains its authority and is established as such: 'L'autorité des lois ne repose que sur le crédit qu'on leur fait. On y croit, c'est là leur seul fondement' (p.30). Hence the paradoxical nature of the law: although its very authority does not derive from justice but from an

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[101] Published in French in 1994, *Force de loi* is made up of two lectures that Derrida gave in English, the first one during a conference entitled 'Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice' in October 1989 at the Cardozo School of Law in New York and the second one in April 1990 at the University of California, Los Angeles.

[102] Benjamin writes for instance that '[a]ll violence as a means is either lawmaking or law-preserving. If it lays claim to neither of these predicates, it forfeits all validity. It follows, however, that all violence as a means, even in the most favourable case, is implicated in the problematic nature of law itself' (2007, p.287).

opaque act of faith and a posterior act of performative violence that takes place in language, it is often conflated with justice.[103]

The method Échinard recommends to the student bailiffs illustrates the fact that he relies on the performative violence of the law. After having entered the house of the person they have come to evict, he recommends first reading out loud what he calls the '*commandement de déguerpir*' (1997b, p.10, original italics), of which he provides an example:

> J'ai, Maître Echinard, huissier de justice, fait commandement à monsieur Marcel Turpin d'avoir immédiatement et sans délai à quitter et vider de corps, de biens et de tous occupants de leur chef, les lieux qu'ils occupent, pour le requérant en disposer ainsi qu'il avisera et cetera (p.11).[104]

This excessively convoluted bureaucratic language (which Échinard nonetheless describes as clear and easy to understand), though obscure, conveys a strong sense of authority. By encouraging the legal text to be read out loud in an authoritative manner, thus suppressing any room for contestation, Échinard can be seen to exploit the performative nature of the law. In addition, after delivering this command, Échinard strongly recommends the students to remain neutral, to 'laisser geindre les affligés' (p.12) as he puts it. However, he adds,

> Si leur émotion vous paraît anormalement longue – les pauvres, vous le remarquerez, sont souvent d'une émotivité excessive, ce qui explique par ailleurs

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[103] Here it is important to underline that even though Derrida appears to draw a distinction between law and justice, his purpose is not to alienate the law but rather to emphasise the entangled nature of law and justice, which cannot be thought independently from one another.

[104] It is also interesting to note that the name Marcel Turpin may not be an insignificant detail, for it could be a reference to the homonymous Resistance member Marcel Turpin who was shot in 1944. If the name Marcel Turpin is indeed a reference to a Resistance member, then this passage, in which Échinard evicts the spectre of a Resistance member, bears strong resonances with a scene, that I will analyse later on, from *Rêver peut-être* when a bailiff, named Pierre Laval, orders that spectres should be evicted.

> leur piètre performance sur le plan de la promotion sociale – si l'émotion se prolonge, disais-je, invoquez d'une voix ferme l'intervention pure et simple de la force publique. Cela les calmera. (pp.12-13)

Here, legal language becomes a rhetorical weapon, meant to instil intimidation and fear. In this respect, Échinard is reminiscent, to a certain extent, of the figure of the 'Pitre' that Rousset explores in his work *Le pitre ne rit pas* (1948) – a montage of archival documents which exposes the absurdity and violence of the Nazi bureaucratic language.[105] Of the 'pitre' Rousset notably writes: 'Il croit. Il croit en lui. Il croit en ce qu'il dit. Il croit en toutes les superstitions qui agissent en lui et le font se mouvoir. Il les habite. Son absurdité croît ainsi dans la démesure' (p.11). Rousset never gives a proper name to his 'pitre', but we learn that 'il est viscères; administration et bureaucratie viscérales' (p.10). Although supposedly a 'pitre', someone who makes people laugh, as the title of Rousset's text indicates, this clown does not laugh. Rousset also warns the reader:

> rire le [le pitre] niera dans sa réalité. C'est pourquoi vous ne rirez pas comme chaque jour. Dans l'ordinaire, par l'éclat du rire vous admettez le clown, vous lui accordez une sympathie de reconnaissance. Aujourd'hui, par le rire, vous refuserez l'acteur. Vous le chasserez du monde. (p.10)

Rousset underlines here the necessity of shaking people out of their complacency and to resist the normalisation of the bureaucratic administration of the concentrationary

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[105] Rousset provides the following explanation for his selection of documents: 'Les textes réunis sont des actes officiels: décrets, rapports, correspondance politique entre fonctionnaires, lettres anonymes, etc. Tous participent, par quelque côté, à l'action et aux responsabilités du pouvoir. J'ai écarté systématiquement, comme n'ayant pas la même signification, les écrits des journalistes et des idéologues. C'est qu'un régime se juge d'abord par les actes de son pouvoir, une société par le comportement réel, quotidien, de ses membres' (1948, p.254).

system.[106] As will soon become apparent, Échinard perpetuates the same dehumanising logic than Rousset's pitre.

Contrasting the violent dimension of the law Échinard embodies with justice as conceptualised by Derrida in *Force de loi* is here helpful to navigate the tension between law and justice that is key to Salvayre's text. Acknowledging the complexity of the very concept of justice, Derrida, instead of providing a rigid definition, chooses to discuss three aporias. An aporia is a point of undecidability and a key term in Derridean thought, which is characterised by a will to problematise established binaries – in relation to justice, those relate to the tensions between the general and the singular, decision and indecision, the calculable and incalculable. The first aporia – 'l'epokhé de la règle' – alludes to the tension between the singular and the universal: while the law aspires to be universal and to apply to everyone indiscriminately, justice, Derrida argues, needs to take into account the singularity of the Other (1994, pp.50-52). The second aporia – 'la hantise de l'indécidable' – tackles another paradox concerning justice: the ultimate undecidability of any decision. Derrida defines the undecidable as follows:

> L'indécidable n'est pas seulement l'oscillation ou la tension entre deux décisions. L'indécidable est l'expérience de ce qui, étranger, hétérogène à l'ordre du calculable et de la règle, *doit* cependant – c'est de devoir qu'il faut parler – se livrer à la décision impossible en tenant compte du droit et de la règle. (p.53, original italics)

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[106] One finds in Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1964 [1936]) a similar idea being developed, as Arendt writes of Eichmann: 'Despite all the efforts of the prosecution, everybody could see that this man was not a "monster", but it was difficult indeed not to suspect that he was a *clown*. And since this suspicion would have been fatal to the whole enterprise, and was also rather hard to sustain, in view of the sufferings he and his like had caused so many millions of people, his worst clowneries were hardly noticed' (p.54, my italics).

Here, there is no opposition between decision and undecidability, but instead a relation of interdependence. The undecidable is not synonymous with indecision, hesitation or oscillation; it is what remains heterogeneous to calculation and what, for Derrida, makes justice possible. Every decision is haunted by undecidability, by a moment of suspension that opens up the calculable to the incalculable and to the possibility of justice. If a decision is made only following predetermined rules, then this decision could be legal but would not be truly just because, as Derrida demonstrates, this would mean that this decision would only be calculation (p.53). For Derrida, a judge must reinvent the law each time (pp.50-51). In his exploration of undecidability, Derrida speaks of 'fantomaticité' which 'déconstruit de l'intérieur toute assurance de présence, toute certitude ou toute prétendue critériologie nous assurant de la justice d'une décision, en vérité de l'évènement même d'une décision' (p.54). In the same way that the violence of the founding moment of law must continue to haunt law, each decision must remain haunted by the undecidable. This is a radically different attitude from that of Échinard who, as we have seen, represses the violent origin of the law and even replicates it. Ironically, Échinard even wishes the law would be more exhaustive, as he laments the supposed leniency of the law, for instance arguing that the fact that pets and work equipment cannot be seized or the winter ban on tenant evictions are legal loopholes (1997b, p.17; pp.20-22).

Échinard fails to consider the two aporias discussed so far – 'l'epokhé de la règle' and 'la hantise de l'indécidable' – identified by Derrida. Instead, his vision of justice appears deeply flawed, blindly asserting the omnipotence of the law. Unlike Derrida, who stresses the need to be attentive to the Other and to what is absent, Échinard advocates a sort of blindness, urging the student bailiffs to deny the singularity and vulnerability of the Other: 'Ne faites entre les expulsés aucune discrimination. Vieux ou jeunes, blancs ou noirs, fermes ou infirmes, valides ou non, exécutez la loi é-qui-ta-ble-ment' (p.35).

That he does so in the name of justice constitutes a further act of violence, and I argue that he in fact epitomises what is, for Emmanuel Levinas, the element of violence within the State:

> Pour moi, l'élément négatif, l'élément de violence dans l'Etat, dans la hiérarchie, apparait même lorsque la hiérarchie fonctionne parfaitement, lorsque tout le monde se plie aux idées universelles. Il y a des cruautés qui sont terribles, parce qu'elles proviennent précisément de la nécessité de l'Ordre raisonnable. Il y a, si vous voulez, des larmes qu'un fonctionnaire ne peut pas voir : les larmes d'Autrui. (1999, p.97)

This becomes clear in *La Compagnie*: because of Rose and Louisiane's extreme precariousness, Échinard holds their future in his hands. This is why the daughter is so inclined to seem affable and appeal to his mercy, in order, perhaps, to postpone their eviction. However, indifference seems to be the only feeling with which he is endowed, and Louisiane describes him as having a 'cœur blindé comme une porte de couvent' (1997b, p.145). In other words, he does not see the nudity and vulnerability of the face of the Other, which Levinas describes in those terms:

> La peau du visage est celle qui reste la plus nue, la plus dénuée. La plus nue, bien que d'une nudité décente. La plus dénuée aussi : il y a dans le visage une pauvreté essentielle ; la preuve en est qu'on essaie de masquer cette pauvreté en se donnant des poses, une contenance. Le visage est exposé, menacé, comme nous invitant à un acte de violence. En même temps, le visage est ce qui nous interdit de tuer. (1984, p.80)

While Louisiane spares no effort trying to appeal to Échinard's humanity, this is to no avail as the bailiff remains as impassive and silent as a statue. He does not see the faces of the two women, in the Levinasian sense of the term: he ignores the vulnerability of

the Other that calls for one's protection. In *La Compagnie*, he is only heard speaking when asking for more information about Rose and Louisiane's items for his estimation. He is only interested in the potential financial value of their belongings and ignores their emotional value. This aspect of Échinard's job is in keeping with the emphasis he puts on calculation and appears fitting for this character who reduces justice to mere calculation. Once again here, this aspect of Échinard echoes Rousset's description of the clown as 'féroce dans l'action. Et imperturbable. Administrativement imperturbable' (1948, p.65).

Finally, the third aporia discussed by Derrida – 'l'urgence qui barre l'horizon au savoir' – underlines the urgency of justice, as justice cannot wait for us to obtain full knowledge (something impossible itself) that would enable us to reduce decision to mere rational calculation. According to Derrida, every decision is haunted by the undecidable, and coming to a decision requires a certain madness, a moment of madness (1994, p.58), or alternatively a leap of faith. Because Échinard only ever mechanically enforces the law without questioning it, he is unable to grasp the complexity of justice. While he presents himself as the epitome of rationality, we shall see in what follows that Salvayre's text deconstructs the binary opposition between sanity and insanity, effectively taking up the link drawn by Derrida between justice and madness.

