DOCUMENTS ET CHEMINEMENTS: TRACING THE POSTMEMORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE ALGERIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes ways out of traumatic silence in contemporary French and Francophone North African fiction. While silence has been the focus of trauma-centered texts in recent decades, I bring in the theoretical frameworks of affect theory, cultural translation, and new media as possible ways out of narrative rupture. These ways out of literary silence lead me to propose new mechanisms of empathy between victims, perpetrators, and their descendants in novels, films, and graphic novels depicting the aftermath of the Second World War, the Algerian War of Independence, or migration crises in France and Algeria. Specifically, this project will look at Leïla Sebbar's novel *La Seine était rouge*, Zineb Sedira's *Mother Tongue*, an art installation that uses video clips, Catherine Lépront's novel *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*, Patrick Modiano's novel *Dora Bruder*, Boualem Sansal's novel *Le Village de l'Allemand ou le journal des frères Schiller*, Pascal Jardin's novel *Le Nain jaune*, Alexandre Jardin's novel *Des gens très bien*, Yamina Benguigui's documentary film *Mémoires d'immigrés*, Jérôme Ruillier's graphic novel *Les Mohamed*, Albert Camus's novels *L'Etranger* and *La Chute*, and Kamel Daoud's novel *Meursault, contre-enquête*. This dissertation also focuses on the question of vectors of memory in France and Algeria, as well as intermediality in contemporary French and Algerian narratives.

My guiding theoretical framework throughout the dissertation draws on Marianne Hirsch's discussions of what she calls "postmemory." However, while postmemory for Hirsch focuses on the transmission of the memories of an event from first to subsequent generations who have not lived the event directly, I use my first chapter to highlight – through the works of Leïla Sebbar – how specifically literary texts express silence, and the multiple implications such an expression

can have beyond merely signaling trauma in the narrative. Can the various factors and causes of silence help us envision paths to self-understanding and self-authoring beyond the assessment of a crisis of transmission of memory? This chapter will therefore extend the existing discussion of postmemory—which focus on successful, albeit difficult, transmissions—by looking at non-linear heritage of memory despite or due to initial silence.

Building on the idea that ruptures in postmemory—represented as literary silence— need not entail the loss of memory altogether, the second chapter suggests that rupture rather calls for postmemory's recuperation through the use of memory prosthetics. To develop this point, I put Marianne Hirsch's postmemory framework into dialogue with the "prosthetic memory" framework theorized by Alison Landsberg. Analyzing Catherine Lépront's novel *Le beau visage de l'ennemi* on the postmemory of the Algerian War of Independence, this second chapter looks at how objects (photographs, diaries, letters, etc.) may assist the recuperation of postmemory, while also opening up the discussion about the limits of such prosthetic remediation.

The third chapter complicates and rounds out the previous one by discussing literary instances where prosthetic remediation needs to be supplemented by an affective sense of belonging to the memorial community. While the second chapter investigated prosthetic memory-*objects*, the third chapter focuses on prosthetic memory-*sites*, which can act as affective links between those who participate in historical events and their would-be memorial inheritors born after the events. Patrick Modiano's novel *Dora Bruder* offers an interaction with places that enable the narrator of his texts to invest affectively in a historical event. To explicate this, I introduce Michel de Certeau's distinction between space and place which, I argue, clarifies the role embodied memory plays in the narrator's walks in the city.

The fourth chapter proposes a new concept—transcategorical postmemory—to supplement the existing framework of postmemory, by including the underdeveloped field of perpetrator postmemory. The proposed concept of transcategorical postmemory names the mechanism by which descendants of perpetrators can empathize with the victims of their forefathers. Through a reading of Boualem Sansal's *Le Village de l'Allemand ou le journal des frères Schiller*, this chapter further distinguishes two modes of the concept: one pathological (melancholic transcategorical postmemory), one future-oriented (productive transcategorical postmemory).

The fifth and last chapter analyzes three literary texts in order to illustrate how the concept of transcategorical postmemory coined in the previous chapter constitutes a generative theoretical tool for approaching rewrites of first-generation texts. Looking at three pairs of works involving postmemory (by Pascal and Alexandre Jardin; Yamina Benguigui and Jérôme Ruillier; and Albert Camus and Kamel Daoud), this chapter will not only show the concept of transcategorical postmemory at play, but also illustrate how attention to the dynamic between each pair of texts enables a richer reading of each work individually.

The conclusion will summarize and situate this dissertation's contributions within the field of postmemory studies, as well as show how these contributions can shed new light on familiar first-generation texts. The conclusion also highlights how the concept of transcategorical postmemory lays the foundation for further research on group identities that challenge the victim/perpetrator divide, and whose memory might have consequently fallen out of public discourses.

DEDICATION

À ma famille

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A note on figures

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Introduction

This dissertation explores the transmission of traumatic memory stemming from the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence,[1] which is then passed on from historical witnesses to their children and grandchildren. This project focalizes specifically on mechanisms of memory transmission in literary narratives where the transmission of memory across generation had previously been broken, and the role played by the inheritance of victim or perpetrator memory for self-definition in the present.

Debates about what defines a contemporary French identity crystalize around the relationship between State, nation, group identities (based on religion, ethnicity, and national origin,) and the national past. Both the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence become sites of negotiation for what defines French identity today. Was the Vichy regime a rupture in the Republic after full powers were given to Maréchal Philippe Pétain in 1940 or should the Vichy regime be recognized as the legitimate executive of the French State at the time? Should the Vichy regime be recognized as the legitimate French State during the Second World War given that it raised to power in accordance with constitutional principles, or was the French State in London with General De Gaulle as claimed by then-president Jacques

[1] Throughout this text, I will use the designation "Algerian War of Independence" to refer to the war of 1954-1962 to avoid the loan translation from the French "guerre d'Algérie" (the war is referred to as "guerre d'indépendance" or "independence war" in Algeria) and to distinguish this war from the civil war occurring in Algeria in the 1990s and early 2000s which I refer to punctually in my text.

Chirac during his 1995 speech commemorating the roundups of 1942? These recurring questions re-emerged particularly prominently during debates on the potential loss of citizenship for convicted French terrorists, and on the possibility of holding a dual-citizenship for French bi-nationals since 2015. While loss of French citizenship has been constitutionally inscribed since the First Republic, the specter of the abrogation of the Crémieux decree and of the destitution of citizenship for some French Jews during the Vichy regime has colored the debate, with prime minister Manuel Valls declaring that "Vichy was not France" in front of the *Assemblée Nationale* in February 2016. The possibility for citizenship loss for binational convicted terrorists, but not for those who held sole French citizenship was also perceived by many on the Left as discriminatory targeting of Franco-Maghrebi[2] dual citizens, and unconstitutional in the double standard it applied to dual-citizens and holders of sole French citizenship. The perceived contradiction between the double-standard with French ideals of *égalité* and *fraternité* found echoes in France's difficult relationship with its colonial past in general, and with the Algerian War of Independence in particular. Algeria's independence marked the end of legal differences between inhabitants on French soil in the Algerian colony. No debate on French identity today occur without reference to the history of Jewish persecution during the Second World War and ethnic-religious discrimination in colonial Algeria.

[2] As is standard in the French, I will use the term Maghreb throughout this dissertation to mean the Independent North African countries which were formerly colonized by France: Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Speakers of Arabic will at times use the word to mean the sole country of Morocco, or the Western territories of the Arab conquest including Libya and Mauritania. The adjective Maghrebi will follow the same usage.

French Memory Wars

The references to the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence invoke the relationship of the French State and the French nation (hence Valls' distinction between the official Vichy Regime and "France" constituted by its population) to the past, and involve those in France who were not born during these wars. In her article "The Generation of Postmemory," Hirsch conceptualizes postmemory as "the relationship of the generations that follow survivors and witnesses of historical or collective traumatic events to these experiences. These events are internalized and "remembered" indirectly through stories, images, and other reminders and remainders of their family's experiences" (103). Debates on past history in the present involve a variety of actors including State representatives in France and in postcolonial Algeria, individual historical witnesses, religious groups, historical witnesses and their descendants organized in non-profit memorial organizations, and national media outlets among others. These different entities may come together for commemorative purposes, or may at times oppose each other in conflicting interests.

The memory wars, "les guerres de mémoires," posit a competition between different groups of historical victims, between a group of historical victims and the French State, or between a group of historical victims and the French nation (i.e. the people of France). These memory wars have become an object of study in themselves. These memorial groups demand official recognition by the French State (through elected representatives on behalf of the French State, or through memorial laws), commemorations on the national level (through the establishment of monuments, museums, or dedicated memorial days), and exposure in the public

sphere (by the inclusion in school history programs which also involves State recognition, or through more exposure in the media).

In 2008, Bercellini observed that :

> Depuis quelques années, le paysage mémoriel français est en train d'évoluer. Construites autour d'une mémoire identitaire favorisant le souvenir des héros "morts pour la France" des deux guerres mondiales, les initiatives mises en place par l'Etat depuis 1981 se heurtent progressivement à la montée d'une nouvelle mémoire, celle des victimes juives mortes *à cause* de la France." (215)

Barcellini's assessment corroborates Annette Wiewiorka's research which dates the emergence of Holocaust survivor's testimonies in France in the 1980s, while the immediate postbellum decades were marked by the memory of the *Résistance*. This emergence had been preceded by some academic inquiries into the Vichy past in the 1907s, in particular by non-French researchers, notably the American Historian Robert Paxton whose book *La France de Vichy* came out in 1972 and was translated into French in 1973. In parallel, the 1980s mark the appearance of *beur* identity in the public sphere ("beur" is the inversion of the word "arabe" in popular slang, which comes to designate French-born descendants of Maghrebi parents), which gained visibility in part to the *Marche pour l'Egalite et contre le racisme*, sometimes referred to informally as "marche des beurs" in 1983. This memorial turn of the 1980s continued onwards, and Isabelle Veyrat-Mason notes that,

> Le plus notable à la télévision, dans les années 2000, est l'apparition d'un thème qui devient vite dominant. Il s'agit du rapprochement entre colonialisme, discrimination, esclavage, immigration…les guerres des mémoires qui relient le

> colonisé à l'immigré, ces indignations qui mettent l'accent sur la victime et la repentance ont trouvé, elles, dans les magazines leur support privilégié. (284-85)

The film *Indigènes* by Algerian director Rachid Bouchareb, which came out in 2006, received numerous prizes and was a commercial success in France. Magazines, television programs, and book publications between public intellectuals advocating for the recognition of historical discriminations and persecutions committed by the French State and the commemoration of their victims in the name of a "devoir de mémoire," and those who argue that national repentance is divisive and a threat to national cohesion play an increasingly prominent role in the public sphere.

In the legal realm, the 2000s are marked by the passing of memorial laws, "les lois mémorielles," althought the first of these laws, the "loi Gayssot" or Gayssot Act, criminalizing Holocaust denial was voted in 1990. In 2001, the official recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the French state was voted, followed by the "loi Taubira" which recognizes slavery as a crime against humanity. In 2005, a heated debate arose regarding the now suppressed *alinéa 2 de l'article 4 de la loi française n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés* which stipulated that the positive role of French colonization be included in history education: "Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit". In 2016, essay questions for the history component of the national high school exit exam (*baccalauréat*) in the literature track, and the social sciences and economics track, included "l'historien et les mémoires de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France" and "l'historien et les mémoires de la guerre d'Algérie." The

debates over a positive aspect of colonization, which never fully exited the public sphere, reemerged notably in November 2016 when an interview with then-presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron was published. In his interview with magazine *Le Point*, Macron declared that French colonialism in Algeria was characterized by torture, but also by the emergence of a State, and of an Algerian middle class. After much criticism both in France and in Algeria, Macron qualified colonization as a crime against humanity during a visit in Algeria in February 2017, which lead to a formal complaint for public insult by *Le Cercle Algérianiste*, a non-profit organization for *pied-noirs* (French citizens of European descent in Algeria) and *harkis* (Algerian "indigènes" who fought alongside France in Algeria). During the same presidential campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy, who was running for a second non-consecutive presidential mandate, also took position on history school programs, opposing the argument that a larger role should be given to the history of immigration in schools in an effort of inclusiveness towards students born in immigrant families, and advocating instead for assimilation in saying that all students should embrace "les gaulois" as their ancestors. Sarkozy had been previously criticized during his presidency in 2008 for his initiative consisting in assigning a deported French Jewish child to each French pupil in order to raise schoolchildren's awareness on the Holocaust. As exemplified in these cases, it is virtually impossible to untangle the political, legal, educational, and cultural components of these debates.

Similarly, education, political drive, and social motivations all play a role in the creation of national monuments and museums such as the *Mémorial National de la Guerre d'Algérie et des combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie* in 2002, or the *Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration* in 2012. The role played by the French State in the persecution of Jewish and Maghrebi populations also undermines its legitimacy as a mediating agent, and contributes at

times to competitive memory between victim groups when the State is perceived as either over-compensating for its own past crimes, or continuing to ignore the discrimination of some of its citizens.

Beyond the *Status Quo*

This dissertation focuses on paths of memory remediation within literary narratives, and shows that traumatic silence is not always a definitive end to the transmission of memory. This project rejects an inescapable inheritance of victimhood or perpetration that trap descendants in the trauma or guilt of their forefathers, and argues instead that literature reveals dynamics of memorial transmission that bridge the victim-perpetrator divide, and enables cultural memory transmission that allow the sons and grandson of historical agents to be invested in self-authoring and future-oriented projects. In such, my approach aligns with Rothberg's multidirectional memory, which aims at thwarting "the misrecognition of collective memory as a zero-sum game —instead of an open-ended field of articulation and struggle —as one of the stumbling blocks for a more inclusive renarration of the history of memory and a harnessing of the legacies of violence in the interests of a more egalitarian future" (21).

I will show that memories can emerge out of silence in order to engage the present. Literature here becomes a site of contact between inheritors of past conflicts and potentiality for dialogues that transcend essentializing dyads (victim/perpetrators, citizen of the former colonizing nation/postcolonial subject), and posits the possibility of inheriting the victimhood of one conflict and the perpetrator of another. At the core of the present project, and grounded in memory studies, is an *active* engagement with historical events and the way they are remembered, whether by states, social groups, or individual agents. This engagement is meant to

avoid and to disturb an unproductive *status quo*, such as that described by O'Riley in the relevant Franco-Maghrebi context, where "memories of the colonial era continue to haunt between and within France and the Maghreb and can lead to a dangerous, often fatalistic, fascination if we allow them" (2). Marc Crépon expresses the same outlook when he insists that reflecting on violent past events should aim at showing that "la mémoire des horreurs du XX^{e} siècle n'est pas hostile à la vie" (125). For Crépon the fossilization of memory – that is, a rote memorization of past historical events without any critical engagement with their causes or conditions of possibility – can also lead to an incapacity to recognize *ongoing* violence. And yet, he also warns against recuperating memory in order to justify current violence. To say it differently, Crépon warns against both forgetting *and* memory, which can become stepping stones for potential violence when used without critical thinking: "la mémoire s'égare, chaque fois qu'elle fait de son enfermement dans le passé la raison aveugle d'un *consentement*, actif ou passif, aux meurtres du présent, une indifférence, une résignation, un encouragement" (122). For Crépon, forgetting and memory then all too easily become two sides of one coin that buys only violence: "Voilà l'étrange paradoxe dans lequel nous entraîne le traumatisme du passé : d'un côté notre rapport à ses traces ne saurait faire abstraction du présent, de l'autre son rappel n'est jamais tant mis en défaut que lorsqu'il sert les intérêts et les calculs de ce même présent" (122-23).

On literature and violence

Through analyses of literary texts, this dissertation shows that memory transmission can emerge in contexts where the transmission of memory had been disrupted, and that this transmission of memory to the children and grandchildren of historical witnesses allows space for new mechanisms of empathy instead of competitive memory. Crépon's argument, which is

the thesis of his 2014 book *La Vocation de l'écriture, la littérature et la philosophie à l'épreuve de la violence*: not only can speaking and writing be *vectors* of violence, but they may already constitute violence in themselves. Crépon highlights the particular insight of literature when it comes to historical violence due to their ontological relationship: "Toute œuvre littéraire […] est concernée par la violence, de façon essentielle. Elle se trouve nécessairement exposée à toutes les forces (variables selon les époques, les régimes, les familles et les tribus) qui pourraient ou voudraient compromettre l'expression langagière d cette singularité – qui reste vitale – et son partage, qui ne l'est pas moins" (56). If literature is so apt at questioning historical violence, it is precisely because it resists essentializing, categorizing, and teological impulses, and allows for conflicting, contradictory, or complementary elements :

> Mais pourquoi la littérature ? De l'histoire, à plus forte raison lorsqu'elle est prescrite, de l'Histoire avec un grand H et de la Philosophie avec un grand P, il est toujours à redouter qu'elles s'accommodent de *la pluralité* des murmures, qu'elles les traduisent, qu'elles les résument, qu'elles les interprètent, qu'elles les sélectionnent selon leurs propres critères, qu'elles fassent violence, en d'autres termes, à ce qui fait la singularité de chacun. Or cette singularité, à quoi tient-elle ? D'abord et avant tout à la langue. La force de ces murmures, la force de ce qui les porte et qui les loge dans nos vies, c'est toujours l'invention d'une langue (124).

The literary works analyzed in this dissertation were chosen precisely because they propose new potentials for postmemorial transmission, and offer insights beyond the closed-loop discussions that only allow for either repentance or transmission.

The chapters of this dissertation build upon each other. The first chapter of this dissertation will highlight – through a reading of Leïla Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge* – the need to consider what happens when the archetypal transmission of postmemory does not happen. That will require considering how silence is expressed in the novel.

The second chapter proposes a way out of that silence. I argue that the rupture of postmemory described above does not necessarily entail the final loss of postmemory altogether. Instead, the rupture invites the possibility of recuperation of postmemory through the use of memory prosthetics. This chapter puts Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory into dialogue with the existing framework of prosthetic memory theorized by Alison Landsberg. Analyzing Catherine Lépront's novel *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi* on the postmemory of the Algerian War of Independence, this second chapter looks at how objects (photographs, letters, etc.) may assist the recuperation of postmemory, while also opening up a discussion about the limits of the mechanism of prosthetic remediation that I describe.

The third chapter of this dissertation complements the previous one by discussing literary instances where prosthetic remediation needs to be supplemented with an affective sense of belonging to the memorial community. Patrick Modiano's works offer an interaction with places that enable the narrator of his texts to invest affectively in a historical event. In understanding Modiano's depiction of embodied memory in his narrator's walks in the city, this chapter finds useful Michel de Certeau's distinction between space and place with a discussion of embodied memory through the narrator's walks in the city.

The fourth chapter refines the existing framework of postmemory by investigating the underdeveloped postmemory of perpetrators. Specifically, it proposes a new concept—transcategorical postmemory—which names a mechanism by which descendants of perpetrators

can empathize with the victims of their forefathers. The chapter also offers two implications stemming from the concept: one pathological (melancholic transcategorical memory), one future-oriented (productive transcategorical memory).

The fifth and last chapter will offer three literary analyses illustrating how the concept of transcategorical postmemory coined in the previous chapter constitutes a generative theoretical tool to yield dynamic readings of rewrites of first-generation texts. Looking at three pairs of works involved with postmemory (by Pascal and Alexandre Jardin; Yamina Benguigui and Jérôme Ruillier; and Albert Camus and Kamel Daoud), this chapter will not only show the concept of transcategorical postmemory at play, but will also illustrate how the dynamic established by the concept between each pair of texts offers a richer reading of each literary work.

Chapter 1

WRITING POSTMEMORIAL SILENCE IN LEÏLA SEBBAR'S *LA SEINE ETAIT ROUGE*

"Ecrire, c'est aussi ne pas parler. C'est se taire. C'est hurler sans bruit."
Marguerite Duras, Ecrire.

Drawing on the aesthetics of testimony documentaries (which typically favor close ups of speakers in front of a neutral background), artist Zineb Sedira's 2002 televised triptych literally displays the intergenerational rupture of communication by the gaps between each of the three flat screens that make up her work *Mother Tongue*.

Figure 1.1: Zineb Sedira's art installation Mother Tongue illustrates the difficulties to communicate between generations in multilingual families. The installation is made up of three flat television screens, each showing a different video recording. On the left screen, a video shows Sedira discussing her own childhood with her mother. Her mother speaks in Algerian dialect while Sedira replies in French. On the central screen, Sedira is seen discussing her childhood with her daughter. Sedira speaks to her daughter in French and her daughter replies in English. On the right screen, Sedira's daughter and Sedira's mother try to communicate: Sedira's mother sometimes says a few words in Algerian Arabic, and Sedira's daughter sometimes says a few words in English, although due to the lack of a common language, they mostly stay silent.

Born of Kabyle Algerian parents in 1963 in Paris, Sedira was raised in France before leaving for London to study visual art and photography, and has since settled in the British capital. Her work focuses on family, migration, and identity, and has largely been shaped by Sedira's personal experience. On the distinction between art and documentary, Sedira indicates

"how important it is not only to produce critical witness art, but also to pay attention to aesthetics, the simple beauty of her art. This, the artist says, distinguishes her work from documentary" (Lambelin). While her work is also an aesthetic pursuit, and not a mere record of her personal experience (a distinction which appears more clearly in other, less autobiographic works), the boundary between art and testimony remains flexible for Sedira who claims, "Yes my work is testimonial, and it should be accepted as art" (Lambelin).

Her installation, *Mother Tongue*, now at the *Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration*, is made up of three flat screens, each projecting a short interview between two women of the same family. While the format allows the viewer to watch and listen to each screen individually, to disregard one or more screens, or to start from right to left, the work constitutes a clearer narrative if approached from left to right. The screen on the left of the installation shows the artist discussing her own childhood with her mother. Sedira asks questions in French about her daily life as a child (for example, what she did on afternoons when school was not in session), which her mother answers in Algerian Arabic. The central panel shows a conversation between Sedira and her own daughter, as her daughter asks about her mother's early life in English and Sedira responds in French. The right screen shows Sedira's daughter and mother, unable to communicate as they do not share a common language, each trying some words in her own native language (Algerian Arabic for the artists' mother, and English for Sedira's daughter), then looking towards the camera in the hope that Sedira will act as an interpreter.

While much of Sedira's corpus is constituted of photographs and installations, *Mother Tongue* proposes a much more visually pared-down aesthetics that leaves the focus on the sound

element of the installation. The pedagogical document accompanying Sedira's work on the *Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration's* website offers the following commentary:

> le choix des langues lui-même renvoie à la biographie d'une artiste que son enfance puis ses études ont amenée à traverser des frontières culturelles et linguistiques. Il rappelle ainsi les 'migrations quotidiennes' que Z. Sedira a dû faire entre la langue de sa famille, celle de l'école (en France), puis celle de sa formation en Grande-Bretagne. C'est tout cet espace-temps autobiographique qui s'esquisse dans les dialogues, à travers le dispositif : la communication intrafamiliale met ici en œuvre une stratification des langues qui pose la question du lieu d'où l'on vient, de celui où l'on est et de ce que l'on est. L'œuvre explore les paradoxes et intersections de l'identité de l'artiste, en tant qu'Algérienne et Française, résidente en Angleterre. (fiche pédagogique 1)

Not mentioned is this commentary is the fact that the installation is best read from left to right, that is in what would be most natural for a reader of French or English (or any other language using a Latin alphabet) rather than a reader of Arabic who might instinctively approach the text from right to left. The linguistic resonance of the installation's directional ambiguity is reflected in the position of each speaker. While Sedira's position as a provider of information is in the middle screen (the left screen showing her asking questions to her mother, and the right screen highlighting how her absence prevents the transmission of information) shows her as a native speaker of French rather than Arabic. Sedira qualifies as a native speaker of French, heritage speaker of Arabic, and second-language speaker of English.

While educators and employers alike continue to stress the practical benefits of multilingualism in a world-market economy, Sedira's work brings the potential disruptive effect

of multilingualism in a family setting to the foreground: "L'œuvre met ainsi en scène le jeu contradictoire de la proximité familiale et de la distance linguistique qui empêche la transmission orale de la mémoire. Zineb Sedira a pu expliquer le sens de cette œuvre en montrant que la continuation de la chaîne était interrompue par le 'télescopage des langues dû à l'expérience de la diaspora'" (fiche pédagogique 2). Source of pride and inspiration –after all, the artwork that is *Mother Tongue* did emerge from Sedira's experience of linguistic disjunction – the presence of diverse languages and cultures is often a source of incomprehension, miscomprehension, and familial disconnect in postmemorial Algerian literature.