4.2.2 Rose or the Spectral Injunction to Denounce Injustice

While Échinard may be considered a representative of the law, and especially of its violent, repressive element, he turns out to be anything but an agent of justice. In fact, for Rose, he is someone who perpetuates injustice, participating in a system characterised by a logic of dehumanisation. As soon as Échinard enters her home, Rose asks him 'C'est Darnand qui t'envoie?' (1997a, p.11), convinced that he works for Joseph Darnand, the

head of the French Milice during the Occupation. In addition to being convinced that the bailiff is a member of the Milice, she also, at one point, mistakes him for a police detective (p.62) and a judge (p.119) – all figures of law and authority. She further suspects the bailiff to have come to not only seize her belongings but also her memories and the spectres that haunt her (p.174). In what follows, I focus on the link between Rose's connection to spectres and her disjointed temporal experience. Eventually, I show that Rose, who is both described as a madwoman and as someone with clairvoyant insight, disrupts the dichotomy between madness and sanity, appearing instead as an unconventional scholar capable of talking with ghosts.

The visit of the bailiff is constantly interrupted by Rose's violent linguistic outbursts and accusatory remarks directed at the bailiff, but also more broadly, at the institution he represents. Her speech also enacts the intrusion of the past into the present, for she inhabits a different temporal moment, and seems to be constantly reliving the past, recounting the brutal murder of her brother Jean by two members of the Milice (the Juel brothers) in 1943. For her, this traumatic event is still very much present, negating any temporal distance, as she states: 'C'était le 13 mars 1943. C'était hier.' (p.22). When recounting the events leading up to the murder of her brother, Rose's narrative, reported by Louisiane through indirect speech, alternates between the past and present tenses, heightening the sense of temporal disruption. While her daughter Louisiane tries to interrupt her narrative, Rose's speech flows relentlessly as she is described as 'emportée' to the past (p.19). A repeated pattern across the text sees Rose, through Louisiane, start her narrative with the past tense before switching to the present:

> Ta grand-mère avait le sentiment que ce que cherchaient par-dessus tout les jumeaux Juel, c'était à faire peur. Et les jumeaux Juel s'y employaient. Et ils y excellaient. Car les jumeaux Juel savent à peine lire et écrire mais ils savent faire peur, dit maman. (pp.67-69)

Trying to explain to the bailiff her mother's condition, Louisiane tells the bailiff: 'Ma mère […] ne distingue pas le passé du présent, le jour de la nuit, ni les vivants des morts. […] Pour être plus précise, dis-je, ma mère vit simultanément dans le passé et le présent et leurs chaos respectifs en quelque sorte s'enchevêtrent jusqu'à d'apocalyptiques dimensions' (pp.80-81). Unlike in *HHbH*, in which, as I have shown, the various slippages between past and present always represented fleeting moments, the narrator being fully aware of the unbridgeable distance that separates him from the past (and the Other), Rose appears to conflate past and present.

While Rose's temporal confusion can arguably be interpreted as part of a post-traumatic stress disorder, whose symptoms include 'the persistence of intense, distressing, and fearfully avoided reactions to reminders of the triggering event, alteration of mood and cognition, a pervasive sense of imminent threat, disturbed sleep, and hypervigilance' (Shalev et al., 2017, p.2459), I would like to suggest here a parallel between Rose's temporal experience and that of the Austrian Jewish survivor Jean Améry as he describes it in his essay 'Resentments' (1980 [1966]). In this essay, Améry draws a link between his feelings of resentment and the dislocation of linear temporality he experiences. Améry, who was arrested and tortured by the Gestapo in Belgium in 1943 before being deported to Auschwitz, rejects the ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation encouraged by post-war German society, for they require the victims to forget the atrocities they have been victims of (p.72); he thus defends his right to resent Germany twenty years after his release from Auschwitz. He writes:

> [Resentment] nails every one of us onto the cross of his ruined past. Absurdly, it demands that the irreversible be turned around, that the event be undone. Resentment blocks the exit to the genuine human dimension, the future. I know that the time-sense of the person trapped in resentment is twisted around, dis-

> ordered, if you wish, for it desires two impossible things: regression into the past and nullification of what happened (p.68).

The temporality of resentment that Améry sketches out is one that seeks extreme proximity to the past. Importantly, I argue that it should be understood as a political gesture against the distance imposed by society that condemns the spectres to oblivion. While at the beginning of the essay, Améry merely describes himself as 'travell[ing] through a thriving land' (p.62), towards the end of the essay he emphasises the growing feeling of uneasiness he experiences ('I travel through the thriving land, and I feel less and less comfortable as I do' (p.80)) as he witnesses Germany celebrating 'a most grandiose resurrection of might' (p.66). Améry's uneasiness stems from the discrepancy between the post-war peaceful landscape where the successful recovery of the country is celebrated and the awareness that the crimes of the past have yet to be addressed. For Améry, this temporal perception could revert to a more 'normal' one (i.e. a linear one) provided justice was served: 'I want at least the vile satisfaction of knowing that my enemy is behind bars. Thereupon I would fancy that the contradiction of my madly twisted time-sense were resolved' (p.69). This proves impossible however, since Germany is still unwilling to confront its past:

> The piles of corpses that lie between them [my torturers] and me cannot be removed in the process of internalization, so it seems to me, but, on the contrary, through actualization, or, more strongly stated, by actively settling the unresolved conflict in the field of historical practice. (p.69)

The process of actualisation that Améry advocates is one that would bring visibility to the spectres produced by Nazi Germany, and would therefore resist the collective

amnesia that characterised German society in the 1960s.[107] In her analysis of Améry's essay, Catherine Coquio astutely suggests that 'l'homme du ressentiment se livre en otage éthique d'une exigence politique : en restant "prisonnier de la *vérité morale* du conflit", il rappelle à l'éthique le criminel "impliqué dans la vérité de son forfait"' (2015, p.381, original italics). It is possible to apply Coquio's analysis to Rose as well, who then becomes, like Améry, a captive of the moral truth of the concentrationary universe, attempting to bring forth a reckoning with the past.

I now return to Rose, whom Louisiane describes as 'constamment déphasée, constamment décentrée et littéralement anachronique', explaining that '[i]l suffit d'un détail pour qu'elle se voie projetée dans cette année 43 de sinistre mémoire dont elle ne remonte ensuite qu'avec mille difficultés' (1997a, p.30). Particularly noteworthy are what triggers her movement of back and forth between past and present, namely failures of institutional justice or her witnessing injustice in the present that makes her confuse past and present:

> Tous ses souvenirs, monsieur, s'enchevêtrèrent dans sa tête, mêlés aux mélancolies anciennes, à l'écho multiplié des hurlements de Jean et aux derniers raffinements de l'horreur qu'elle découvrait à la télé, du côté de l'Afrique. (p.161)

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[107] It is noteworthy that in the 1977 preface to the reissue of *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities* (which includes 'Resentments') Améry seems to explicitly subscribe to the idea of the concentrationary as a threat that has now been unleashed onto the world. He writes: '[s]ometimes, it seems as though Hitler has gained a posthumous triumph' (vi) and goes on to mention 'Czechoslovakia 1968, Chile, the forced evacuation of Pnom-Penh, the psychiatric wards of the USSRS, the murder squads in Brazil and Argentina, the self-unmasking of the Third World states that call themselves "socialist", Ethiopia, Uganda' (vi). He also explains (in an echo to Cayrol in *Lazare parmi nous* (1950) who writes that '[l]es plaies peuvent disparaître mais les cicatrices restent ; elles sont fragiles ; elles peuvent s'ouvrir à nouveau' (1950, pp.11-12)): 'What happened, happened. But *that* it happened cannot be so easily accepted. I rebel: against my past, against history, and against a present that places the incomprehensible in the cold storage of history and thus falsifies it in a revolting way. Nothing has healed, and what perhaps was already on the point of healing in 1964 is bursting open again as an infected wound' (xi, original italics).

Just like Améry then, who implies that his twisted perception of time stems from his realisation that the atrocities of the past have yet to be addressed, Rose's chaotic temporal movements are the result of the enduring presence of injustice that continues to produce spectres. Here, Rose further appears to be haunted not only by the spectre of her brother, but also by a multitude of other spectres, victims of atrocities beyond the Holocaust (she mentions crimes in Algeria, Egypt, and Rwanda). For Rose, these spectres share a common traumatic origin that can be located in the Vichy collaborationist past, but one could also argue that they are the spectres produced by the concentrationary logic of dehumanisation. She contends that,

> [Les spectres] vont où bon leur semble. Ils traversent à leur guise les murs et les frontières. (Le speaker annonce sur un ton neutre un nouveau crime en Algérie.) Aujourd'hui ils sont à Alger, comme le montre le reportage, demain ils seront en Égypte, ils vont là où la mort pue, et la mort pue en maints endroits de la planète, il faut bien le reconnaître. (Le speaker annonce la découverte d'un charnier au Rwanda.) Tu te demandes qui ils sont et d'où ils viennent, ma chérie. Les spectres sont les morts assassinés par Putain et les siens qui ressuscitent et viennent nous regarder vivre. (p.150)

The explanation provided by Rose for the spectral presence is not some unfinished business the spectres may have, but rather relates to a certain kind of evil. This evil, I argue, is what Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* identifies as the crime that consists of 'depriv[ing] men of their human condition and leav[ing] them alive, [of] expel[ling] the living from humanity and the dead from memory of history' (2004 [1951], p.624). Now unleashed onto the world, this extreme violence that characterises the concentrationary universe is perpetuated, disseminated across the world, and condemns the spectres to wander. If Rose can indeed be considered, as I suggested, a moral captive of the concentrationary universe, her frenzied back and forth between past and present,

which highlights the absent presence and close proximity of the spectres that demand justice, represents an attempt at making visible the hidden presence of the concentrationary.

An example of the continuation of violence is provided by Rose for whom, in a moment of temporal confusion, the brutal members of the Milice responsible for her brother's murder in 1943 also appear responsible for the events of October 1961: 'les jumeaux Juel, s'alarmait-elle, ont poussé un Arabe dans la Seine, rien ne leur sert de leçon, c'est à désespérer' (1997a, p.164). Rose refers here to the massacre that occurred on 17th October 1961 in Paris, when a peaceful demonstration of Algerians was brutally repressed by the police, with approximately two hundred demonstrators killed, their bodies hurled into the Seine. This massacre was ordered by Maurice Papon, the then head of the Parisian police, and, as it was revealed in 1981, a police prefect during the Vichy regime, responsible for the deportations of more than 1,600 Jews in Gironde. Michael Rothberg's argument that 'a lasting multidirectional network connects the Nazi past to this episode of the Algerian War' (2009, p.26) certainly resonates, but here the multidirectionality underlined by Rothberg is specifically oriented towards a memory of complicity. Indeed, Papon and the impunity he enjoyed for many years, eventually being convicted of crimes against humanity only in 1998, represent for Rose French complicity that has not been properly addressed, thus preventing the spectres from being laid to rest as injustice continues to corrupt the world. While Louisiane suggests that her mother's mind makes somewhat ludicrous connections, the links she draws between the Holocaust and the October 1961 massacre (and by extension the colonial atrocities committed by France in Algeria) are shown to be anything but far-fetched.