While Leïla Sebbar's lived experience differs from Sedira's in important ways, she also expresses the same incomprehension, miscomprehension, and familial disconnect in her works. Sebbar's biography places her between France and Algeria. Born in Algeria of a French mother and an Algerian father whose language she does not speak, and ostracized by Algerian children because she dresses in what they consider to be European fashion, Sebbar's work is dominated by questions of language, identity, silence, family and belonging. Sebbar grounds her writing in her own experience, such as hearing her father speak in Arabic without having access to what was being said in Arabic when she was still a child in Algeria: "Mon père […] parlait avec les pères de ses élèves, des voisins, dans sa langue, près de nous" (*Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père* 18). While Algeria is her native land, she ever only had partial access to her own familial and cultural heritage: "Je ne comprenais pas la langue de mon père, je l'entendais dépourvue de sens" (19). *La Seine était rouge* retraces the journey of three young people (one French, one French of Algerian descent, and one Algerian living in Paris) in search of their parents' implication in the demonstration of Algerians in Paris on October 17th, 1961. This

demonstration, protesting a curfew that specifically targeted Algerians in France, was brutally suppressed by the French police. The title of Sebbar's novel alludes to the bodies of killed Algerians that were thrown into the river. Unable to get information, neither specific facts nor testimonies, the younger generation feels cut off from the memory group formed by those who lived the events, while still bearing their elders' trauma.

Before discussing the theoretical implications of silence, it is worthwhile explaining the concrete forms it can take in literature, which is to say, in an artistic medium made up of words. It may be obvious even on a first reading that *La Seine était rouge* centers around trauma, the unspoken and unspeakable, and broken chains of transmission. Nevertheless, pointing out a number of rhetorical figures specifically will help to anchor my point about the prominence of silence in Leïla Sebbar's text. Silence in literature can be both obvious in its manifestation – words that should be on the page are not – and puzzling: how can silence be expressed in an art form made of words? Like a space left blank in a painting, or a silence between different movements of a concerto, silence is both *part of the art form*, and the *antithesis of the art form*. The analytic discussion of silence always risks falling into the trap of discussing everything *but* silence—what's hidden and why it's hidden—which is why I want to start this chapter by anchoring my analysis in the form of the text, reminding my reader of rhetorical devices found in Sebbar's text, before discussing further the postmemorial aspect of silence.

The anacoluthon is an unexpected discontinuity in the expression of ideas, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as the expression of an idea "lacking grammatical sequence," while the *Webster Dictionary* defines it as an instance of "syntactical inconsistency or incoherence within a sentence; especially a shift in an unfinished sentence from one syntactic

construction to the other". *Webster* gives an example: "You really ought – well, do it your way". In Sebbar's text, the anacoluthon has the double function of indicating the impossibility for a character to talk further about a difficult topic, while also serving to highlight the oral nature of memory transmission within the family, since anacolutha loudly announce their deviation from the polished prose one expects in a medium as amenable to revision as literature.

The anapodoton – "a figure in which a main clause is suggested by the introduction of a subordinate clause, but the main clause never occurs" (Burton)- is also a prevalent figure in Sebbar's work. Throughout Sebbar's corpus of texts, the anapodotons reference each other, marking the obsessional return to a past which remains symptomatic of trauma. Sebbar, who speaks French like her mother but has never learned her father's native Arabic uses such titles as *Si je parle la langue de ma mère* that echoes *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père*). These titles, while echoing each other, do not complete each other, since one is not the dependent clause and the other the missing main clause. Rather, both titles function independently and together as anapodotons, marking the obsession over the fragmented information Sebbar herself and her characters have about their respective pasts. The anapodoton is related to aposiopesis, from the Greek "to keep silent," and defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "a rhetorical artifice, in which the speaker comes to a sudden halt, as if unable or unwilling to proceed." Aposiopesis differs from an anapodoton in that it does not specify which grammatical part of discourse must be elided.

Sebbar's most common silence-related figure, however, is ellipsis. This is true of her work in general, and of *La Seine était rouge* in particular. The *Oxford English Dictionar*y defines ellipsis as "the omission of one or more words in a sentence, which would be needed to complete

the grammatical construction or fully express the sense." The aforementioned anapodoton is therefore a specific, grammatically constrained case of an ellipsis. The *Webster Dictionary* defines ellipsis as "the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood but that must be supplied to make a construction grammatically complete," but also notes that the term ellipsis can refer to "marks or a mark (as …) indicating an omission (as of words) or a pause." The term ellipsis therefore comes to mean any of the following: the omission of part of a grammatical structure, the omission of information contained in this grammatical structure, or the typographical mark indicating these omissions. Sebbar's work is visually marked by typographical ellipses, which indicate both the facts left out at the time of the action (what happened in the past is left out from the text) and at the time of narration (the interruption of the characters' discourse, often marked typographically as follows: ….). The double meaning of "ellipsis" defined by Webster, the omission and the diacritic mark, work together to highlight the lack of information to the reader. I have made the conscious choice of using […] to indicate where I have truncated texts myself and left … for the ellipses originally used by other authors in their own texts that I am quoting. This applies to my entire document throughout chapters.

Bertrand Cardin proposes the term of "eclipse" to complement the concept of "ellipsis" in the literary realm. He characterizes an eclipse as "more explicit than the ellipsis because it says something even if it partly masks speech. The eclipse, like a silent word, avoids direct expression by implying it […]. The reader has to interpret the allusions of the text to understand it" (61). While Cardin's use of eclipse is poetic and enticing, it is only applicable when what is implied can be guessed by the reader and therefore does not fit well for most trauma narratives which hide complex histories and implications behind each silence.

The figures of speech described above show how silence permeates Sebbar's novel. Their prevalence, and variety, are central to the reader who engages with the text for the first time. Because the figures of speech expressing silence alternate, and because they are found both structural (the breaks between chapters for example) and on a smaller scale (like the ellipses), the reader's engagement has to be sustained. The reader has to take on an active role towards the text to construct a genealogy of the characters, and a timeline of the events in order to reconstruct the narrative puzzle. Therefore, not only do the figures of speech expressing silence convey the difficulties in remembering or in telling of the characters, but they also put the reader in the same situation as Amel or Louis who are struggling to understand what happened in 1961. Additionally, the fact that Amel and Louis are teenagers (as many protagonists in Sebbar's novels) emphasize this idea of searching for past history, and for one's self-perceived identity:

> Psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and essayist Jalil Bennani […] declares these phenomena [migration, and adolescence] similar because of their triggering of *dépaysement* (a notion difficult to translation that combines elements of exile, unfamiliarity, and change of locale): adolescence is a kind of exile from childhood that triggers the disorientation one ordinarily feels upon leaving a familiar country for the first time. (Mack85)

This feeling of unfamiliarity, and disorientation is precisely what is felt by Amel and Louis, but also by Sebbar's reader when faced with a text permeated with silence. The focus on teenage characters in Sebbar's work emphasizes the themes of transition, adaptation, self-searching, and self-authoring.

The variety in figures of speech also show the complex nature of traumatic silence, which is not just an inability to remember, or personal memories that are hard to translate into words, or the lack of a common languages, or the reluctance to speak to the younger generation, but a combination and permutation of these elements. Additionally, the same figure of speech does not always match with the same reason for silence throughout the narrative: ellipses do not only translate a lack of common language, and a break between chapters is not always the result of interrupted speech from the narrator of the previous chapter. The result is that the reader of Sebbar's text is at the same time stricken by the presence of silence in the text, and unable to decode it without piecing all the elements together and accepting that some questions will be answered while others won't, that is the reader's experience places him in the same situation as the generation of postmemory.

At first glance, silence can seem merely negative. Archives, testimonies, the work of histories tell us what happened in the past, how these events are linked to or triggered by others, and how they influence the present. Silence, therefore appears at first as the *lack of* information, the negative of the positive value that is knowledge. On the personal level, trauma is the conflation of symptoms, what one wants to get rid of by filling the void with knowledge, self-understanding, and self-narrating, leading to self-awareness and coping mechanisms. Silence, like the Lacanian Real, is posited as the indescribable that is the source of anguish. Writers are often imagined as capable of understanding the human soul more fully than everyone else, and their art enables them to capture the complexity of human experience, to really know themselves, and to make an honest portrait of human experience without cheating, as Montaigne would have it. By comparison, silence can appear like a monolithic darkness. The unknown, the un-understood (whether it be historical knowledge or the understanding of the human psyche) might

be the inevitable pendant of knowledge, but it is only valued as a zone to conquer, a void to fill, the motivation for its own destruction. In this chapter, I hope to convince my reader that silence is not only protean in its literary expression, but that it holds various roles in trauma narratives: it can be a symptom of trauma, a conscious reproduction of the difficulty to testify orally, a sociological reality for many French children of Arabic speakers, and a space for self-searching and self-authoring.

Initial silence in the family

The opening sentence of *La Seine était rouge* sets the tone for the rest of the novel. This opening, "Sa mère [la mère d'Amel] ne lui a rien dit, ni la mère de sa mère" (9), is further highlighted by the typography, as it constitutes a single-sentence paragraph at the very beginning of the novel. This sentence introduces the matrilineal filiation "Amel"- "sa mère"- "la mère de sa mère" (as often in Sebbar's texts, the fathers are either absent or relegated to the background of the narration), as well as the theme of silence and the repetition of words ("mère") so characteristic of Sebbar's writing. The negative construction of the verb "ne lui a rien dit," rather than a positive alterative (lui a caché, a gardé le silence) already introduces the idea that something that should have been said has not been said, an idea amplified by the accumulation of negatives ("ne", "rien", "ni"). For readers, the narrative therefore starts with an enigma whether they are aware of the historical context of the novel or not. Readers who do not know about the 17 October 1961 demonstration in Paris are left with a double enigma: the mystery of the title. Why was the Seine red? And why are certain things not communicated to Amel? On the other hand, readers who do know about 17 October 1961 still have to figure out why it is not spoken about in Amel's family. Even for a French or Algerian audience, who might be acquainted with

the historical events depicted in Sebbar's novel, the reasons for the silence surrounding this event are not always clear.

As mentioned above, Sebbar's writings rarely feature paternal figures, at least not as a presence in the narrative. In *La Seine était rouge*, the reader does not have direct access to the point of view of fathers or grandfathers. The only male characters who get dedicated chapters, dialogues, or direct representation (that is, representation that is not mediated by another character) are Louis and Omer, both of them sons but not fathers, and neither of them belonging to the generation of witnesses. Omer's father still lives in Algeria where he works at the Algiers hospital and is only evoked though Mina, Omer's mother: "Mina s'inquiète. Pas de nouvelles de son fils. Plus d'une semaine. Elle a téléphoné à Alger. Le père ne sait rien" (84). Similarly, Amel's father is only evoked through the voice of Amel's mother Noria: "J'ai su qu'il était devenu chef, mais pas chef d'atelier comme mon mari aujourd'hui…Chef de réseau, mon père a organisé la manifestation du 17 octobre 1961" (26). Amel's grandfather is also evoked by Amel's mother Noria, as illustrated by the aforementioned quote. Louis's father is also evoked through Louis's mother Flora "Demande à ton père" (18), or by Louis himself when he remembers his father's conversations with his colleagues (58). The only direct testimonies we have by male witnesses of the demonstration of 17 October 1961 are by "le patron du café l'Atlas" (28), "le harki de Papon" (36), "l'Algérien sauvé des eaux" (48), "l'amant français" (69), "l'étudiant français" (81), "le libraire de la rue Saint-Séverin" (91), and "le flic de Clichy" (99). It would therefore be false to say that male witnesses do not get a voice in *La Seine était rouge*. Crucially, however, there is no transmission of memory *within the family* from male witnesses to the younger generation. This lack of transmission from male witnesses to their children and grandchildren is either represented in the text by the absence of their voices, or in

the case of Amel's grandfather/Noria's father more explicitly when Nora says that in 1961 "il n'a pas voulu me dire pourquoi" (27) the demonstration was happening, although by the year in which *La Seine était rouge* takes place, in 1996, Amel's grandfather only seems concerned with his trip to Mecca where he hopes to find a final resting place (11). If Algerian men don't pass on the memory of 17 October 1961, the mothers and grandmothers at first seem similarly reluctant to speak about the events:

> Why are the Algerians silent? First, having experienced traumatic events, individuals often do not want to transmit a legacy of pain and suffering to the next generation. Second, Algerian culture teaches women to distinguish between public and private events, male and female space. Demonstrating alongside the men, women participated in the political demonstration but considered their role to be supportive, their own realm being the private world of domestic space. Finally, the experience was a defeat for the Algerians, particularly for the FLN organizers, completely unprepared for the violent response of the Paris police. (Mortimer 1250)

State-sanctioned silence

This silence in the families is also a reflection of a state-imposed silence. The memory of the Algerian War of Independence is particularly marked by silence, both in France and in Algeria. If the fact that in France the war was referred to as the "events in Algeria" throughout the war is well known, the general public does not always realize that it took until June 1999 for

France to officially use the term "war" (Bancel and Blanchard 142)[1]. The censorship imposed on the French press at large during the Algerian War is also a factor in the de facto silence. Additionally, the use of torture by the French Army in Algeria, and massacres in the metropole - such as the one of 17 October 1961 (at the heart of *La Seine était rouge*) but also the extreme repression of demonstrators at the Charonne metro station in Paris on 8 October 1962, which left nine dead and several hundred wounded – can trigger what Connerton names "forgetting as humiliated silence": "Perhaps it is paradoxical to speak of such a condition as evidence for a form of forgetting, because occasions of humiliation are so difficult to forget; it is often easier to forget physical pain than to forget humiliation. Yet few things are more eloquent than a massive silence. And in the collusive silence brought on by a particular kind of collective shame there is detectable both a desire to forget and sometimes the actual effect of forgetting" (67). As time passes, and as those directly involved themselves pass away, humiliated silence can give way to a resurfacing of memory, especially from the postgeneration.

After the independence in Algeria, "[l]'écriture de l'histoire fut confiée à des idéologues du parti du FLN, et non à des historiens" (Stora, "Retours de la mémoire" 461), who reshaped the story of the fight for independence not only to consolidate the regime's legitimacy, but also to annihilate any political opposition in Algeria. "Le passé se reconstruisait sans cesse pour structurer un présent où régnait un parti unique" (462). This is in line with Connerton's

[1] The conflict is called "Guerre d'Algérie" in France, and at times the expression "Révolution Algérienne" can be found (used by historian Todd Shephard for example), but I will use the expression "Algerian War of Independence" as it appears to me the most neutral expression and does not stem from either national side.

theorization of repressive erasure which "can be employed to deny the fact of a historical rupture as well as to bring about a historical break" ("Seven Types of Forgetting" 60). Here, the historical break is created by the newly independent Algerian state. On the one hand, it takes the lead in writing its own history rather than having it narrated by the former colonizing power. On the other hand, it also erases or papers over any prior dissension in and opposition to the party which formed the state, i.e., the FLN. According to Stora, it was only with the start of what will develop into a civil war in 1988 that state narratives of the war of independence could be questioned (562). The appearance of a free press with the decree of 2 April 1990 will eventually also encourage the further spread of political debate and disagreement, including on the subject of the new Algerian nation (464). Of course, shortly after the creation of this decree, Algeria would fall into a civil war that lasted more than ten years. The winners of that war—the Algerian government currently in place today—keeps to this day a close eye on any public deviation from its official version of history.

Silence as forgetting

Sebbar's works are deeply concerned with the transmission, or lack thereof, of memory in the family setting**.** Most of her works take place in France after the Algerian independence, although she has written short stories set in colonial Algeria ("La Photo d'identité"), or during the Algerian civil war ("La Jeune fille au balcon," both short stories were published in the short story collection *La Jeune fille au balcon*). Sebbar's work seems little concerned with the state-sponsored silence evoked earlier, yet it is impossible to know whether it is for lack of concern on behalf of the author, or if it reflects instead the consequences of state censorship, whether simply internalized or consciously followed by the author. Sebbar's work focuses on individual

memory, or the transmission of memory within a family. In some works, like in *La Seine était rouge*, Sebbar includes peripheral characters (two café owners, the harki, the Algerian demonstrator who survived being thrown in the Seine, the French lover, the French student, the bookstore owner, the policeman) to bear their testimonies in chapters that could work as standalone stories and are rarely explicitly linked with the main characters[2].

One of the most evident causes of forgetting in the novel is the passage of time. With time, memories become less clear, distorted, modified by discussions with others (in more serious cases, this leads to confabulation, the co-creation of an alternative description of events within a memory group although this case is not present in Sebbar's novel). Leïla Sebbar highlights this time-induced forgetting through the voice of Lalla, who says to her granddaughter Amel, "je ne sais plus" (10). That is, she *no longer* knows. When approached by Louis to testify in his documentary film, Nora first starts by claiming that she will not be able to give her testimony: "On aura oublié, ce sera flou, approximatif, sans intérêt, je t'assure" (18). Interestingly, when she later explains to Louis that she has forgotten much of the events that he is trying to retell in his documentary film, her insistence on forgetting is laced with desire to tell (" te dire ") and ideas about how to narrate the story she is having trouble to tell herself : "J'ai oublié de te dire…Louis, quand on raconte, on oublie, tout vient dans le désordre, je ne peux plus dire exactement l'emploi du temps de ce soir-là, tu demanderas à Lalla, il faudra que tu remontes ton film dans l'ordre chronologique, si c'est possible" (86). Human memory is fallible, images are blurred, and accuracy is seldom guaranteed, even for those who were old enough to

[2] in *La Seine était rouge*, the reader infers that the aforementioned characters are featured in Louis's film, as indicated by the first line of each testimony: *intérieur/extérieur jour/nuit.*

remember, like *l'étudiant français*: "Déjà j'oublie les dates…la mémoire est faible" (Sebbar, *Seine* 82). Noria is conscious of her memory's shortcomings, but starts opening up to the possibility of telling the story of what happened on 17 October 1961, even if she does not feel entirely capable of doing the retelling herself: "Tu demanderas à Flora ou à ma mère" (97). Literature about the Algerian War of Independence often uses the figure of the *chibani* to introduce this incapacity to transmit a testimony due to an inability to retrieve information from memory. *Chibani*—a Maghrebi Arabic word for elderly man— most often names an immigrant worker in France (as seems to be the case with Amel's grandfather), but the term can also refer simply to elders in Algeria.

While the excerpts above can help to locate one cause for silence more or less straightforwardly in the natural erosion of memory, it is not always so easy to identify discrete causes of silence. Dori Laub points out that there "are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech" (78). In Sebbar's novel, reasons for silence are often intertwined with each other. Flora tells Louis: "Toutes ces histoires, Louis, je t'assure elles n'intéresseront plus personne, seulement les vieux, les vieilles qui les auront vécues et encore, combien veulent les oublier, les oublient" (18), indicating that sometimes the erosion of memory caused by the passing of time ("les oublient") and the desire to forget ("veulent les oublier") are not easy to distinguish—they feed off each other. The duty to remember, *le devoir de mémoire*, has become a common injunction, intended to ward off the repetition of past evils. Thus, individuals and society are supposed to learn from history. As time passes, moreover, the anxiety over memory preservation grows. Questions

multiply: When the witnesses have passed away, will we still be able to remember enough not to repeat our mistakes? What happens when even physical traces, places, or documents disappear? Or, if we want to avoid that eventuality, how are we to maintain them in physical and digital archives? Witnesses therefore find themselves in a double bind of being asked to speak by the younger generations while struggling with their own uncertainty whether to speak in the first place, and, for that matter, how.

To complicate things further, some question the usefulness of harping on the past. Examples can be found in both the witness generation and the postgeneration. Take Omer. He seems particularly reluctant to entertain Amel's constant inquiring: "Qui veut entendre parler de cette histoire, de ce jour du 17 octobre 1961 ? Qui ? Ni les Français, ni les Algériens, ni les immigrés, ni les nationaux…Alors…Tout ça pour rien" (89). To him, Amel's constant concern with what happened in 1961 seems hardly relevant in the face of contemporary violence – the novel takes place in 1996 during the Algerian Civil War which led Omer, a young journalist, to leave his country while his father stayed behind in Algiers where the hospital that employs him needs personnel – "l'Algérie qui se déchire, l'Algérie qui saigne, l'Algérie dans le noir, dans la merde, après plus de trente ans d'Independence…la belle revanche…Et c'est Khaled[3] qui défend la démocratie, le pauvre Khaled menacé par les monstres intégristes…C'est grotesque" (89). Omer fails to understand Amel's search for her own identity. He was born in post-Independence

[3] The rai singer Cheb Khaled was indeed threatened in his native Algeria for voicing concerns about the lack of freedom of expression in his country. *La Seine était rouge* takes place in 1996, the year Cheb Khaled's most famous hit "Aïcha" was released.

Algeria, is an Algerian citizen, speaks Arabic, and grew up in Algeria. Amel does not speak Arabic and hence is excluded from some of the conversations happening at home between her mother and grandmother, is a French citizen born in France, presumably has never set foot in Algeria, and cannot travel there as the war is raging.

House and MacMaster point out that "what distinguished the [17 October 1961 demonstration of Algerians protesting against discriminating measures] was its location in the capital, the heart of empire, rather than in the streets of Algerian cities" (5), and that the violence of the Algerian War of Independence "spilled over directly into the metropolitan heartland" (25). In a way, this spilling over of the Algerian War of Independence into the capital is a way for Amel to access Algeria, and Algerian history when the ongoing war prevents her from going there. Yet, the very fact that the colonial conflict "spilled over the metropolitan heartland" might be a constant reminder of potential past trauma to those who lived the repression of the demonstration.

Silence as the expression of trauma

Despite Amel's feeling that nothing is explained to her, neither what is hidden from her nor why it is hidden from her, her grandmother Lalla does give her a reason for not telling her what is said in Arabic in front of her: "Des secrets, ma fille, des secrets, que tu ne dois pas savoir, ce qui doit être caché, ce que tu apprendras, un jour, quand il faudra. Ce jour viendra, ne t'inquiète pas, ce jour viendra et il ne sera pas bienheureux pour toi" (9). A short conversation even ensues between grandmother and granddaughter when Amel asks: "Tu parles de secret. C'est quoi un secret ? C'est si affreux pour tout cacher ?" Lalla's main concern is to protect her granddaughter from the violence she herself experienced as a demonstrator on 17 October 1961:

"Tout, non, mais ce qui fait mal, oui. Voilà, je voulais pas te dire que le malheur existe, et tu m'obliges" (10). In an interview with Nelly Bourgeois, Leïla Sebbar analyzes this manifestation of silence as a desire to protect the younger generations from a difficult past, and the desire that younger generations not develop resentment regarding the country they were born in:

> Cette parole qui manque, est-ce que c'est une protection, une volonté d'oubli ? Je penche pour la volonté d'oubli, qui cherche à protéger les proches, les enfants, ceux qui sont fragiles. Je crois qu'il y a une peur de parler de ce qui va blesser et de ce qui va séparer. On a toujours peur de la séparation. Un peu comme les enfants qui ont peur quand les parents crient ou se séparent. On a peur, parce qu'on est en France, de faire resurgir ce qui va diviser les adoptés de la France et ceux qui étaient là avant.

Of course, Lalla's very desire to shield Amel from "ce qui fait mal" et "le malheur" is precisely the reason for Amel's feeling of exclusion from her own family. By trying to protect her granddaughter from psychological hardship, Lalla heightens Amel's suffering.