Another figure who, like Papon, went unpunished for a long time, is René Bousquet, and as Louisiane explains, it is the discovery of the role he played during the Vichy regime that marked the start of her mother's obsession with the past. It is after

reading an article published in 1978 in *L'Express* in which Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, the head of the 'Commissariat général aux questions juives', declared that the official responsible for the Jewish deportations in 1943 was René Bousquet, the then general secretary of the Vichy regime police (1997a, p.156), that Rose decides to 'rétablir la justice de la justice dont nous avions, affirmait-elle, été spoliés puisque ceux-là qui étaient censés la rendre, se bouchaient, offusqués, les oreilles, et se voilaient, pudiquement, la face' (p.157). Rose is here referring to the fact that, although Bousquet was tried in 1949 for his participation in the Vichy regime, he was acquitted and was only given the minimal sentence of five years of 'dégradation nationale', a sentence which was lifted immediately after. His collaborationist past proved not to be an obstacle for his career as a successful banker as well as for his friendship with François Mitterrand. This proves intolerable for Rose who argues that:

> L'avenir, si nous ne châtions pas les monstres qui ont laissé derrière eux un pays ravagé par la honte et la mort, l'avenir nous châtiera et oncle Jean, ainsi que tous ceux qui comme lui moururent dans l'horreur, mourront une deuxième fois et n'en finiront pas de mourir. (p.158)

What is at stake here is her sense of responsibility toward the dead, which takes shape in her desire to address the injustice they have fallen victims. Rose is unable to ignore this spectral ethical injunction, leading her to burst in during a live television show in an attempt to expose the failure of justice (here understood as the institution of justice) to a wide audience. She delivers an impassioned speech:

> L'heure de la justice a sonné, s'écria-t-elle. (Tous les participants de l'émission semblaient tétanisés.) Puisque Putain a échappé par je ne sais quelles accointances aux foudres de la loi et reste scandaleusement impuni en dépit de ses crimes, je rendrai justice moi-même. (Tous les participants de l'émission soudés par la réprobation avaient à présent l'œil rivé sur le présentateur vedette.) Certains ont

> cru que l'on pouvait bâillonner la mémoire. Qu'ils se détrompent ! Cet attentat à la mémoire sera par moi réparé. Je clamerai les paralipomènes, dussé-je y laissé jusqu'à mon dernier souffle, et infligerai au coupable le châtiment qu'il faut. (pp.166-167)

Despite her efforts to make the spectral injunction heard and seen on television – the pinnacle of visibility – she is quickly silenced and sent to a lunatic asylum. Her attempt to denounce the failure and inadequacy of legal institutions to address the past proves unsuccessful.

The haunting presence of spectres due, according to Rose, to the enduring presence of injustice and the failure of institutional justice to hold accountable perpetrators and collaborationists, provokes the temporal disjunction that brings her at odds with official chronology. In this respect, she can be said to fully subscribe to Hamlet's statement that 'the time is out of joint'. It is more specifically, the spectral gaze that is the source of temporal chaos: as Rose puts it, '[l]es spectres viennent nous regarder vivre, et cela suffit à semer la pagaïe' (p.150). What Rose observes – that the living can feel the gaze of the spectre without being able to reciprocate it – is what Derrida has called the 'effet de visière' (1993, p.26), which, as mentioned earlier, denotes the asymmetrical nature of the relationship to the dead other. According to Rose,

> Il ne suffit pas d'ensevelir les morts assassinés pour annuler leur existence, […] car leurs âmes immortelles nous reviennent toujours sous une espèce ou sous une autre, elles prennent parfois la forme d'une rumeur que seuls quelques sujets, comme Sophocle ou moi, très avertis, savent entendre […]. (1997a, pp.150-151)

Here, Rose reasserts once again her belief spectres transcend the binary between distance and proximity, absence and presence. She also posits that the ability to detect the spectral presence is a rare ability bestowed only upon a few, including herself and Sophocles. The

reference to Sophocles, the author of *Antigone* – in which Antigone, having defiantly buried her brother Polynices in spite of Creon's orders, is sentenced to be buried alive in a cave where she eventually kills herself – encourages the reader to consider Rose as a modern Antigone. *La Compagnie* can then be read, to a certain extent, as a contemporary reworking of *Antigone*, the tension between law and justice at stake in Sophocles's play and represented by Creon and Antigone being transposed to the opposition between Échinard and Rose.

In addition to Sophocles, other points of reference for Rose (and Louisiane) include Seneca, Callimachus, and Plutarch. These references to scholars and the erudition of the two women also encourage the reader to see them as scholars, and Rose certainly considers herself as such. Nicknamed the 'Pythie de Créteil' (p.25) by Louisiane, Rose also appears as a sort of oracle, capable of seeing what otherwise remains invisible and inaccessible to other people. The question of whether a scholar can talk to ghosts is a question that is taken up by Derrida in *Spectres de Marx*. As Derrida notes, though critical, the task of speaking to the spectre appears incompatible with the status of a scholar. Indeed, what is usually expected of a scholar is the very opposite task of exorcising spectres. Writing as what Derrida calls 'un *scholar* traditionnel' (p.33, original italics), Diderot writes for instance in *L'Encyclopédie* under the entry 'fantôme':

> On a appliqué le mot de fantôme à toutes les idées fausses qui nous impriment de la frayeur, du respect, etc. qui nous tourmentent, et qui font le malheur de notre vie : c'est la mauvaise éducation qui produit ces fantômes, c'est l'expérience et la philosophie qui les dissipent. (1756, p.404)

This distrust for what exceeds the logic of presence is in stark contrast to Derrida's philosophy that posits the need to deconstruct and think beyond rigid dichotomies (1993, p.33), including that between absence and presence, distance and proximity. In contrast to the 'traditional scholar' who does not believe in the existence of ghosts, Rose, who,

with her 'yeux de folle' (1997a, p.43), is otherwise considered a madwoman by the other characters, then appears as a new kind of scholar. She certainly endorses this role and its didactic dimension, telling her daughter 'Je t'enseigne l'Histoire car bientôt je mourrai, les bouches des derniers survivants se rempliront de terre, et qui sera là pour te dire les paralipomènes du siècle qui s'achève ?' (p.44).

The text thus unsettles the binary between sanity and insanity, an aspect that has been explored by Susan Bainbrigge, who, drawing on Foucault's investigation of madness, argues that, 'if there is a madwoman in the text, indeed two madwomen, given Louisiane's own struggles, there may also be insight' (2017, p.12). In her analysis of Salvayre's text, Bainbrigge pertinently shows that the transgenerational transmission of trauma from mother to daughter goes hand in hand with a transmission of madness, the women's apparent insanity becoming 'a legitimate response to an apparently "insane" world' (p.16). Yet, it seems that the transgenerational mechanism of transmission encompasses another generation, with Jeanne, Louisiane's grandmother. That these women, all outcasts of society – because considered disturbed or mad – appear nonetheless more clairvoyant than most, implies an association with the tragic figure of Cassandra rather than with the Pythia and prompts us to reconsider the dichotomy between madness and sanity. In the case of Jeanne, it is after a traumatic event that she gained her ability to see what seems invisible to others. After witnessing a group of local men write a letter of denunciation in a café, Jeanne decides to travel to Vichy to confront Pétain and his policies. She is not allowed to meet Pétain and is instead interrogated and imprisoned for two days, while her house in Venerque (a village in southwestern France

near Toulouse) is raided by police.[108] As Rose recounts, this traumatic event produced a dramatic change within her mother Jeanne:

> Ainsi qu'elle [Jeanne] nous le confia beaucoup plus tard, cet enfermement, si éprouvant qu'il fût, s'avéra pour elle des plus féconds puisqu'il fit en deux jours l'ouvrage d'une année et même davantage. En ce court laps de temps, elle sentit, dit-elle, ses facultés d'intelligence se porter à un point d'incandescence extrême. Elle eut comme une illumination, mais une illumination noire, il faudrait dire un feu, qui éclaira violemment les choses tout en les obscurcissant et lui vit voir la Terre couverte d'un voile sale et sombre et effrayant. Ce fut, dit-elle, comme si le monde et son esprit lui-même s'étaient mis à l'envers, exhibant leur face interne, souillée, sanieuse et noire de sang (1997a, p.105)

Jeanne's painful experience, and, even more strikingly, the language she uses to describe it, echo, to a certain degree, Cayrol's following words in *Lazare parmi nous*: '[l]e message noir des camps n'est pas près de s'éteindre et quelques-uns en devront vivre le mensonge et déchiffrer la signature sans cesse illisible pour tous ceux qui ne veulent plus être bourreau ou victime' (1950, p.66). It is not spectres per se that Jeanne is able to see, but rather a spectral truth: the unvarnished reality of a world corrupted by a logic of dehumanisation. Unlike before, when she thought that the antisemitic tropes used by her neighbours were nothing more than rhetorical devices 'où le mot Juif ne désignait rien d'autre que des voleurs, des fainéants, des lâches, qu'ils fussent juifs, gitans ou venerquois' (1997a, p.63), Jeanne has now fully realised the power language holds and refuses to be compliant any longer. As a result, her resistance to Pétain's politics and ideology

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[108] Rose sees a direct parallel between her childhood home in Venerque being raided in 1943 with police officers unable to give a motif for their actions, merely saying that 'la loi c'est la loi, les ordres sont les ordres' (p.102), and the bailiff's visit in the present day, as she yells at the bailiff 'Vous pouvez toujours perquisitionner, vous ne trouverez rien ! Que dalle !' (p.104). The non-justification of the police officers is here another example that underlines the violence of the law.

expresses itself through her language: instead of showing reverence, she yells 'Heil Putain !' in the village (p.109) or calls Pétain 'PP', 'le vieillard cacochyme', 'le vioque inapte' (p.112), for instance. However, this only further heightens the prejudice of the other inhabitants towards her, with malicious rumours spreading and eventually, her resistance leads to the gruesome death of her son Jean in retaliation.

According to Louisiane, Rose's visionary sight likewise stems from

> son mépris des contingences joint à la capacité de son œil pinéal (j'aime à jouer des concepts de la science) à pénétrer les secrets, les vices cachés, tout l'en dessous des sentiments, à décrypter les plus subtils détails dissimulés sous le fatras des apparences ; et ce sont ces deux vertus conjuguées qui lui confèrent cette vision des choses débarrassées de leur fard, comme écrit le poète qui appelle un fard ce que d'aucuns appellent de la merde […]. (p.58)

This ability to see beyond appearances, to bring into proximity disparate elements, and to grasp the insanity of a violent world where conventions and norms produce an artificial sense of coherence is a female inheritance in Salvayre's text. Rose has also inherited Jeanne's rebellious language, explicitly drawing attention to this dimension as she explains: 'Le pouvoir consiste à fermer la gueule aux autres, dit maman, mais moiv v personne ne me fera taire, déclara-t-elle en élevant la voix, ni Putain ni Darnand ni personne, cria-t-elle' (p.20). The women's language – bursting, excessive, decadent – sharply contrasts with the bureaucratic language of the bailiff that was analysed earlier. While the bailiff's language proved brutal because of its negation of the Other, the apparent violence of the women's speech differs in kind. As I have argued, its violence is understood as resistance and conveys their outrage at the injustice they witness. This violence could also be understood as a form of catharsis as Huglo, exploring the recurrence of the theme of language across Salvayre's novel, argues. Thus, for Huglo,

> the mechanism of language established in Salvayre's novels allows the narrators to unleash the violence that inhabits them and to confront the feat that alienates them. […] each of Salvayre's works presents a singular voice whose utterance is a veritable catharsis, a purge that frees the speaker's violences, rancors, despairs, and transports. (2006, p.38)

In *La Compagnie,* the transgressive nature of Rose and Louisiane's language is reinforced by the simultaneous inclusion of sophisticated references to classic authors such as Seneca, Callimachus, Plutarch and curse words. According to Filo, a Spanish refugee who found shelter with the Mélie family during the Second World War, a curse word is a 'petite fusée propulsée dans les airs sans intention de blesser ni d'offenser mais dans le but de rompre avec la bêtise des conversations ordinaires et d'ouvrir des petites fissures dans les bulles casanières où la paresse d'ordinaire nous enclôt' (1997a, p.140). This definition that underlines the need to unsettle the passivity, even the complicity of ordinary language, is endorsed by Rose, who refuses to be silenced. Like the reader of Rousset's *Le pitre ne rit* pas, who, Coquio argues 'est invité à penser [le] non-rire grotesque [du Pitre] par l'humour' and to oppose to the 'pitre qui ne rit pas […] *un rire de refus* capable de "chasser l'acteur"' (2015, p.221, original italics), Rose and Louisiane oppose to the bureaucratic, violent language, a defiant language that represents a figurative attempt to chase the bailiff out of their home.

4.2.3 Louisiane or the Difficulty of Living with Ghosts

So far, I have explored the tension between Échinard and Rose, arguing that while Échinard embodies the dehumanising element of the law, Rose, on the other hand, points to the inadequacy of the law to bring justice to the spectres that haunt her. Turning to Louisiane, who finds herself in-between her mother and the bailiff, I shall now

demonstrate that it is through her character that the phenomenon of haunting, rather than leading to an entrapment into the past, as is the case for her mother, opens up time towards l'*à-venir*. As mentioned previously in the introduction of this chapter, the à-venir is radically different from an understanding of the future as mere repetition of the present and is instead synonymous with unpredictability.

Louisiane has internalised her mother's trauma as she herself recognises that her mother's spectres have become hers as well, as she says, 'ses spectres qui étaient étrangement devenus miens' (1997a, p.61). As Louisiane explains, her mother's traumatic memories have dominated her entire childhood:

> [J]e fus bercée dans mes jeunes années par les histoires de Darnand et Putain, et je peux dire qu'en somme Darnand et Putain furent mes loups, mes ogres et mes Barbe bleue, aussi angoissants, aussi caricaturaux et frappés de la même irréalité, et les récits de leurs turpitudes qu'enfant déjà je n'écoutais que d'une oreille, car je savais obscurément que je devais m'en prémunir, déposèrent dans le fond de ma mémoire des images d'effroi qui perdurent encore et se dressent la nuit, pour me poursuivre. (p.33)

Louisiane's experience resonates in more than one aspect with the postmemorial condition, for her experience corresponds to Hirsch's description of 'grow[ing] up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness', but also to the risk that it entails: the risk of 'having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors' (2012, p.5). Through the lens of postmemory, Huglo's comment that '[l]a narratrice, Louisiane, est une voix ventriloque qui porte la sienne (en tant que personnage) et celle de sa mère, Rose Mélie, qui porte à son tour celle de sa propre mère, qui porte celle des assassins de son fils...' (2003, p.42), illustrates the overwhelming imprint of the past on Louisiane, but also how

connections across time and space are drawn, in a way that is reminiscent of Bardet's text, which I argued in Chapter 2, functioned as an echo chamber.

Moreover, not only the spectres of her mother have become her own, but Louisiane herself appears inhabited by a spectre, that of her uncle Jean. Noting Louisiane's resemblance to her late brother Jean (1997a, p.136), Rose reveals that she named her daughter Louisiane in memory of her brother who had always wanted to travel to Louisiana and that she considers her daughter as Jean's 'enfant géographique' (p.137). Although Louisiane is not strictly speaking a 'replacement child' but rather a 'replacement sibling' since she appears to replace her late uncle rather than a dead sibling born before her, Gabriele Schwab's analysis of replacement children resonates with Louisiane's experience. According to Schwab,

> [o]ne cannot compete with a dead child, and yet one cannot avoid the ghostly competition handed down with parental fantasies. This tacit competition with a dead sibling is a classic syndrome of replacement children. It is also a prevalent form in which parental trauma is transmitted to the next generation and often to generations to come. (2010, p.121)

Louisiane cannot possibly undo Jean's death and the question that arises is whether Rose sees Louisiane for herself or through the spectre of her dead brother. That her mother seems to care more for the spectres than for her is a wound for Louisiane. In a poignant passage, she recounts her difficult childhood, brought up in an environment characterised by the overbearing presence of spectres leaving no space for Rose to take care of her basic physical and emotional needs:

> Maman, monsieur l'huissier, ne m'apercevait que par éclairs. Occupe-toi de moi, la suppliais-je. Mais elle, ailleurs, à des kilomètres de moi, dans des projets mondiaux, à des hauteurs sublimes. Maman, j'ai faim, maman, j'ai soif. Mais elle,

> à marcher sur les cimes, à militer pour la paix planétaire et pour l'amour interracial. […] Maman, j'ai mal au ventre, maman, je te dis que j'ai mal. Mais elle, en pourparlers avec les spectres. A disputer avec Putain. En tête à tête. Et sans fléchir. (1997a, p.173)

Louisiane thus repeatedly expresses her annoyance with her mother's obsession (see for instance p.42; p.44, p.177), asking her to take care of the living (p.150). Paradoxically, then, even if Rose claims a certain form of clairvoyance, her ability to sense the spectral gaze is at the expense of her ability to see her own daughter for who she is (as opposed to her brother's replacement) and to live in the present. Rose and Louisiane both experience the difficulty of living with ghosts, and in many respects, the haunting they experience resonates with Paul Ricœur's definition:

> La hantise est à la mémoire collective ce que l'hallucination est à la mémoire privée, une modalité pathologique de l'incrustation du passé au cœur du présent, laquelle fait pendant à l'innocente mémoire-habitude qui, elle aussi, habite le présent, mais pour 'l'agir', dit Bergson, non point pour le hanter, c'est-à-dire le tourmenter. (2000, p.65)

Ricœur views haunting as counterproductive in that the overpowering hold of past traumas – a result of a failed process of mourning – may, in his view, have a paralysing effect and thus prevent action from being undertaken in the present.[109] If I have argued that Rose's choice to live in immediate proximity with spectres can be understood as a

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[109] Retracing the evolution of Ricœur's ideas around haunting, Joan Stavo-Debauge (2012) demonstrates that from this pathological and decidedly negative vision of haunting in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Ricœur articulates a slightly more positive vision of haunting in *Parcours de la reconnaissance*. Though admittedly still viewed through a pathological prism in *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, 'la hantise est […] productive et son efficace n'est pas toujours 'pathologique' ou uniquement négative ; sa dimension pathique n'est pas toujours source d'apathie, elle enjoint à agir et organise l'agir' (p.138).

political gesture that opposes the distance imposed by society and aimed at expelling ghosts and preventing them from returning, it is also true that as a consequence, in the words of Améry, 'it blocks the exit to the genuine human dimension, the future' (1980, p.68). If Rose's perception of time became twisted as she realised the presence of injustice, which corresponds to the first type of disjunction identified by Derrida, it so far seems unclear whether it is able to open up a space and time for justice. In what follows, I will however show that *La Compagnie* points to the possibility of opening up a time for justice outside linearity, while carrying out the spectral injunction of justice and memory.

If Rose's temporal horizon seems limited to the past, for Louisiane, who has inherited her mother's trauma, the possibility of a future is likewise negated as she finds herself trapped, with nowhere to escape, between a traumatic past, a bleak present and no perspective for the future. As she explains,

> Il ne faut pas que je pense à demain, me dis-je. Si je pense à demain, je vois aussitôt un courant m'emporter vers quelque chose de noir et de froid que je ne peux me représenter, sinon sous la forme d'un gigantesque calamar, c'est absurde. Il ne faut pas que je pense au futur qui s'annonce féroce selon les plus optimistes prévisions. Il ne faut pas que je pense au passé, d'une grande hideur si j'en crois ma maman. A quoi puis-je penser au juste ? (1997a, pp.47-48).

Early on in the novel, she also compares her temporal experience to that of a passenger in a train moving backwards, with the feeling 'de [s]'enfoncer à toute vitesse vers un avenir qui n'est pas devant moi mais derrière et qu'en même temps le passé se jette sur moi comme pour me happer' (p.31). While Rose and Louisiane's entrapment in a traumatic past seems to prevent them from living in the present, condemning them to relive the past, thereby validating Ricœur's definition of haunting as a pathology, the ending of the novel points to a much more positive and hopeful dimension.

La Compagnie ends in a final liberating movement, with Rose and Louisiane joining forces to chase Échinard out of their home, effectively performing a reversal of order as they are the ones evicting the bailiff who had come to facilitate their eviction. This scene happens in the last two pages of the novel in an unexpected turn of events. For Louisiane, this moment represents a moment of madness :

> je ne sais quelle mouche me piqua, je me précipitai sur lui, sans hésiter, sans réfléchir, l'agrippai par le tissu de son vêtement et le poussai de toute ma force dans le dos tandis que maman le tirait vers l'avant, par la cravate. (p.187)

Returning to Derrida's discussion of justice's aporetic nature, and in particular to his argument that a moment of decision is always haunted by the undecidable (as one can never predict all the consequences of a decision) and that deciding thus entails a certain form of madness, enables us to grasp the link between justice and madness that Louisiane makes here. As Derrida further elaborates,

> L'instant de la décision est une folie, dit Kierkegaard. C'est vrai en particulier de l'instant de la décision *juste* qui doit aussi déchirer le temps et défier les dialectiques. C'est une folie. Une folie car une telle décision est à la fois sur-active *et* subie, elle garde quelque chose de passif, voire d'inconscient, comme si le décideur n'était libre qu'à se laisser affecter par sa propre décision et comme si celle-ci lui venait de l'autre. (1994, p.58, original italics)

Derrida's description of the instant of decision, which entails a disjointed temporality and a deconstruction of binaries, strongly resonates with the ending of Salvayre's text. The spontaneous moment of decision marks a radical shift, from a temporal horizon that was limited to the past, to an opening up of time. During this critical instant, rules determining calculability are suspended and Louisiane embraces the undecidable. The two women, along with the reader, do not know what will happen following their decision to evict

Échinard as the novel ends after the dramatic exit of the bailiff. In fact, the hypothetical consequences of their spontaneous decision do not form part of their reasoning, they are not interested in the future (in the sense of future presents, of mere repetition of the present) but rather, in 'l'à-venir' that is always unpredictable and undecidable. Unsettling once again the binary between sanity and insanity, Rose and Louisiane's final moment of 'madness' makes a cut, in a history that has been so far associated with injustice, and lays ground for 'la justice à-venir'. It triggers here another temporal disjunction, and it is perhaps therefore in this very moment of madness that spectral justice can be located. Although when Derrida mentions that it is as if 'le décideur n'était libre qu'à se laisser affecter par sa propre décision et comme si celle-ci lui venait de l'autre' (p.58), he does not mention spectres, I argue that Rose and Louisiane's liberating action is a response to the spectral injunction to justice. The open ending of the novel, which opens up the traumatic temporality of repetition to the à-venir, therefore inscribes itself into a much more positive and Derridean idea of haunting.

4.2.4 Conclusion

While justice cannot possibly hope to be reparative, due to the irreversible loss of the Holocaust, Rose and Louisiane's response to the spectral injunction to justice is to confront Échinard, who embodies the mechanical and dehumanising aspect of the law, and to reassert their own humanity. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that to be able to do something unpredictable is part of what it means to be human and that 'the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness [as political action], because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation' (1989 [1958], p.190). If in *La Compagnie*, Rose and Louisiane's spontaneous final action can ultimately be understood as a spontaneous act of resistance that also serves to reassert the women's humanity, we shall see that in *Rêver peut-être*, another

answer to the question of what it means to be human is not spontaneous action but the faculty of dreaming. Importantly, we have also seen that the interplay of distance and proximity to be found in Salvayre's text bears a political dimension.