Mina's explicit link between verbal repetition and madness— "Je ne veux plus dire et redire. C'est comme la folie" (14) —might also come from her feeling that the present repeats the evils of the past, without repeating the positive possibilities of the past :

> Les interrogatoires, les menaces…les vexations, les humiliations, je ne les ai pas oubliés, mais jamais je n'ai retrouvé cette solidarité profonde, réelle, sincère. Aujourd'hui, malgré les risques de mort, de danger de l'exécution sommaire, je n'ai pas réussi à reconstituer ces réseaux de résistance et d'aide que j'ai connus. A peine menacée, j'ai dû partir (15)

Her current situation as "une avocate algérienne à Paris, c'est une chômeuse de plus, et une chômeuse clandestine" (15) seems to contribute to Mina's reluctance to think about the past now that her struggle of Algeria's independence has not given her a better life. Post-trauma life affects trauma itself, a fact noted by many Holocaust survivors, for whom spreading awareness about the Holocaust becomes a life purpose, and by psychologists[4]. Mina's present suffering exacerbates her feeling that contemplating the past would be too psychologically damaging. Not only is she in France illegally and hence unemployed, like her son Omer, but Omer's father is still in the midst of the Civil War in Algiers. Feeling that she is currently worse off than during the War of Independence therefore discourages too much attention to the past.

Silence due to a gap in language mastery

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Sebbar never learned Arabic, the native language of her father, even though she was born in Algeria where she spent her childhood. Sebbar's father taught French as a foreign language to Arabic-speaking Algerian students, and her mother was French:

> Quand j'étais enfant, en Algérie, les instituteurs –dont mes parents– enseignaient la langue française à des enfants dont ce n'était pas la langue maternelle. Cela signifie que les autres langues étaient interdites dans l'école. Le berbère, le kabyle, l'arabe étaient exclus. Dans ma famille aussi, c'était le français qui

[4] Viktor Frankel, himself a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, notes in *Man's Search for Meaning* that concentration camps prisoners who managed to retain hope in a better future had better chances of surviving and of adapting to life after the Holocaust

> permettait la communication et l'accès au savoir. Il n'y avait pas de nécessité vitale à apprendre l'arabe, et mon père qui aurait pu nous l'apprendre ne l'a pas fait. C'est une situation que l'on retrouve en France, chez ces couples qu'on dit mixtes. Beaucoup d'enfants de l'immigration maghrébine ne parlent ni le berbère, ni le kabyle, ni l'arabe. Ils font semblant, ils s'amusent à dire des mots, ils friment un peu, avec quelques mots, quelques phrases qu'ils maîtrisent à peine. (Bourgeois)

The Sebbar family speaks French exclusively with each other, and Sebbar never learned to understand, speak, read, or write Arabic. Once in France, her Arabic name ("Leïla" means night, while "Sebbar" means patient) however hints at her Arabic background.

Sebbar's experience is reflected in the titles of her works *Si je parle la langue de ma mère* (1978), *Tu ne téléphones plus* (1979), *Parle, mon fils, parle à ta mère (1984)*, *La Langue de l'exil* (1985), *Si je ne parle pas la langue de mon père* (1988), *Le Corps de mon père dans la langue de ma mère* (1991), *Le Silence des rives* (1993), *Son nom au-delà des mers* (1997), *Les Mères du peuple de ma mère, dans la langue de mon père* (1998), *Des Années particulières entre terre et langue* (2000), *Le Silence de la langue de mon père, l'arabe* (2001), *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père* (2003), *Il ne parle pas, il ne crie pas* (2005), *L'Ombre de la langue* (2005), *L'Etrangère aimée, ma langue vivante* (2006), *L'Arabe comme un chant secret* (2007), *Etrangère dans la maison de mon père* (2010), *Le Prénom sans le nom* (2010).[5] Looking at these titles, the repetition of terms expressing Sebbar's core themes is striking: "langue", "père", "mère", "secret", "silence".

[5] The titles above were found in Sebbar's complete bibliography published online by Swarthmore College. See link in bibliography.

Sebbar's titles are repetitive not only in lexical terms, but also in their grammatical structures. Some of the titles are nearly identical: *Si je parle la langue de ma mère*, *Si je ne parle pas la langue de mon père*, *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père* only vary by a few words, while *Le Corps de mon père dans la langue de ma mère, Les Mères du peuple de ma mère, dans la langue de mon père* and *Le Silence de la langue de mon père, l'arabe* repeat the formula *la langue de ma mère/mon père*. Aside from signaling the persistence of Sebbar's own anguish, such echoing titles can make it difficult for readers to distinguish her works. While characters do not recur from one work to another, the sense that the same themes and anecdotes pervade her corpus creates an impression of returning symptoms. It also confuses literary temporality and topography. One has trouble remembering where one first encountered a quote or anecdote: in which text, in which historical context, even in which country). Sebbar's readers thus become engulfed in themes and concerns (silence, trauma, identity, linguistic heritage) larger than any single novel or short story. The feeling of reading yet again about a character being excluded from a conversation within her family, for example, becomes a source of *déjà vu* for the avid Sebbar reader. This experience lends more weight to the issue on the page than a single occurrence could.

In *La Seine était rouge*, the reader is presented with Amel's exclusion from her mother and her grandmother's conversations on the first page: "Elles se voient souvent, la mère et la fille [Lalla et Noria], elles bavardent en français, en arabe, Amel ne comprend pas tout" (9). Because the conversation between Noria and Lalla is not transcribed on the page, whether in Arabic script or in transliteration in Latin characters, the reader does not get access to this conversation either and has no possibility to either understand it in Algerian *darija* (Algerian dialectal Arabic) or to look up a translation in French (as well as not benefiting from the intonations or body language perceived by Amel). The reader therefore finds himself in the same linguistic exclusion as Amel

for whom he/she empathizes. This linguistic exclusion from the family is exacerbated by the dialogue that follows between Amel and her grandmother Lalla when Amel asks "Vous parlez en arabe maman et toi pour que je reste une petite fille qui ne sait pas la langue du pays, la langue de sa mère et de son père ?" (9), and Lalla answers "tu n'as pas réussi à parler la langue des Ancêtres, tu as essayé, j'ai essayé avec toi tu n'as pas dit non, mais tu n'as pas parlé l'arabe" (9-10). Here, the inclusion of expressions such as "maman et toi", "la langue du pays", "la langue de sa mère et de son père", "la langue des Ancêtres" lists all the links that seem broken to Amel: parental ("mère", "père"), familial (including her grandmother), genealogical ("les Ancêtres"), national ("du pays"). Adding insult to injury, this exclusion is paired with a feeling of infantilization for Amel—" pour que je reste une petite fille" (9)—who has to stay in her room, and is not old enough to hear the secrets that belong to the realm of adults: "Amel ne comprend pas tout. Elle les entend de sa chambre. Si elle demandait ce qu'elles se disent dans l'autre langue, 'la langue du pays' dit Lalla, sa grand-mère lui répondrait, comme chaque fois : "Des secrets, ma fille, des secrets, ce que tu ne dois pas savoir, ce qui doit être caché, ce que tu apprendras, un jour, quand il faudra" (9).

Silence due to a gap in common knowledge or references

Not being able to understand Arabic creates a gap in comprehension – a silence of sorts while language is still produced, but meaning cannot be received by the postgeneration – but a gap in comprehension can occur even when French is used. I have evoked this point before in my article "Retracer le passé : rupture et récupération de la mémoire familiale chez Modiano, Sebbar et Sansal".

> Ainsi, même lorsqu'ils maîtrisent une langue commune, la communication entre les personnages se trouve entravée par un manque de référents culturels ou

> contextuels communs. Dans *La Seine était rouge*, le manque de compréhension du contexte politique rend la conversation entre ses parents opaque à Noria, et lorsque ceux-ci évoquent la manifestation pacifique du 17 octobre 1961, ces mots la laissent perplexe : 'Sur la carte du monde, j'avais lu sur le bleu: PACIFIQUE. J'ai pas posé de questions' (Sebbar 45). Cette impossibilité à communiquer crée ce que Diana Taylor appelle un " percepticide " (28), c'est-à-dire une incapacité à voir certains éléments. Parce qu'ils n'ont pas accès à leur propre langue à tous ses niveaux de références, les personnages de la jeune génération sont exclus de la transmission de certaines communautés mémorielles. Les autres membres de leur famille, qui ont accès à ces informations, constituent donc un groupe dont la jeune génération se sent exclue. Il est important, cependant, de noter que ce percepticide n'est pas toujours une dissimulation consciente de la part de l'énonciateur et peut être le résultat de secrets volontairement cachés, ou d'un décalage involontaire dans le discours entre l'énonciateur et le destinataire. (6)

In the passage quoted in my article, "Sur la carte du monde, j'avais lu sur le bleu: PACIFIQUE. J'ai pas posé de questions," Noria who is a child in 1961 recognizes only the word "pacifique," which she recalls from a map featuring the pacific ocean (*l'océan pacifique* in French). The adults around her, on the other hand, intend the word in another sense entirely, i.e., of "manifestation pacifique," a peaceful or non-violent demonstration. Noria, being a child, does not know the double meaning of the word, and hence cannot understand the information she overhears. Such percepticide, born of a lack of both contextual information and shared systems of reference, is found again when Noria encounters the *République* subway station – one of the meeting spots of the demonstration. "République," she wonders. "Pourquoi République ? A

l'école, j'ai appris la République en Histoire, mais là, c'était un mot de passe…C'est ce que j'ai pensé" (46). Because Noria, who grew up in the shantytown of Nanterre, does not know that "République" is a subway station, and because the only context that she associates with the word is her history class at school where she learned about France becoming a republic, she thinks that "République" has to be a password, an "open sesame" from her childhood games.

Even as an adult, in 1996 when Noria discloses her memories of the 1961 demonstration, the cognitive associations she makes are still the ones that seem to come straight from her childhood: Noria recalls that during the demonstration she walked "Jusque devant un hôtel fameux, je l'ai jamais vu, Flora m'a dit son nom, ça ressemble à 'Grillon'" (66). This phenomenon by which children do not understand their parents because they are missing part of the cultural information is experienced by Louis when he overhears his father, an Egyptologist, speaking with his colleagues: "Il a souvent écouté avec une ferveur discrète, les amis égyptiens de son père. Il n'a pas tout compris […] Son père prenait le parti des savants, Berthollet, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Monge…Louis entendait le nom des rues du quartier qu'ils habitaient, à cheval sur le XIIIe et le Ve arrondissement" (59). Instead of relating the names he hears to his father's researches, Louis, like Noria, relates them to the context of his immediate life and surroundings, in this case the streets named after the men his father is referring to. Louis, like Noria before him, therefore stays in a completely different realm of references.

In another novel by Sebbar, *Parle mon fils, parle à ta mère*, the mechanism is reversed: it is the mother who does not have access to the cultural references used by her son. As the son listens to "radio beur," a radio whose main audience is French youth of North-African descent, the mother confuses "beur" (a term used to refer to French descendants of North-African immigrants) and "beurre" (butter). The mother's lack of comprehension of the term "beur" is of

course particularly telling, as it metonymically suggests a broader failure to understand her own son's identity.

Not a one-way silence

At the beginning of the novel, silence is presented as stemming from the generation of witnesses who do not communicate with the younger generations. Amel, for example, reproaches Lalla for her silence: "tu pourrais me dire tout, et tu ne dis rien, et maman ne dit rien" (10). Louis finds himself in a similar situation with his mother Flora: "Je sais que tu as aidé des Algériens et des Algériennes et papa aussi […]. Je ne sais pas ce qu'il a fait, ni toi, vous commencez à parler et vous vous arrêtez, et si je pose des questions, vous ne voulez pas répondre" (18). Omer, who is not part of the witness generation of 1961, but is older than both Amel and Louis and is a direct witness of the contemporary Algerian Civil War in 1996, also refuses to tell Amel more about the life he left in Algiers, where he was a journalist. Instead, he tells Amel: "Je te dirai, mais pas maintenant. Je te dirai," thereby making the same unsatisfactory promise as her mother and her grandmother ("Tu dis toujours ça, plus tard, plus tard et je sais rien" says Amel to her grandmother (10)). Amel therefore finds herself not only cut off from the memory of past events (those of 1961), but also from the testimony of witnesses in the present (1996). The sentence which immediately follows Omer's refusal to speak to Amel—" Amel entend la voix de sa mère"—shows that Amel automatically associates any refusal to speak with her mother.

As we progress in the novel, we realize that this silence inflicted on the postgeneration was already present for those who lived the event but were children at the time of the 1961 demonstration. Noria, who went to the demonstration with her mother Lalla, remembers asking her father why he would not continue to work at the Renault factory and getting no explanation:

"Il n'a pas voulu me dire pourquoi. J'ai pleuré. J'ai supplié. J'ai boudé. Je ne l'ai plus embrassé, ni le soir, ni le matin. Il n'a pas cédé…J'ai su qu'il était devenu chef, mais pas chef d'atelier comme mon mari aujourd'hui…Chef de réseau, mon père a organisé la manifestation du 17 octobre 1961, à l'usine et dans le bidonville. Je n'ai rien su. Ma mère oui" (27).

In the middle of the novel, the production of silence changes sides and remains so until the end. Now it is the generation of postmemory, namely Amel, Louis, and Omer, who produce silence. The parents and grandparents (the witness generation) are the ones who have to endure it: "Flora décroche le téléphone. C'est Lalla. Elle ne pleure pas, mais elle va pleurer, de rage, de chagrin. Amel, sa préférée a disparu, sans un mot. Et elle, Lalla, qui croyait que sa petite-fille lui confiait tout…enfin presque tout" (38). They find themselves in the same situation as the postgeneration was before them, having to rely on each other intragenerationally to try and find information: "Flora téléphone à Nanterre. Chez Noria, personne. Chez Lalla, personne. […] Mina s'inquiète. Pas de nouvelles de son fils. Plus d'une semaine. Elle a téléphoné à Alger. Le père ne sait rien" (84). While the witnesses were reluctant to speak before, they are not given the opportunity to speak anymore, as when Louis "raccroche. Flora n'a pas eu le temps de parler" (101).

"Forgetting as constitutive of a new identity"

At the end of the novel, and after the silence imposed by Amel, Louis, and Omer on their parents and grandparents, a new dynamic appears. In his article "Seven Types of Forgetting," Paul Connerton develops what he calls "forgetting as constitutive of a new identity."

> This conviction [that forgetting involves loss] is found in our European and American background, even if it may not be held more widely. But could not

> forgetting be a gain, as the case of prescriptive forgetting implies, as well as, or perhaps more than, a loss? This certainly appears to apply to a third type of forgetting, *which is constitutive in the formation of a new identity*. The emphasis here is not so much on the loss entailed in being unable to retain certain things as rather on the gain that accrues to those who know how to discard memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one's current identity and ongoing purposes. Forgetting then becomes part of the process by which newly shared memories are constructed because a new set of memories are frequently accompanied by a set of tacitly shared silences. (62-63)

Connerton is no doubt familiar with Nietzsche's argument that forgetting is necessary for present and future-oriented projects on the societal scale, an argument echoed by Krondorfer who focuses on the individual, and not the societal scale, when he claims that "Oblivion in relation to trauma is a necessary step toward creating the means for continuing to live in the present (and this is not meant only in a therapeutic sense)" (246).

While at the beginning of the novel, silence is created by the witness generation who cannot pass on their testimonies to the generation of postmemory, which creates suffering for the latter, as the novel progresses, silence takes on a more positive potentiality. This initial suffering created by being excluded from family memories drive the generation of postmemory to new projects. Louis, for example, starts learning Arabic (63). This dissociation between ethnic heritage and linguistic heritage (Louis is French of French parents) is also found when Omer points out that the singer Étienne Daho, whose parents were Algerian *pied-noirs*, sings like a European dandy and notes: "Remarque, c'est ça qui me plaît qu'il soit arabe et qu'il chante pas comme un Arabe" (90). At the beginning of the novel, belonging to an Algerian community

(such as Amel's family) was equated with speaking Arabic. Not mastering Arabic consequently meant being excluded from this Algerian community, despite one's own familial and ethnic heritage. Later, both a French person of European descent (Louis) speaking Arabic, and a French person identified as having North-African descent (Étienne Daho) but singing or speaking solely in French become not only possible but positive as shown by Omer's remark "c'est ça qui me plaît."

Silence, which was originally a cause of exclusion and suffering, also sets in motion self-searching that might not have happened without the impetus to fill the memorial void created by silence. At the beginning of the novel, Amel had a disagreement with Omer because the latter seemed to have no interest in the demonstration of 1961, preferring to focus on the ongoing Civil War in Algeria. She asks him: "Je comprends pas pourquoi tu veux pas savoir. Tu sais rien de cette journée et des suivantes, de ce moment de la guerre. Tu sais rien et tu veux pas savoir. C'est pas important, parce que aujourd'hui des Algériens tuent des Algériens ? On sait pas qui, ni pourquoi…parce que ta tragédie est plus excitante que celle de ma mère et de ma grand-mère ?" (41). Omer, at least according to Amel, seems to subscribe to a competitive approach to the two historical events: because the Civil War is ongoing, the War of Independence is not worth thinking about. Omer spends his time reading the newspapers that publish articles about the Civil War in Algeria and seems reluctant to explore Paris with Amel. Yet, later in the novel, Omer seems to abandon competitive memory, for a multidirectional approach which includes both French history and Algerian history as he inscribes memorial graffiti on the Parisian landscape. At the Concorde metro station, he writes "ICI DES ALGERIENS ONT ETE MATRAQUES SAUVAGEMENT PAR LA POLICE DU PREFET PAPON LE 17 OCTOBRE 1961" (68), while at Saint-Michel he writes "ICI DES ALGERIENS SONT TOMBES/ POUR

L'INDEPENDANCE DE L'ALGERIE/ LE 17 OCTOBRE 1961" (90) next to an already existing (and partly hidden) memorial plaque that reads "A LA MEMOIRE/ DES SOLDATS DES FORCES FRANCAISES/ DE L'INTERIEUR ET DES HABITANTS DES Ve ET VIe/ ARRONDISSEMENTS QUI SUR CES LIEUX/ TROUVERENT LA MORT EN COMBATTANT" (85). This second graffiti is featured in Louis's documentary film, another project that is born out of the silence which prevailed at the beginning of the novel. In an interview, Sebbar herself discusses the possibility for renewed conversations when memorial plaques appear in the public sphere:

> J'ai rencontré, après la publication de ce livre, des femmes qui avaient 40 ans, et qui disaient qu'il avait fallu l'agitation autour de l'apposition de la plaque commémorative par Delanoë à Paris, et tout ce qu'on a pu dire à ce moment de la responsabilité de Papon, pour que leurs mères leur racontent qu'elles avaient participé à cette manifestation en étant enceintes d'elles… Il aura fallu que, quarante ans après, la parole familiale individuelle soit précédée de la parole publique, collective et politique. Les familles n'avaient pas pu prendre la responsabilité de l'émergence de cette parole. (Bourgeois)

It is not by chance that *La Seine était rouge* ends with the generation of postmemory (Amel, Louis, and Omer) traveling to Egypt. Of course, Egypt is present in the novel from early on through Louis's father who is an Egyptologist. The references to Napoleon's conquest of Egypt and the historical ties between France and North Africa are also present in the novel. A trip to Algeria would be impossible in 1996 at the time of the narrative since the Civil War was ongoing. However, Egypt is also a symbolic space: it is neither France nor Algeria, and hence

constitutes a third space where Amel does not have to feel fully French at the expense of her Algerian heritage, or fully Algerian at the expense of her French identity. For Louis, it is a way to rekindle some sense of relationship with his father, while also having some autonomy in his self-authoring rather than being in the shadow of his father. For Omer, it is a space where he can create an identity for himself that goes beyond that of victim (the inherited memory of Algerian victimhood from French colonialism, and the victimhood of being a persecuted journalist during the Civil War). Neither France nor Algeria, Egypt also escapes the colonizer-colonized dyad. Cutting themselves from both France and Algeria –traveling is a common rite of passage – can provide a "rebeginning" for Amel, Louis, and Omer.

> Augé calls [this] form of oblivion "rebeginning," an ambition that aspires to envision the future by forgetting the past. As its "emblematic ritual form," he has in mind initiation rituals, in which the past is forgotten 'at the moment when a new awareness of time emerges' (Augé 2004, 57). Rites of passage are such moments that mark the transition into something new, closing a life's stage or chapter so as to be ready and prepared to be pushed into a new phase. Such rebeginnings in the context of contemporary Holocaust discourse are not found in the creation of new museums and memorials but in the initiation of genuine dialogue across religious, cultural, and national differences. People from different sides of the historical divide left by Nazi genocidal anti-Semitism would bring to the encounter their baggage from the past without letting the weight of the baggage determine their journey together. Exchanging their experiences of, and predicaments with, the remembering-forgetting dyad can be viewed a form of mental and cultural gift-giving, an exchange that allows them to live together in

> their present lives and communities. This is a rebeginning not in the sense of a revisionist past but of a re-envisioning of the future, so that the past does not, against one's best intentions, dictate the lives we still have to live. (Krondorfer 261)

At the end of the novel, all three characters who did not experience the 17 October 1961 demonstration become producers of new objects of memory. Louis has produced his documentary movie, and is working on a play, and Omer is working himself on a movie. Amel becomes the muse for the two young men, as Louis is writing "une pièce pour Amel" (102), and Omer confesses that Amel will also be the heroin of his movie. Amel herself therefore reaches a new stage in her life, from being a teenage "savante" (10) interested in ancient Greek, to traveling the world and inspiring plays and films herself. The incipit of the novel also showed her as a character excluded from meaning (what was being said in the Arabic language, what was being transmitted orally within her family) to a character for whom meaning is created. At the end of the novel, instead of searching to retrieve meaning from the past, Amel, Omer, and Louis, all become creators of new meaning and new possibilities.

Behind the initial impression that silence is overbearing in *La Seine était rouge*, and that the narrative is solely the assessment of a break in transmission, hides the intricacy of this postmemorial silence. Postmemorial silence is not presented in Sebbar's work as a monolithic, inevitable, or permanent. The two next chapters of this dissertation will focus on two possible paths to remedy postmemorial silence: the first being objects of memory, the second (which will be the focus of chapter 3) sites of memory.

Chapter 2

THE PHOTOGRAPH AS AN OBJECT OF POSTMEMORIAL REMEDIATION IN CATHERINE LEPRONT'S *LE BEAU VISAGE DE L'ENNEMI*

"Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us."
Susan Sontag. Regarding the Pain of Others.

Photographs as vectors of postmemory

I ended the first chapter of this dissertation by making a case for the possibility of postmemory despite the existence of silence between the generation of witnesses and the postgeneration. In this previous chapter, I mentioned that at the end of Leïla Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge*, the generation of postmemory ends up finding other ways for self-authoring: traveling or engaging in new creative projects such as writing a play. Objects and space (space will be the topic of the chapter 3) often find a prominent place in narratives that deal with postmemory. Marianne Hirsch, who coined the term postmemory, addresses the role of objects of memory herself when she notes the mediated nature of her own concept, stating that "Our relationship to [these past events] has been defined by our very 'post-ness' and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed them" ("The Generation of Postmemory" 106). The main medium of postmemory mediation addressed by Hirsch is photography, and she explains how in her own case postmemory was transmitted within her family by looking at pictures and passing on memories orally at the same time. Looking at photographs also permitted an acquaintance with family members who perished during the Holocaust, and whose face she might not recognize were it not for the family pictures. It is therefore not surprising to find that

many novels addressing postmemory include either reproductions of photographs or descriptions of photographs.

To make a link with my previous chapter, I would like to point out that Sebbar is herself interested in objects of memory. In her article "The work of collecting: Objects, sociality and self in Leïla Sebbar's *Lettres parisiennes* and *Mes Algéries en France,*" Sonia Wilson points out Sebbar's interest in objects of memory. Since the two works written by Sebbar that Wilson mentions are explicitly autobiographic, I will not however discuss her article in detail as I want to focus my discussion on fictional writing. Photographs are also often included in works that are not autobiographic. In her introduction to Sebbar's novel, Mildred Mortimer identifies a photograph as Sebbar's source of inspiration to start writing *La Seine était rouge*:

> A writer who has always insisted upon the importance of both personal and collective memory, Sebbar, in these few pages, reveals the importance of image and sound to the process of restoring memory. In 1986, while examining a newspaper photo, she finds that the image brings back the sounds and voices associated with past events of October 17, 1961. (xvi)

In the novel In *La Seine était rouge*, Louis decides to make a documentary about the demonstration of 1961 in order to break the silence of the older generations. Here, cinema, not photography, is shown to have an active impact on how memory is transmitted, but the importance of the visual medium in the memory transmission is similar.

> Significantly, Noria's [Amel's mother] process of remembering is mediated through a camera held by an outsider. Here, as Sebbar explains, the principle of psychoanalysis comes into play. Speaking to the eye of the camera, Noria is able to recreate scenes of trauma and evoke her personal, painful sense of loss.