4.3 Dreams, Justice, and Spectrality in Jean-Claude Grumberg's *Rêver peut-être* (1998)

Born in 1939 in Paris, Grumberg is one of France's best-known contemporary playwrights. A prolific writer, he has authored over thirty plays while also writing for cinema (he has notably co-written the scripts of Truffaut's *Le dernier métro* and Costa-Gavras's *Amen*) as well as young audiences. Key recurrent themes among his diverse body of work include the Holocaust and Jewish identity and experience. A son and grandson of Holocaust victims – he was an infant when his father, a Romanian Jew, was arrested by French police officers to be deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered – Grumberg's work remains haunted by the Shoah. It is to his father that the play *Rêver peut-être* (1998) is dedicated:

> Ce père inconnu de moi, né en 1898 à Galatzi, Roumanie, aurait eu cent ans en 1998, qu'il me soit permis en cette occasion de lui dédier cette œuvrette ; en ces temps commémoratifs et de repentance des corps constitués, qu'il prenne cela comme un monument funéraire que son fils déficient lui aurait dressé en dormant. (p.64)

In *Rêver peut-être* Gérard B., an actor rehearsing *Hamlet*, suddenly faces accusations of murder, but not just any murder - one he allegedly committed in his dreams. When questioned by a judge during his trial, he is unable to recall the name of his alleged victim. The worst crime, however, is that he supposedly did not feel any sense of remorse and

he is therefore also accused of inhumanity. As a result, he faces a Kafkaesque trial in which his dreams are scrutinised to determine his humanity/inhumanity. As the play unfolds and the boundaries between reality, dream and memory collapse, it is eventually revealed that the victim is Gérard's unmourned father, who was deported when Gérard was an infant in Vichy France, and who repeatedly manifests himself in a spectral form throughout the play. Although Gérard ends up being exonerated of the murder and the correlated inhumanity charges, he, in a plot turn, then requests that justice be brought for his father, who is an unavenged victim of inhumanity. His thirst for justice is, however, frowned upon and denied and he eventually turns to dreaming about his father in an act of remembrance and resistance that concludes the play.

Unlike Salavyre's *La Compagnie*, Jean-Claude Grumberg's play *Rêver peut-être* has yet to be critically examined. In fact, Jean-Claude Grumberg's extensive body of work has not often been the subject of academic focus, apart from his most well-known plays *Dreyfus* (1974), *L'Atelier* (1979), and *Zone libre* (1990), that together are often referred to as his 'trilogie juive'. The relative lack of academic interest generated by his work contrasts with the popular acclaim his work has enjoyed as well as with the institutional recognition it has achieved.[110]

In what follows, I will first argue that *Rêver peut-être* can be read as a contemporary reworking of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Discussing the parallels and differences between the spectres of Shakespeare's and Grumberg's respective plays will allow me to draw out the specificity of the problematic of justice in the wake of the devastating catastrophes of the twentieth century. I will suggest that the key question of Grumberg's play is the question of the possibility of reconciling the irrecoverable, irreparable nature of the loss and the

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[110] His plays have been performed at the Comédie française; he has won seven Molière; finally, several of his texts are or have been also included in the school curriculum at various levels.

demands for justice. The spectre, which embodies a promise for justice and triggers a disjunction that disrupts the law and opens up the possibility for justice, invites us to reflect on the complex relationship between justice, spectrality and the law. Through its staging of the law as incompatible with the kind of justice demanded by the spectre, it questions the limit of the law and the possibility of justice in a post-Holocaust world. While the ability to see spectres is, in *La Compagnie*, bestowed upon characters who transgress the binary between madness and sanity, in *Rêver peut-être*, this ability appears to be available to those able to dream. I will elucidate the links between dream, memory, spectrality and justice that are at the core of Grumberg's play in light of Henri Bergson's theory of the dream and in particular his notion of 'souvenir-fantôme'. This notion explicitly articulates the link between spectrality and dreaming: freed from the constraints of the present, the dreamer's perception is extended, allowing what remains otherwise hidden in waking life to become visible. Gérard thus becomes aware of the spectral presence that haunts his dreams, but, even more importantly, of the hidden presence of the concentrationary that permeates his everyday life. It is here, I will argue, that a complex interplay between distance and proximity can be located. Eventually, the act of dreaming becomes a subversive, rebellious act alluding to the tension between law and the kind of justice that is demanded by the spectre.

In *Rêver peut-être*, the spectre of Gérard's father disrupts the courtroom and the law. The unfolding of Gérard's trial, disrupted by the appearance of the spectre, is here reminiscent of Shoshana Felman's analysis of the Eichmann trial in 1961, a trial which helped forge a collective memorial narrative of Jewish trauma (2002, p.7). According to Felman, trauma acts as the structuring element of the complex relationship between judicial memory and Holocaust memory. And although trials are often envisaged as a way to master and contain trauma, the courtroom is also the place where traumas are re-enacted, and where trauma may disrupt legal order. In Grumberg's play, the spectral

disruptions serve to highlight the difference between justice and the law: in *Rêver peut-être*, the spectral presence challenges the oppressive and dehumanising nature of the law: as it becomes apparent, the justice required by the spectre exceeds a legal framework.

4.3.1 A Contemporary Reworking of Hamlet

There are numerous references to *Hamlet* throughout Grumberg's play, and even the title of the play itself – *Rêver peut-être* – is taken from Hamlet's famous soliloquy in which dreams and death converge:

> […] To die, to sleep,
>
> perchance to Dream; aye, there's the rub,
>
> For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come,
>
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
>
> Must give us pause. […] (Shakespeare, 2016 [1603], p.315, 3.1:63-67)

This intertextual reference is especially significant, for, as I mentioned previously, Shakespeare's play also plays a key role in Derrida's thinking about justice. However, despite the numerous references to Shakespeare's play and parallels drawn between Hamlet and Gérard – to the extent that Jean Caune talks of a condensation (itself a key mechanism of dreamwork) between these two characters (2016, p.158) – there nonetheless exist some important differences distinguishing them. Although in both plays, the present daily life of the protagonists is disrupted by a spectral apparition, the two spectres prove to be radically different: while the spectre of Hamlet's father clearly voices his command for Hamlet to kill Claudius, the spectre of Grumberg's play remains silent. This points to the difference of status separating these two spectres, Gérard's father being a Jewish man arrested by the French police, who did not enjoy a position of

high social status nor was granted a funeral, unlike Hamlet's father. This is important, for the lack of burial has been identified, notably by Daniel Sangsue in his extensive study of spectral and ghostly manifestations in French literature (2011, p.107), as one of the main reasons prompting a spectre to appear. For surviving family members of the 75,000 Jews deported by France from 1941 to 1944 – most of whom never returned – obtaining death certificates proved incredibly challenging. Indeed, when deportees did not come back after the war, death certificates were issued to surviving family members, but those very certificates arbitrarily stated the place of death as the internment camp where the deportee was detained and the date of death as that of the departure date of the convoy, thus presenting a distorted version of History. It was only in 1985 that a law was eventually passed to rectify this. In one of his best-known plays, *L'Atelier* (1991 [1979]), Grumberg tackles this revisionism by the French administration of the very conditions of death of deportees through the character of Simone. Simone is a widow who, after countless administrative procedures and hurdles, eventually obtains in 1949 a death certificate for her husband, a Romanian Jew arrested and deported by the French police (like Grumberg's own father), which incorrectly states her husband's place of death as 'Drancy, Seine'. For Hélène, one of Simone's co-workers, this amounts to a denial of the reality of the Holocaust: 'Alors personne n'est parti là-bas, personne n'est jamais monté dans leurs wagons, personne n'a été brûlé ; s'ils sont tout simplement morts à Drancy, ou à Compiègne, ou à Pithiviers, qui se souviendra d'eux ? Qui se souviendra d'eux ?' (1991, p.52). In addition to a lack of burial, Jewish deportees like Gérard's father are thus also victims of an administrative act of denial that erases the reality of the extermination camps as well as the responsibility of the French state. While the late King Hamlet's life is celebrated and his name remembered by all, Gérard's father is, on the other hand, forgotten by all, including his own son.

The silence of the spectre in *Rêver peut-être* can be interpreted as in keeping with the fact that he is part of the anonymous victims of History identified by Walter Benjamin in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (p.256), whose voices have been muted by the deafening nature of atrocities. If, indeed, as Shoshana Felman has argued, 'the relationship between history and trauma is speechless' (2009, p.213), the silence of *Rêver peut-être*'s spectre can be read as the result of the traumatic history of the twentieth century. Its silence, however, also reinforces the spectre's radical indeterminacy, and complicates the interpretation of its intentions for those who feel the weight of the spectral injunction. Unlike *Hamlet*'s spectre which voices its demand, the spectre that appears in front of Gérard remains stubbornly silent. Through this silence transpires the radically different dilemmas faced by Hamlet and Gérard: in Shakespeare's play, the question of revenge is directed towards one individual (Claudius), whereas the question that Gérard comes to grapple with is that of the difficulty of seeking justice from systematic, state organised extreme violence. Beyond individual responsibility, the question that awaits Gérard is that of collective responsibility, including that of later generations.

The parallels between Gérard and Hamlet – that both are tormented by the absence of their fathers, and experience a dilemma regarding whether and how to avenge them – are essential to Grumberg's play, to the point that Gérard arguably appears as a modern version of Hamlet, one haunted by the spectre of the atrocities and extreme violence of the twentieth-century (primarily the Holocaust, but as we shall see, colonial atrocities as well). That modernity is fundamentally spectral has been argued by several critics, including Jean-François Hamel (2006) and Raphaëlle Guidée (2009). For Guidée, modernity's spectrality stems from the inability to mourn the individuals, cultures and languages annihilated by the extreme violence of the twentieth century. As a consequence, the spectre 'impose de penser à la fois la dimension irréparable de la

catastrophe (le spectre ne peut être reconduit au tombeau), et la nécessité pourtant accrue de la justice' (2009, p.13). In addition to Guidée's pertinent analysis, one must also take into account Zygmunt Bauman's sociological study of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, out of which the Holocaust emerges as a hidden possibility of modernity (2013, p.28), one that continues to haunt our contemporary societies. As Grumberg's play unfolds, it is this very reckoning that Gérard comes to face in his dreams.