> Although she cannot yet speak to her daughter, she can bear witness via a different medium. Thus, Sebbar shows that when crucial dialogue between parents and children fails, the message can nevertheless be articulated through other means. (Mortimer xix)

It is worth noting that even when photographs do not appear in a narrative as objects of memory, they are sometimes used to legitimize a fictional narrative based on historical events. An example of this is Maïssa Bey's novel *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, which tells the encounter between a French veteran and a young Algerian woman whose father – a former teacher in Algeria (just like Bey's actual father, and Sebbar's father) – died fighting for Algeria's independence. The novel is prefaced by a picture of Maïssa Bey's father and annexes following the novel include copies of actual documents: *certificat de nationalité, certificat de bonne vie et mœurs, rapport de l'académie*, and a postcard from Nice to Algeria. Although none of these documents are directly related to the novel's plot, their inclusion gives the reader a visual complement to the literary text. The fact that the character of the Algerian woman whose father was killed during the war is left unnamed suggests, but does not affirm, that the text might be autobiographical.

This inclusion of objects as vectors of memory is symptomatic of narratives that deal with erasure of memory, whether through censorship or taboo, or due to an organic erosion of historical traces through time. Objects of memory (artifacts, museums, digital archives, and non-tangible objects such as filmed testimonies) have played a growing role in the field of memory studies as noted by José Van Dijck: "In recent years, cultural theorists have observed an irreversible trend toward what is generally called the 'mediation of memory,' the idea that media

and memory increasingly coil beyond distinction" (15). With the passing of time, the disappearance of witnesses has also placed more burden on objects as those who could previously talk cannot do so anymore. In this context, photographs –as discussed by Hirsch – come to play a central part in the remembering process of many families. They become a link, an object that helps create a sense of connection between generations. This use of photographs as a vector of memory is replicated in fictional narratives, many of which feature descriptions of photographs. The narrator of Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* describes photographs of Dora and her parents, which are one of the few tangible elements he has in hand. In *Le Village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller*, by Boualem Sansal, Rachel goes so far as to reproduce a picture of his father taken in Egypt. Photographs also play an important role in other novels focusing on postmemory, such as Michel Le Bourhis' novel *Les yeux de Moktar*, where handing a photograph becomes symbolically synonymous for passing on the responsibility of a testimony.

However, I intend to continue the inquiry on postmemorial remediation that I started at the end of chapter 1 by looking at the role of the photograph as an object of memory in a context where postmemory has been ruptured. In Catherine Lépront's 2010 novel *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*, Ouhria, a young doctor of Algerian descent living in France, contacts Alexandre T., an elderly French veteran of the Algerian War of Independence. Ouhria has learned of Alexandre's existence through a picture showing him with her grandfather Driss who lost his life during the war, fighting for Algeria's independence. This photograph, which depicts "le beau visage de l'ennemi" and gives the novel its title, becomes the trigger for the encounter between the two main characters, but it is also the site of contested memory between Ouhria and Alexandre,

between Algeria and France. Yet, as the novel progresses, the photograph also reveals the tension hinted at by the quasi oxymoron of the title "beau"/ "ennemi."

Le Beau visage de l'ennemi, published in 2010, is not Lépront's first literary engagement with individual remembering, and the cultural memory of past wars. In 1997, her novel *Namokel* focused on Jewish persecutions during the Second World War. Her novel *Esther Mésopotamie*, published in 2007, also featured themes present in *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*, such as a beloved by absent woman, and man's daily engagement with objects of representations (in Le Beau visage de l'ennemi, Alexandre is a retired stage designer, while in *Esther Mésopotamie* Osias Lorentz is an expert in Sumerian art). Lépront, who also wrote short stories, plays, and critical articles, and who was a literary advisor for Gallimard, stated in an interview with the newspaper *Libération*:

> Si ce n'est pas dans le roman qu'on peut tout faire, on ne peut le faire nulle part. Le genre romanesque est extrêmement libre, en même temps exigeant, il demande de l'épaisseur. Je distingue bien le roman du récit, il doit y avoir un jeu sur la temporalité. La linéarité, ce n'est pas juste, ce n'est pas intériorisé, c'est l'artifice le plus facile qui soit, le plus erroné quant à la vérité de l'inscription de l'homme dans le temps. De multiples sujets, de multiples perspectives sur un même fait, seul le roman peut obtenir ça. (Devarrieux)

This is precisely why *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi* constitutes a valuable basis for this project's discussion of memory. The novel depicts personal memories (Alexandre's memories of his time as a French soldier in Algeria), postmemory (as Ouhria grows up with the stories inherited from her family), and cultural memory (that of the Algerian War of Independence as a

conflictual and difficult site of negotiation for a multicultural present in France), without simplifying the multiple perspectives inscribed in the narrative.

From the very start of the novel, both Ouhria and Alexandre appear particularly marked by the stakes of memory. Alexandre lives in the memory of his deceased wife Elise, and her memory has taken over his life, reducing his daily routine to brief encounters with a young student who works in a parking garage, and with his cleaning lady, while most of his day is spent painting stage settings and reminiscing about Elise. Ouhria, who is pregnant, and who "a des frères et sœurs, mais du côté de son père, elle est la seule petite-fille de Driss" (39) has come to hear Alexandre whom the family tales blame for Driss's death during the war: "Elle attend qu'il se défende ou qu'il s'explique, sans doute, du moins qu'il rende des comptes" (39). Ouhria has come find out the truth about her grandfather's death. Possibly, Ouhria wants to hear what the French state did not grant her: that Alexandre T. is guilty of having betrayed Driss, by speaking of the latter's involvement with the FLN, and by telling the French military authorities about Driss's whereabouts. Ouhria holds Alexandre responsible, but since Alexandre "a passé toute la guerre sans combattre" (21) – and hence did not directly shoot Driss – before leaving the army in 1967 (17), she believes that confronting the veteran herself is the only way for her to hear Alexandre's putative confession. The photograph, which shows Driss and Alexandre in Algeria, therefore becomes in her mind the tangible proof that Alexandre knew Driss well enough to betray him. By confronting Alexandre with the photograph, Ouhria knows that he cannot deny knowing Driss, or deny being in Cherchell at the time of Driss's death. Photography, unlike any other previous medium of representation (written descriptions, paintings, engravings, letters etc.) proves that the person or the thing captured by the photo indeed existed as stated by Barthes: "until this day no representation could assure me of the past of a thing except by intermediaries; but with the Photograph, my certainty is

immediate: no one in the world can deceive me" (115). Ouhria, by having the photograph in her hands, gains a sense of authority over historical truth that she would not have without. As Barthes notes, thanks to photographs "the historian [is] no longer the mediator" between the viewer and historical truth (80).

Objects of memory and historical truth

The first description of the photo in Lépront's narrative however comes in stark contrast with Ouhria's pre-formed idea about what happened in Cherchell. Far from showing an undeniable truth, captured on film for all to see, and in which Alexandre can only acquiesce, the photograph refuses to lend itself to definite interpretation:

> Sur la photo : deux hommes dans un paysage de montagnes. Elle est en noir et blanc et peut-être légèrement surexposée mais enfin il y a fort à parier qu'il faisait très beau et très froid ce jour-là, car les deux hommes, Driss et lui, sont chaudement vêtus, et les crêtes déchiquetées à l'horizon sont couvertes de neige.
>
> Il déclare qu'il n'y a rien à voir.
>
> Sur une photo, jamais rien à voir.
>
> Sur celle-ci pas davantage.
>
> Si on les avait pris de dos, ou mieux : si on avait pris deux hommes de dos et qu'on avait déclaré plus tard qu'il s'agissait d'eux, il n'y a aurait pas eu grand-chose à voir que ce qu'on voit ici. (Lépront 27)

The photograph, which appeared as a historical artifact, meaning as a proof to Ouhria soon loses its capacity to transmit any truth about the past: "Deux hommes dans un paysage de montagnes,

en l'occurrence le Djurdjura, mais qui aurait pu être n'importe quelles montagnes rudes, accidentées et magnifiques ici ou là de par le monde, ou être le Vercors" (27).

This lack of inherent truth in historical documents is found later in the narrative when Alexandre's topological report of the Cherchell area, "une mission exténuante et absurde" (163), and identity documents belonging to Ouhria's grandmother Tidmi prove similarly disconnected from the truth they are supposed to convey. As a French soldier, Alexandre was in charge of drafting a topographical report, which will prove both useless to locate FLN activity during the war and to convey any truth about Driss's death once the war was over: "Alexandre T. avait établi une monographie inutile : points d'eau, grottes, sentiers, anciennes mechtas, passages, nombre de natifs, nombre de déplacés" (36). The identity papers created for Tidmi provide an even clearer case of distance from any historical accuracy as the French end up inventing biographical information in the absence of previous birth records. Alexandre is put in charge of Tidmi's documents and ends up deciding on an arbitrary birth date: "Et maintenant, il faut décider de la date de naissance de madame Tidmi. Il propose le 26 janvier 1892" (58). Alexandre also falsifies the woman's signature as she does not know how to sign for herself: "Alors, sans plus réfléchir, il signe à la place de madame Tidmi" (68). Even when written records exist, they turn out to be inaccurate as "Tidmi n'a pas le moindre papier d'identité et ne connaît pas sa date de naissance, mais elle a le livret militaire de son mari, blessé pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, mort des suites de ses blessures en 1920, une date tardive dont l'appelé du Vercors a jusqu'alors argué pour refuser à l'ancêtre le statut de veuve de supplétif" (57).

This rebuttal in Lépront's novel of the common idea that photographs show the truth is perhaps not so surprising if we consider Barthes's remark that someone who is knowingly being

photographed will change his attitude, therefore corroborating the idea that photographic evidence does not necessarily mean truth: "I constitute myself in the process of 'posing'. I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image" (10). The photographed subject is therefore, in the flesh, already not the 'usual', 'normal', 'daily' subject that he is when he is not photographed. Photographs therefore show subjects in a very different vein than what they are in their daily life. And it is this version of the photographed subject, that the person looking at a historical photograph sees. Even in the event that Alexandre and Driss were photographed candidly, the inability of a photograph to encompass the ambiguity of a relationship between two men on opposing sides of a conflict remains "Pas plus qu'elle n'était capturable avec l'image des deux hommes de la photo, l'amitié ne se raconte" (Lépront 40). This failure of photographs to restitute a historical truth is also found in Laurent Mauvignier's novel 2009 *Des hommes* where the camera becomes a physical filter and psychological shield between the French soldier and the reality of the Algerian War of Independence :

> J'ai regardé les photos avec leurs bords légèrement crénelés, et j'ai passé la pulpe de mes doigts sur les cadres blancs en bas relief qui soulignent le tour de l'image, et à ce moment-là j'ai pensé qu'en Algérie j'avais porté l'appareil photo devant mes yeux seulement pour m'empêcher de voir, ou seulement pour me dire que je faisais quelque chose de – peut-être, disons – utile.
>
> Après, je n'ai plus jamais fait de photographies. (258)

The photograph therefore plays an ambiguous role in *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*: it is the original impetus for a conversation between generations and national narratives, but it is also the proof of Alexandre and Driss's relationship and the tangible manifestation that historical reality cannot be boiled down to an image or a clear-cut narrative. What role then can the photograph

play in postmemorial transmission if it is not able to do justice to historical truth at the time it was taken?

Jose Van Dijck might lead our refection when she claims that "mediated memory objects [here, the photograph] never represent a fixed moment; they serve to fix temporal notions and relations between past and present" (17). The photograph is therefore not so much a repository of historical information but an affective link between the past and the present. This point sustains the fact that Ouhria already seems to know what happened to her grandfather Driss when she first comes to see Alexandre. Despite the initial impression on the reader, and possibly her own belief, that Ouhria reaches out to Alexandre so that he can corroborate the narrative that has been passed on to her by her mother and grandmother, it is rather a connection between the past and the present (and the future symbolized by her unborn child) that Ouhria is looking for.