4.3.2 Dreams and Spectrality

In what follows, I argue that Bergson's theory of dreams, itself indissociable from his theory of memory, can elucidate the link between spectrality and dreaming that underpins both *Hamlet* and *Rêver peut-être*. The dream occupies a central place in Bergson's philosophy: if Freud, in *The Interpretations of Dreams* (1899) notably, establishes the dream as a paradigmatic object for psychoanalysis, Bergson, in *L'Énergie spirituelle* (1919), declares, in a similar fashion, that, in the dream-state, 'l'état de rêve nous apparaîtra au contraire comme le "substratum" de notre état normal. Il ne se surajoute pas à la veille : c'est la veille qui s'obtient par la limitation, la concentration et la tension d'une vie psychologique diffuse, qui est la vie du rêve.' (1919, pp.135-136). In *Matière et mémoire* (1929 [1896]), Bergson opposes a normal sensory-motor situation – whereby, between the perception of a stimulus and the reaction consequently produced, memories are selected according to their usefulness for the present situation – to the one experienced by the dreamer. Unlike in waking life, where one primarily has access to memories that will be most immediately useful to react to the present situation, when dreaming, one is no longer subjected to the demands of the present and therefore has access to larger circuits of memory and 'des couches plus profondes de la réalité' (1929, p.108). Bergson

further elaborates on these reflections in a conference entitled 'Le Rêve'[111] that he gave in 1901 at the Institut Psychologique International, just a few months after the publication of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.[112] It is in this conference that Bergson uses the term of 'souvenir-fantôme', to designate such memories that can only be accessed while dreaming:

> [L]es souvenirs que ma mémoire conserve ainsi dans ses plus obscures profondeurs y sont à l'état de fantômes invisibles. Ils aspirent peut-être à la lumière ; ils n'essaient pourtant pas d'y remonter ; ils savent que c'est impossible, et que moi, être vivant et agissant, j'ai autre chose à faire que de m'occuper d'eux. Mais supposez qu'à un moment donné *je me désintéresse* de la situation présente, de l'action pressante, enfin de ce qui concentrait sur un seul point toutes les activités de la mémoire. Supposez, en d'autres termes, que je m'endorme. Alors ces souvenirs immobiles, sentant que je viens d'écarter l'obstacle, de soulever la trappe qui les maintenait dans le sous-sol de la conscience, se mettent en mouvement. Ils se lèvent, ils s'agitent, ils exécutent, dans la nuit de l'inconscient, une immense danse macabre. (1919, p. 102, original italics)

In the above passage, Bergson links dreams with spectrality: memories inaccessible in waking life, akin to invisible phantoms, become available to the dreamer due to a widening of the faculty of perception. The liminal nature of both spectres and dreams – dreams are located between waking life and sleep; a spectre is neither dead nor alive, but rather hovers in-between these existential states – encourages such a connection between dreams and speciality. This connection was already at play in *Hamlet*'s celebrated soliloquy quoted earlier: pondering on whether to abide by the command of his father's spectre

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111 Re-published in *L'énergie spirituelle* in 1919.

112 It is interesting to note that Bergson only mentions Freud in passing in 'Le Rêve'. For more on the relationship between Bergson and Freud, see Sitbon (2014).

and avenge his father by killing his uncle Claudius (who poisoned his father), Hamlet first addresses his dilemma in binary terms – whether to pursue revenge, to die or to live, 'to be or not to be'. However, dreams represent an obstacle that complicates this binary reasoning. Indeed, while Hamlet yearns for a dreamless sleep, he cannot rule out the possibility that dreams will come to disturb even the stillness of death; after all, he has himself witnessed his father's spectre coming back from the afterlife. Dreams are thus conceived by Hamlet as an in-between space between life and death, an ambiguous space that upsets a clear-cut boundary between waking and sleeping and that is thus susceptible of accommodating the liminal characteristic of spectral figures. In the same way that the spectre of his father has disrupted his life, a dream also holds the possibility of disturbing pre-established dichotomies. Moreover, for Cécile Wasjbrot, herself a member of the postmemory generation, the dream's liminality (like the spectre's) proves helpful in articulating the specificity of the experience of the posmemorial subject. She describes it as:

> cet état somnambulique permettant d'habiter deux espaces et deux temps – c'est-à-dire finalement aucun – cet état n'est pas sans rapport avec l'état d'écrivain qui consiste à être réceptif au monde apparent comme à ses courants souterrains, ses réalités cachées, à l'écoute de cet autre monde – qui n'a rien d'un hypothétique au-delà- cet autre monde qui n'apparaît pas immédiatement à ceux qui ne vivent que dans l'ère du temps. Et c'est sans doute cela, cette inadéquation, cette inadaptation – cet écart – qui nous pousse à écrire nous qui sommes nés après, comme pour tenter de combler de l'irrémédiable faille. (2008, p.27)

Like the spectre, the dream also appears to hold the potential to address the ambiguity that is characteristic of the experience of those who are born after the events that nonetheless continue to define them.

In a key moment of the play, Gérard recounts one of his dreams: an infant in his cradle, Gérard witnesses the policewoman, bailiff, stage director, and judge search his childhood flat, when suddenly, from a concealed door, appears the spectre. Dressed, like Gérard, in 'Stratford-sur-le-Rhin' pyjamas, the spectre is revealed to be Gérard's father (1998, pp.54-55). Through this dream, Gérard uncovers a memory that he had repressed: his witnessing, when he was a young child, of police officers breaking down the door of the family flat and arresting his father in wartime France. While this dream of the discovery of the paternal spectre, that had previously only appeared as a menacing silhouette from afar, exonerates Gérard (he was after all only a child when the spectre was discovered), it also brings forth a revelation. Realising that the spectre 'a été victime d'inhumanité' (p.57) leads Gérard to acknowledge a truth he had repressed up until this point: the capacity of humanity to commit inhuman acts. Concealed in waking life, this truth is revealed to Gérard through the spectre's appearances in his dreams, and is particularly painful for Gérard to come to terms with, as shown by his difficulty to utter it. He repeatedly stutters and has to repeat it three times to coherently articulate it:

> GÉRARD. Il faut cacher à l'humanité son inhumanité sinon l'humanité ne sera plus visi… vida… vira
>
> *Il souffle.*
>
> LA FEMME. Fais tes exercices de diction debout tu veux ! Que je puisse faire le lit.
>
> GÉRARD. Il faut cacher à l'humanité son inhumanité sinon l'humanité ne sera plus vivable. Ouf ! (p.61)

It is thanks to the different kind of perception available to the dreamer that Gérard is able to perceive the spectral presence that haunts him, together with the truth that it carries, or, to borrow Bergson's words, 'une couche plus profonde de la réalité'. Beyond

the absence of his father, the spectral truth that Gérard must now confront is that of past and present injustice, of an inhumane world indifferent to the countless spectres it produces. In other words, it is the concentrationary nature of contemporary life, which entails systematic dehumanisation, that Gérard must now face. That this revelation occurs in dreams underlines the political capacity of dreams, a potential that has been underlined for instance by Sharon Sliwinski, who describes dreams as 'species of political thought' (2017, p.119). If I have analysed the significance of Gérard's dreams primarily through Bergson's theory of dreams, it is important to underline here that the new kind of perception enabled by the oneiric is one that produces an uncanny doubling effect, the coexistence of the concentrationary universe and everyday life being made visible by the breakdown of the boundaries between dream and reality. This doubling effect has been theorised as key by Cayrol to what he calls 'rêves concentrationnaires'. Cayrol thus writes,

> Ces perspectives chatoyantes de la nuit se superposaient à son existence quotidienne et lui donnaient la possibilité d'être 'ailleurs', d'être avec les autres sans être comme les autres […] Le prisonnier acceptait sans cesse une vie fictive qui doublait l'autre. (1950, p.17)

Here I argue that the doubling effect that reveals the hidden presence of the concentrationary in post-war everyday life is akin to a spectral disjunction, as conceptualised by Derrida. At the same time as it underlines the proximity of the concentrationary with 'normal' everyday life, this doubling of reality, also enables the possibility of justice. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, key to resisting the concentrationary logic is the ability to detect signs of its normalisation in post-war life. In *Rêver peut-être*, the normalisation of the concentrationary is exemplified by the indifference manifested towards the spectres. As we shall see later on, it culminates in the literal expulsion of the spectre of Gérard's father by a bailiff named Pierre Laval.

While Gérard's dream that revealed the spectre's identity ends the judiciary process against him, Gérard wants justice to be brought to the spectre, a 'victim of inhumanity'. He also considers himself 'coupable de complicité de crime d'inhumanité' for 'le fils en permettant qu'on cache le corps du père, qu'on l'enfouisse sous un papier à fleurs, qu'on disperse ses cendres aux quatre coins du globe afin de ne pas avoir à le venger' (p.57). Yet, his suggestion, that the spectre of his father ought to receive justice, is met with incomprehension by his lawyer, who simply states that inhumanity is 'un crime que tout le monde commet' and 'les placards de la république débordent de cadavres de tout genre non vengés' (p.57). The lawyer encourages Gérard to accept this as a normal part of contemporary life and to feign ignorance of enduring injustice. This echoes an earlier statement of the lawyer who, when preparing Gérard for his trial, urges him to 'cacher comme tout un chacun votre inhumanité foncière sous le masque de la bonté et de la grandeur d'âme' (p.26). These comments suggest that, rather than an assessment of his humanity through the examination of the morality of his dreams, the hidden aim of Gérard's trial is to assess his ability to feign ignorance of the inhumane potential of humanity. What is then asked of Gérard by his lawyer – that he cries in public or in his dreams as proof of his humanity – is a mere performance (p.24). It is therefore ironic that Gérard, who is an actor, is the only one who proves unable to put on such a performance.

The contamination of everyday life by the concentrationary is shown in another of Gérard's dreams that occurs in the very last scene of the play. In this dream, Gérard is a child walking on one side of the street, where the sun shines and shops are open – a peaceful scene of everyday life. The other side of the street, however, is characterised by a radically different scenery: 'sur l'autre trottoir c'est la guerre' (p.62). Despite Gérard's efforts to ignore the other side of the street where 'les spectres sans visage et sans voix poussés par des gendarmes pressés s'entassent dans des bus à plate-forme' (p.62), he

cannot help but notice that 'il y a dans le fond de l'air quelque chose de pourri' (p.62), echoing Marcellus's observation about something being rotten in the state of Denmark in *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 2016, p.240, 1.4:90), and signalling the concentrationary presence that pervades everyday life. In this dream, the two parallel sides of the street represent the coexistence of past and present. The spectres that feature in this dream are again voiceless, and they also appear faceless, a characteristic which, in light of Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of the Other, powerfully conveys their extreme vulnerability. The space of the street, a quintessential zone of the everyday, becomes a way of picturing the Janus-like nature of contemporary society. This dream resonates with a post-war tradition of French theorists, including Henri Lefebvre, who emphasised the close links between the concentration camp system and the modern city (Sheringham, 2006, p.137). Again here, what is not perceptible in waking life becomes visible in dreams, alluding to a special kind of perception that is only available to the dreamer. As we shall see, however, it is not just the concentrationary that permeates everyday life that is revealed in dreams, but also the need to resist it.

Why the concentrationary presence can only be revealed to Gérard in dreams is a question that Bergson's theory of memory and dreaming can elucidate. If, indeed, as Bergson theorises, only selected memories that are useful to react to the immediate present situation are selected in waking life, then this would explain why memories that would prevent Gérard from living a seemingly peaceful life, including memories of his father, would remain confined to the domain of the oneiric. In a note immediately following the play that briefly elaborates on the genesis of *Rêver peut-être*, Grumberg states that:

> J'étais moi aussi du grand complot, moi aussi je voulais vivre et même – horreur, horreur – vivre heureux, et pour cela il me fallait tenir ce père assassiné à distance, dresser entre lui et moi des remparts infranchissables. Aussi ne trouva-t-il pour

> se manifester que ces heures blêmes et moites où le sommeil vous offre à la merci des spectres sans sépulture et ce, jusqu'à ce que vous trouviez, en un ultime sursaut, la force d'arracher votre tête à l'oreiller pour vous entendre questionner, tremblant, l'obscurité : 'Est-ce que le corps est bien caché ?' (p.64)

Banished from waking life, the spectres can thus only find refuge in dreams, where the circulation of images is fluid, and in which hidden dimensions of life can be made visible, for, as we have shown, dreaming entails a more perceptive mode of seeing. While dreams are often associated with fiction, in Grumberg's play, they shatter the illusion of a world left unchanged by the extreme violence of the twentieth century.

In *Rêver peut-être*, it is not only the shadow of the Holocaust that haunts Gérard, but also France's role in colonial atrocities. That the extreme violence of modernity incorporates not only the Holocaust but also the colonial past becomes apparent when another dream sequence, this time set in what appears to be an African-inspired environment, begins. The stage directions which describe the setting for this scene - '*L'Afrique a surgi, faune et flore, façon Bibi Fricotin revu par un Hollywood ruiné*' (p.44, italics in original) – make it clear that this dream reflects colonial prejudices. Indeed the reference to *Bibi Fricotin* – a comic book series by Louis Forton, in which the eponymous hero, a young boy who travels to exotic places, is accompanied by a black boy named Razibus Zouzou, whose portrayal crystallises racist prejudices (he is depicted with protruding red rubbery lips and ink black skin) – emphasises the stereotypical nature of the setting.[113] In this scene, Gérard, accompanied by the stage director (both are dressed 'en tenue

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[113] Gérard himself uses the term 'savages' to designate the people he met, and he is justifiably reprimanded by the judge for using a 'degrading, abject neo-colonial vocabulary' (p.46). Yet, coming from the judge, who at the same time continues to refer to former colonies as part of the Afrique-Équatoriale française' (p.46), this criticism appears rather hypocritical.

d'explorateur' (p.44)), encounters a group of African people and asks them the question that preoccupies him: 'Qui a tué mon père ?' (p.45). They are, however, unable to understand this question as they appear to have a different linguistic system in which possessive adjectives do not exist. To this sign of otherness, the stage director reacts violently and orders Gérard to shoot them. After a moment of hesitation during which Gérard asks the stage director 'C'est un ordre ?' (p.45), he eventually obeys. Here Gérard unconsciously reproduces the line of defence infamously adopted by perpetrators in the 1945-1946 Nuremberg trials, or by Adolf Eichmann in his trial in 1961, according to which they could not be held responsible for obeying orders.

This scene, which tackles colonial atrocities rather than the Holocaust, can certainly be read as a displacement of Gérard's guilt about the murder of his father. Yet I suggest that this scene can also be read as illustrating the potential for dreams to become a space where one can confront one's own implication in different histories of violence. It also suggests that the spectral relevance of dreams for conveying atrocity applies not only to the Holocaust but also to colonial atrocities. With this dream that foregrounds his privileged position as a white man in a world in which the legacies of colonialism are still very much present, the vicarious responsibility Gérard feels for acts of atrocities he did not actually commit can be understood in terms of implication. According to Michael Rothberg, 'an implicated subject is neither a victim or a perpetrator, but rather a participant in histories and social formations that generate the position of victim and perpetrator, and yet in which most people do not occupy such clear-cut roles' (2019, p.1). While Gérard equates his desire to live happily and to forget about the past with complicity in, or even responsibility for, his father's tragic fate, viewing Gérard's entanglement within power structures in terms of implication, a notion that destabilises the binary between perpetrator and victim, proves more productive.

4.3.3 Dreaming as an Act of Resistance

In *Rêver peut-être*, dreams not only reveal the concentrationary presence that haunts contemporary life, but the very act of dreaming also becomes one of resistance. The society that Gérard lives in is a dystopian version of contemporary French society that does not value dreaming and actively polices it. There exists a department dedicated to the 'dépistage et décryptage des rêves à caractère criminogène et délictueux' (p.15), which is reminiscent of the post-apocalyptic world depicted by Chris Marker in *La Jetée* (1962), where 'la police du camp épiait jusqu'aux rêves'. The disregard for sleep and dreams reflects the contemporary devaluation of sleep that is characteristic of capitalist societies driven by profit and productivity targets. As Jonathan Crary observes, because 'sleep is an uncompromising interruption of the theft of time from us by capitalism' (2008, p.10), it is represented by capitalism as a time devoid of any use and necessity. In *Rêver peut-être*, the antagonistic relationship between sleep and waking life that underlies capitalist ideology is challenged and shown to be highly unstable. Indeed, from its opening line – Gérard's wife asking Gérard whether he is dreaming 'Gérard, Gérard, réveille-toi. Tu rêves ou quoi ?' (p.7) – Grumberg's play blurs the boundaries between dream-life and waking life. While Gérard's wife's remark might allude to the possibility that what unfolds in the play may just be one long dream sequence, the ambivalence between states of waking and dreaming is central to the entirety of the play, with Gérard being at times unsure himself as to whether he is dreaming or awake, or even whether he might be experiencing someone else's dream (p.38). With the beginning and ending of dream sequences being hard to discern, it becomes equally challenging for the audience to come to a definite conclusion. Such an instability is reinforced by Gérard's peculiar outfit. Throughout the play, Gérard wears a striped shirt with matching trousers, that he claims are from the brand 'Stratford-sur-coton' (p.31) – an obvious reference to Shakespeare's birthplace. Several characters (the unnamed bailiff, p.12; the stage director, p.31) point

to the inappropriate nature of such an outfit, claiming this resembles far too much pyjamas. By dressing against the norm, Gérard's visual appearance challenges the limit between waking life and dream, night and day. However, what is perhaps even more striking about this outfit, is the uncanny resemblance it bears to the striped uniforms inmates were made to wear in concentration camps, an unsettling likeness that no character in the play picks up on, but which is eventually brought to the fore when the spectre is revealed to be dressed in the same striped pyjamas as Gérard (p.55).

Furthermore, in Grumberg's play, Gérard is repeatedly admonished for sleeping late and spending too much time in bed. At his court hearing, the policewoman who had come to deliver the summons to Gérard in the first scene of the play, tells the judge that when she came to his place, it was noon and he was still in his pyjamas. In a moment of comic relief that also serves to highlight the absurdity of Gérard's trial, she criticises him for his 'sommeil prolongé' (p.41) and asks the judge to add 'traîne au lit jusqu'à midi' (p.43) to the list of his alleged crimes. But more than sleeping, it is the very act of dreaming that is seen as a crime. As such, Gérard's dream about the two sides of a street, which revealed the enduring presence of the concentrationary universe, is interrupted by the arrival of a bailiff, who proclaims that 'La Cour dit et ordonne que les spectres soient expulsés, les placards scellés et l'oubli proclamé !' (p.63). In order to carry out this order, the bailiff declares that he has come to seize Gérard's dreams and proceeds to seize his bed.[114] The bailiff, whose name is Pierre Laval (a clear reference to the second-in-command of the Vichy regime from 1942 to 1944 and architect of the Collaboration with Nazi Germany who actively participated in the organisation of the deportation of Jews), is indifferent to Gérard's wife's objection that seizing one's bed is illegal, simply stating

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[114] In the stage adaptation by Jean-Michel Ribes from 1999, the audience can also see the spectre being arrested by police officers in the background.

that he has changed the law. The seizing of Gérard's bed, the only prop mentioned in the stage directions and, arguably, one of the most intimate pieces of furniture, represents an attempt at gaining total control over Gérard's life. Left standing on an empty stage, Gérard closes his eyes and still manages to dream, however – 'ça y est je rêve, je rêve…' (p.63). When his wife asks what he is dreaming about, Gérard replies 'Je rêve que j'oublie tout…' (p.63), yet this remark is immediately followed by Gérard reciting a traditional French Father's Day song:

> Petit papa, c'est aujourd'hui ta fête,
>
> Maman m'a dit que tu n'étais pas là.
>
> J'avais des fleurs pour couronner ta tête
>
> Maman m'a dit que tu n'aimais pas ça
>
> Petit papa, petit papa. (p.63)

These lines, the last of the play, appear paradoxical: it is unclear whether Gérard is actually having a dream about forgetting everything or if he is conveying his wish for oblivion, in a figurative return to Hamlet's soliloquy. Nonetheless, the very fact that, as Gérard is falling asleep and starts dreaming, this children's song is what completes his initial response ('Je rêve que j'oublie tout…'), seems to point to the latter possibility. Indeed, reciting this nursery rhyme, celebrating one's father, can be interpreted as an act of remembrance. Although there are different variants of this children's song, the fourth line 'maman m'a dit que tu n'aimais pas ça' seems to be an addition from Grumberg's part. More commonly, the fourth line is instead 'et un bouquet pour mettre sur ton cœur'. The gesture of laying flowers is of course reminiscent of a funeral rite, that of laying flowers on graves, and therefore, the fact that Grumberg chose to replace this line may be interpreted as a refusal to bring about a sense of closure. Gérard, who had tried to let go of the past and forget about his father, now appears radically changed, embracing

dream life and commemorating his father – resisting the efforts of the other characters (bailiff, judge, lawyer, policewoman) to strip him of his oneiric life. Here again, it is the link between dream and memory, also key to Bergson's philosophy, that prevails. The 'souvenirs-fantômes' that Gérard encounters in his dream are also 'concentrationary memories', for they act as a warning against forgetting the victims of the extreme violence of the twentieth century and shed light on the intricately linked nature of mundane life and the concentrationary universe. 'Concentrationary memory' is defined by Pollock and Silverman as:

> an agitated, agitating, anxious memory, heavy with fears that a terrible event initiated a repeatable possibility in human history. It recognizes that what was generated in the concentration camps in Germany and the countries Germany occupied during World War II must not be buried under the ruins of destroyed crematoria at Auschwitz or effaced from mind by the transformation of innumerable concentration camps into gardens of memory in Germany. It is a memory that purposively erodes divisions between past and present, using specific histories to become a constant probe with which to interrogate the present for any current affinities with absolute horror and aspirations towards total domination. (2014, p.1)

More specifically, in *Rêver peut-être*, the spectral presence challenges the oppressive and dehumanising nature of the law: as it becomes apparent, the justice required by the spectre exceeds a legal framework. As the earlier discussion on *La Compagnie* has shown, the link between spectrality and justice is one that has been convincingly brought to the fore by Derrida. Like Grumberg's play, Derrida's text includes numerous references to *Hamlet*. For both Derrida and Gérard, what is at stake in *Hamlet* is a question of justice: when he discusses Shakespeare's play with the judge, Gérard argues that rather than a murderer, Hamlet is one who seeks justice (p.14). This resonates with Derrida's analysis

of Shakespeare's play, who understands Hamlet's line 'the time is out of joint' as a statement pointing to the enduring presence of injustice that disrupts a harmonious order of the world (1993, p.45). In Derrida's analysis, the spectre comes to represent radical indeterminacy and otherness; it represents a promise for justice and triggers a disjunction that disrupts the law and opens up the possibility for justice. The unfolding of Gérard's trial, disrupted by the appearance of the spectre, is reminiscent of Felman's analysis of the Eichmann trial in 1961, a trial which helped forge a collective memorial narrative of Jewish trauma. For Felman, the disruption brought about by the collapse of the writer and witness K-Zetnik during the trial makes visible what cannot be articulated in legal language (2002, pp.153-154). Although trials are often envisaged as a way to master and contain trauma, the courtroom is thus also the place where traumas are re-enacted, and where trauma may disrupt legal order. Likewise, during Gérard's trial, the spectral disruptions point to a traumatic past that cannot be adequately addressed by the law.

As an inheritor of the extreme violence of the twentieth century, Gérard must respond to this promise of memory and justice that is embodied by the spectre. Such a perspective echoes Avery Gordon's analysis of haunting as 'an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known' (2008, xvi). However, when Gérard attempts to do so through the law, by asking his lawyer if he could sue the police officers who broke down his door and took away the spectre of his father, the response of his lawyer takes the form of a short poem:

Ce que gendarme fait

Est toujours bien fait

Car c'est la hiérarchie

L'amour de la patrie

L'ordre et la loi

Qui guident sa foi. (p.56)

That the lawyer's response takes the form of a poem conveys a sense of rigidity: the lawyer seems to simply repeat something he has learnt by heart, without any critical distance. This lack of critical distance becomes even more visible when he fails to answer Gérard, who asks him, twice, 'qui fait la loi ?' (p.56). Another example of the aforementioned arbitrary nature of the law is when the bailiff Pierre Laval suddenly changes the law; but the most striking example of the oppressive power of the law is perhaps when the bailiff orders the banishment of spectres and the rule of oblivion. Denied by the law the justice he seeks to bring to the voiceless, Gérard then turns to dreaming, which becomes an act of resistance against the dehumanising consequences of the law that actively denies the existence of victims of atrocities. Eventually, while, earlier in the play, Gérard was at a loss as to how he could prove his humanity, being able to dream proves to be a vital answer to the question of what it means to be human. Gérard's ability to dream is what sets him apart from the other characters of the play: the lawyer, for instance, admits that he never dreams (p.20). On the other hand, Gérard's wife confesses that she used to dream – 'ça m'arrivait avant' (p.29) – but she is unable, when asked by her husband, to give any details as to what the 'avant' refers to. One may speculate the 'avant' she refers to is a world before the camps.

4.3.4 Conclusion

Bergson's notion of 'souvenir-fantôme' proves productive in seeking to elucidate the connections between dream, memory, spectrality and justice that are at the core of Grumberg's *Rêver peut-être*. This notion explicitly articulates the link between spectrality and dreaming: freed from the constraints of the present, the dreamer's perception is extended, allowing what remains otherwise hidden in waking life to become visible.

Gérard thus becomes aware of the spectral presence that haunts his dreams, but, even more importantly, of the hidden presence of the concentrationary that permeates his everyday life. Further, I have shown, with reference to Derrida's *Spectres de Marx,* that the spectre also represents a memory of promise and an injunction of justice that exceeds a legal framework. It is in fact the very act of dreaming that proves to be a subversive, rebellious mode of resistance and memory. In the end, it seems that Grumberg fully subscribes to the words of Imre Kertész: 'the true crisis is total forgetfulness, the dreamless night' (2003, p.171).

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

In *Mal d'archive*, Derrida ponders on Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's question in *Zakhor* 'Est-il possible que l'antonyme de l' "oubli" soit non pas l' "acte de mémoire" mais la *justice* ?' (1995, p.122, italics in original), admitting that this question resonates with his own thinking. Rather than pitting one against the other, what this chapter, dedicated to an exploration of the significance of the trope of the spectre in contemporary French literature, has demonstrated is the inseparability of justice and memory, an act of memory being also an act of justice. In both Salvayre's *La Compagnie* and Grumberg's *Rêver peut-être*, the inadequacy of the law that fails to acknowledge the absent presence of spectres becomes apparent. Confronting the mechanical, violent aspect of the law that participates in perpetuating the concentrationary logic of a dehumanising world, both texts highlight the need to think another kind of justice, one that would be attentive to the spectral presence. Ultimately, this proves possible only if the attempt at restoring humanity is both directed towards the living *and* the dead.

While in the previous chapters, it was the ethical potential of a dialectic between distance and proximity that was emphasised, the texts examined in this chapter, I have

demonstrated, are also concerned with the political dimension of an interplay between distance and proximity. Both *La Compagnie* and *Rêver peut-être*, albeit in different ways, are thus both concerned with the question of how to detect the proximity of the concentrationary universe and resist its normalisation. The spectre, because of its ability to transcend established boundaries, has been shown to be particularly apt in revealing the proximity of the concentrationary universe to 'normal' life. A key sign of the process of the normalisation of the concentrationary has also been shown to be, in both texts, the imposition of a distance that effectively reinforces a binary between the living and the dead and condemns the spectres to oblivion.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to elucidate the complex interplay between distance and proximity that can be found in postmemorial texts about the Holocaust by contemporary French and Francophone writers. Through close reading of diverse texts – that range from fiction to non-fiction, theatre to family memoir – together with a diverse theoretical framework that notably combines post-structuralist thought and memory studies, I have demonstrated that, in order to understand the place of the Holocaust in contemporary French and Francophone writing, it is critical to go beyond the binary opposition between distance and proximity that sees them as mutually exclusive. Viewed this way, it becomes possible to make sense of the paradoxical position of the Holocaust as an event whose traumatic imprint is still very much felt in contemporary French society, in both visible and less visible ways (notably through the insidious presence of 'the concentrationary'), despite greater temporal distance. This also generates new ways of understanding the rich body of works produced by postmemorial writers, especially as it relates to what I have identified as four key aspects that cut across generational and genre boundaries: the rejection of chronological time in favour of non-linear time, the emphasis on the connective nature of memory, a reflection on the political and poetic dynamics of the archive, and the articulation of a link between spectrality and justice.

In many ways, this thesis can be seen as an attempt to retheorise Hirsch's model of postmemory. Whilst postmemory remains a helpful way of framing the complex experience of those with only indirect experience of the Holocaust, notably in its foregrounding of mediation, creativity, and affect as central to the structure of transmission of memories, this thesis has demonstrated that it is necessary to mobilise a wider theoretical framework in order to account for the complexity and ambiguity that

are characteristic of contemporary texts about the Holocaust. Putting those texts in dialogue with the thoughts of Bergson, Deleuze, Levinas, and Derrida, among others, has provided an interpretative framework that has enabled me to shed light on the tensions between distance and proximity, past and present, virtual and actual, horizontality and verticality, affect and cognition, and presence and absence, that traverse them.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I examined the use of non-linear time in Binet's *HHhH* and Bayard's *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau ?* and argued that their subversion of chronological time can be directly linked to ethical concerns surrounding the question of how to preserve the alterity of the Other and the past through literary writing. I demonstrated that, in both texts, the irreducible otherness of the past is revealed through their performance of a simultaneous gesture of distance and proximity. In Binet's text, this gesture leads to the recognition of the radical otherness of his protagonists, with whom it is impossible to synchronise own's rhythm of duration. If there is interpenetration of past and present, it thus never leads to the conflation between the two. On the other hand, in Bayard's text, the narrator's attempt to bridge the distance that separates him from the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust recasts the past as a space of infinite virtual possibilities that resists a reductive notion of the possible. These two texts thus depart from a 'presentist' vision of time and highlight instead the multidimensional and complex nature of our temporal relation with the past. In a marked contrast with a contemporary context that has been described as valuing only what is instantaneous, and immediately available – thus encouraging the abolishing of distance and promoting proximity – I have demonstrated that a meaningful engagement with the past that does not gesture towards identification and objectification is possible, provided the notions of distance and proximity are thought of in terms of a dialectical relationship.

The following chapter expanded the scope of my investigation: rather than focusing on the interaction between two temporal moments located in the present and the past, I turned my attention to the various ways Bardet's *À la droite du père* and Benmalek's *Fils du Shéol* connect the Holocaust to other histories (and stories) of extreme violence and atrocity. By bringing into proximity disparate elements – Vichy and the Lebanese Civil War, the Holocaust and the Herero and Nama genocide – that are kept apart by spatio-temporal distance, both texts navigate the difficulty of weaving connections between those events without dissolving their specificities. This chapter emphasised the need to take into account the horizontal and vertical dynamics that implicitly characterise the circulation and modes of transmission of memory through tropes such as metaphor and metonymy. I argued that it is through their mobilisation of a rhizomatic imaginary, as conceptualised by Deleuze and Guattari, in which both vertical and horizontal lines coexist, but are always kept in tension, that they manage to avoid the collapse of distance into proximity, or difference into sameness.

In Chapter 3, I turned my attention to two hybrid texts – Jablonka's *Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus* and Rubinstein's *C'est maintenant du passé* – and explored their use of the archive. While the archive, and especially photographs, have been central to Hirsch's formulation of postmemory, here I was interested in how Jablonka and Rubinstein tackle the contamination of their desire to recover archival traces of their family members that were murdered in the Holocaust with a reckoning of the violence of the archive. While an initial answer to this challenge posed by the archive seems to be to encourage a sense of critical distance, this is countered by the sense of affective proximity they experience towards archival traces. I demonstrated that it is in their elaboration of a poetics of the archive that unsettles the opposition between cognition and affect that they are ultimately able to acknowledge both the entanglement of the archive with violence and its potential to foster affective links.

The final chapter of this thesis explored contemporary French writers' mobilisation of a spectral imaginary to tackle the unresolved legacies of violence of the Holocaust. The figure of the spectre, which embodies a sense of ambivalence between absence and presence, distance and proximity, is used in both Salvayre's *La Compagnie des spectres* and Grumberg's *Rêver peut-être* to bring to the fore the urgency of the spectral demand for justice that exceeds the law. In a parallel to the critique of conventional historiography, I have demonstrated that both texts highlight the inadequacy of a legal framework to attend to the otherness of the spectre. Rather than a legal framework, then, Salvayre and Grumberg both turn to alternative ways of envisioning justice, through intergenerational female solidarity and the oneiric realm respectively. This chapter concludes that it is not through the exorcism of the ghosts of the past, but by taking seriously the injunction of Derrida to 'apprendre à vivre avec les fantômes' that the present can open up to *l'à-venir*, to what is unpredictable and new. Rather than being synonymous with an entrapment in the past, haunting thus becomes a productive phenomenon through which what is not readily visible, namely the persistence of the concentrationary that contaminates contemporary life, can be brought to light.

While each chapter is dedicated to the exploration of the way a dialectic of distance and proximity unfolds in a specific area (namely time, the relationality of memory, the archive, spectrality), those very areas, as well as the questions that I investigate in relation to them, have been shown to be tightly imbricated. Non-linear time, for instance, which is explored in Chapter 1, underpins the other chapters: in Chapter 2, it is partly through non-linear time that disparate histories are brought together; in Chapter 3, Rubinstein's and Jablonka's texts must resist not only the violence of the archive but also that of the totalising power of linear time; in the final chapter, spectral appearances disrupt linear time, which in turn open up time to the possibility of responding to the spectral injunction of memory. The major questions that emerge across the different chapters

notably include the ethics of memory and the relationship between history and memory, which provide other common threads that run throughout the thesis. Another uniting feature of this thesis has to do with its sustained efforts to challenge binary thinking. I have argued that memory, because of its fluidity, hybridity, and ambiguity, cannot be accommodated within such a reductive, rigid framework. A rejection of binarism does not entail the erasure of tensions, far from it. In the works I have considered, the tensions between distance and proximity, the individual and the collective, and affect and cognition, rather than being dissolved, are left unresolved.

As this thesis has made clear, the end of 'l'ère du témoin' has not resulted in the loss of a sense of close connection to the events of the Holocaust, but has meant that writers have come up with innovative ways of approaching this past, most notably through the opening up of an ambivalent space in-between distance and proximity. Ultimately, this thesis has made the case that approaching memory through the dialectical relationship between distance and proximity provides a model able to capture the complexities and ambiguities that agitate the postmemorial writers.

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