Postmemory and Prosthetic Memory

It appears fruitful here to refer to two theoretical frameworks. The first one is Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory. Postmemory is helpful to understand the dynamics between past and present in Catherine Lépront's *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*. Ouhria is strongly affected by this connection between past and present, a situation "where experiences were transmitted to [her] so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (Hirsch "The Generation of Postmemory" 106–7). Although Ouhria is only twenty-five years old, and hence was not born during the Algerian War of Independence, her entire existence seems consumed with her family's past. Apart from her grandfather's death, and the resulting trauma and resentment that has been passed on to her from her mother, grandmother, and aunt, we know very little about Ouhria. Specifically, we know that

she is a doctor, that she is twenty-five years old, and that she is pregnant. Any character trait she has, such as her sharp sense of irony[1] and her natural distrust towards Alexandre is only shown through references to the familial past. Furthermore, Ouhria does not seem to recall any time in her own past that can be dissociated from the family history, and she cannot recall any point where Driss's picture was not a familiar presence. When Alexandre "demande à la jeune fille Ouhria d'où elle tient cette photo, elle répond qu'elle l'a toujours vue chez elle, trônant dans un cadre dans la pièce principale" (41). As is typical for postmemorial transmission, the past has always been a part of the generation of postmemory's present, and photograph, as noted by Marianne Hirsch herself, become both the vector of postmemory and the symbol of this extension of the past in the present, having "that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead" (Barthes 9). Susan Sontag, writing in a different context – *Regarding the Pain of Others* does not specifically focus on postmemory – notes a similar power of fascination created by photographs which remains valid in the postmemorial context: "When it comes to remembering, the photograph has the deeper bite. Memory freeze-frames; its basic unit is the single image. In an era of information overload, the photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something and a compact form of memorizing it" (22). While other historical documents (newspaper archives, documentary films, etc.) on the Algerian War of Independence exist, Ouhria's fascination with the photograph might be explained both by Sontag's observation,

[1] When Alexandre asks her what she will name her child, she replies "avec un air de défi puéril" that if the baby is a girl, she might name her Alexandra (23); later when Alexandre mentions in passing that it was cold in the Algerian mountains, Ouhria interrupts him "Mais Ouhria ironise. Très froid, très chaud, c'est tout ? De sa voix polie, cruelle" (37).

and by Barthes's argument that one is naturally drawn to search for proofs of filiations in family photographs, especially when the familial link or sense of connection might not be immediately obvious: "the Photograph sometimes makes appear what we never see in a real face (or in a face reflected in a mirror): a genetic feature, the fragment of oneself or of a relative which comes from some ancestor" (103).

The second theoretical framework that seems particularly useful in the context of a novel in which the photograph becomes both Ouhria's focal point for understanding her own past and the central symbol for all memory in the novel, is Alison Landsberg's prosthetic memory. In her 2004 book *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture,* Alison Landsberg proposes the concept of prosthetic memory. Not necessarily intergenerational, prosthetic memory also proposes a form of memory transmission which can be applied to the family context. This possible dialogue between postmemory and prosthetic memory can be seen early and clearly in Landsberg's book, when she states that "with prosthetic memory, as with earlier forms of remembrance, people are invited to take on memories of a past through which they did not live" (8). Although Hirsch's and Landsberg's concepts thus seem closely related, it is worth noting that postmemory typically takes place within the family setting (although Hirsch does propose a possibility for affiliative postmemory), whereas Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory takes place outside the family setting. Additionally, Hirsch's postmemory is necessarily intergenerational, while Landsberg's prosthetic memory can be intergenerational or not. In Landsberg's conceptualization, individuals carry with them memories of events which they gained exposure to, or knowledge of, through experiential sites such as "movies, experiential museums, television shows and so forth" (Landsberg 11). Prosthetic

memory implies that by seeing a film, going to an exhibition, attending a play, reading a book, hearing a song, or any other similar encounter with an object of memory, someone who did not live through an event might invest in the historical event so powerfully that they then "take on" the memory of the event. I want to state from the start that Landsberg herself does not give a moral connotation to the term prosthetic memory, and uses the expression as a diagnosis rather than a goal to be reached. The first chapter of her book gives the example of immigrants to the United States taking on their new American identity by reading books and learning songs, but she points out herself that this is to the detriment of their past identity that they are expected to shed. Prosthetic memory, like postmemory, generates a personal involvement with events (whether past events, or contemporary events) that the person "remembering" has not experienced themselves:

> This new form of memory, which I call *prosthetic memory*, emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history […]. In the process that I am describing, the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics. (Landberg 2)

In *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*, Ouhria is part of the generation of postmemory: she has not experienced the Algerian War of Independence herself, her grandfather Driss whose death haunts the whole family died well before her birth, and has only heard of Driss's death through the stories

told to her by her elders. At first sight, her case therefore seems to fit the framework of postmemory as theorized by Hirsch. At first, the photograph is therefore the proof that Ouhria's blame towards Alexandre is justified. Ouhria's original impulse is to take the photograph at face value, as she interprets it as the printed transcription of historical truth. Barthes notes that this reaction, the feeling that "I am a primitive, a child – or a maniac; I dismiss all knowledge, all culture, I refuse to inherit anything from another eye than my own" (51) is an instinctive response to the photographic medium. Yet, if the photograph in *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi* becomes so central to Ouhria's life, and to the narrative alike, it is also because it soon becomes more than a mere historical artifact. If Ouhria has felt the need to confront Alexandre with the photograph, rather than to stick to the stories that were passed onto her by the women in the family, it is because something in the picture seems to suggest that the story she inherited was incomplete. In this sense, the photograph unsettles what she held as truth even before Ouhria can figure out the reason that drives her to investigate the story behind the photograph further. Maybe it is what Barthes names punctum — "the *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut little hole […] A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (27) — which hints at the photograph being more than just a typical vector of postmemory in Hirsch's sense.

The memory prosthetic as an agent of memory politics

Despite Ouhria inheriting postmemory in a family context, she ends up distancing herself from the narratives she has inherited from the women in her family. Instead of looking at the photograph solely as the vector of postmemory, she half-heartedly considers the possibility that the photograph might be an agent of partisan outlooks on history, that the photograph has "its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it"

(Sontag 38). The phenomenon here is therefore somewhat similar to that described by Alison Landsberg in the first chapter of *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* when she describes how recent immigrants to the United States, through the use of memory prosthetics, would assume a new American identity. This new identity would enable them to embrace their new homeland and to adapt to their new cultural environment, but it would also impose a cookie-cutter version of American identity that did not leave place for any negotiation or contestation. While Hirsch's concept of postmemory focused on the inheritance of family stories, Landsberg brings in the idea of state-censored identity or History[2]. In Lépront's novel, the picture which was originally presented as a historical proof, then becomes "une concrétion de la haine, une sorte de congélation de la mémoire officielle" (200).

At this point, the two main characters' profession take on a new meaning. Ouhria, as a doctor, is presumably trained to reach a correct diagnosis from the medical clues she is given. When presented with data, charts, or medical images, her role would be to find truth, or the most probable interpretation. Alexandre, who paints theatre settings, is presumably less concerned with any inherent truth in visual media. His work as an army topographer when he was drafted in Algeria proved useless. As a professional painter, he might be less prone than Ouhria to buy into an inherent truth of the photograph.

[2] In fairness to Landsberg's work, this idea is present mainly in the first chapter of her book. I will discuss later how Landsberg links her concept of prosthetic memory with individuals' negotiation of culture, self, and personal political stances later.

Lépront uses free indirect speech throughout her novel, which leads the reader to empathize with Alexandre rather than with Ouhria. When the reader follows Alexandre's thought that "La photo ne pouvait ainsi illustrer qu'un seul récit, édifiant, exemplaire, aussi schématique et codé qu'un roman-feuilleton : destins croisés d'un traître et d'un héros" (189), this shortcoming of the photograph as a vector of memory, the focus on what the photograph is not telling becomes conspicuous. The photograph becomes a symbol of a larger issue, the seeming impossibility to question the narrative enmity between the Algerian and the French where "aucune histoire individuelle ne pouvait s'écarter d'un iota des schémas imposés" (Lépront 206). Alexandre's question to Ouhria when he asks her if she thinks that "il va marcher dans cette combine qui consiste à faire rétrospectivement coïncider les histoires des individus et la grande Histoire, comme si celles-là devaient être emblématiques de celle-ci ou bien l'illustrer, et que celle-ci, la grande, était réductible à la somme de toutes leurs petites histoires, petits destins croisés, à ces misérables petits bonhommes, misérables petites bonnes femmes qu'ils étaient tous, lui inclus, Driss inclus ?" (Lépront 24), and which the reader first takes as a sign of Alexandre's curmudgeon character, finds a new echo and questions the photograph as a memory-object. Through the free indirect speech, Lépront transcribes Alexandre's thoughts in her narrative, but also broadens the debate on postmemorial transmission of enmity beyond Alexandre and Driss:

> Bien qu'historique, la haine s'est d'autant mieux gavée qu'en réalité elle faisait la diète de l'Histoire, car qui sait ce qui s'est passé ? Qui a cherché à savoir ? Qui, le sachant, s'est préoccupé de le répandre ? Ouverture des archives ? Non. Dénis et fictions, d'un côté comme de l'autre, de l'autre valeurs militaires et baratins iniques sur la colonisation positive, ce n'est pas avec ça qu'on pouvait l'entamer.

> Mais cela non plus n'aurait pas suffi. Il a bien fallu enfin que chacun en fasse une affaire personnelle, alors que la haine était impersonnelle. (200)

The potential of the photograph as a memory object to be used either as an object of identity transmission (the glorious memory of Driss as a national hero of the Algerian resistance in Ouhria's family) or as an object of competitive memory (denounced by Alexandre who does not buy into the zero-sum memory politics of Ouhria's family) reveals that memory objects, and photographs in particular, "mediate not only remembrances of things past; they also mediate relationships between individuals and groups of any kind (such as family, school classes, and scouting clubs) […]. But besides their personal value, collections of mediated memories raise interesting questions about a person's identity in a specific culture at a certain moment in time" (Van Dijck 1). The value of the photograph, and its specificity compared to other non-artistic objects of memory, such as personal belongings of deceased relatives, also lies in its capacity to challenge and go beyond any evident meaning: "Ultimately, photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes, but when it is *pensive*, when it thinks" (Barthes 38).

The photograph as a memory-object disturbing the zero-sum game of competitive memory

Once the meaning of the photograph is open to questioning between Alexandre and Ouhria, a new element which had been left undiscussed before is brought to the discussion. If, like Ouhria believes, the entire family has blamed Alexandre for Driss's death, then why would Driss's grandmother, Tidmi, keep this photograph of the two men posing together? "L'ancien soldat français se demande pourquoi l'ancêtre n'a pas coupé la photo en deux dans sa hauteur pour le supprimer, lui, et ne laisser imprimé sur le papier glacé que le visage chéri de son petit-fils Driss" (Lépront 44-45). This quote is also particularly telling of Lépront's style, which uses

subtle clues as to the characters' psychology, as Alexandre who is usually either referred to as "Alexandre T." or simply "il" throughout the novel, is here unusually identified as "l'ancien soldat" contrasting with his open antimilitarism during the war[3]. The shape of the photograph as

[3] Alexandre's father, a veteran himself, can be seen as participating in the zero-sum game mentality towards the war, and has particularly brutal words when learning that his son will not be drafted as a fighting soldier: "cette planque à Cherchell ! lui a craché son père, le colonel T., grand médaillé, grand blessé. Instructeur radio, c'était encore trop musclé pour toi ? Alors la voilà, ta SAS, puisque tu y tiens. C'est le système le plus hypocrite que les politiques aient jamais trouvé, et le rôle le plus pervers qu'ils nous aient demandé de jouer, mais c'est ce que tu voulais, tu l'as. Tu pourras jouer à l'institutrice, l'infirmière, l'assistante sociale et – il le dit encore au féminin – à la représentante du préfet –, tu n'auras pas grand-chose d'autre à faire que de la paperasse, des pansements et du prosélytisme, c'est-à-dire du boulot de Florence Nightingale" (52). Unlike his father, Alexandre has never felt like "un soldat" until he reminisces about meeting Driss during the war, many years later, judging that "en dernier recours il ne restait plus à chacun que son ancien ennemi pour attester formellement qu'il avait été un combattant et ne pas le laisser dans un total abandon" (Lépront 184). Driss's existence become the reason for both Alexandre's later identification as a former soldier, and his inability to be a proper soldier during the war: "même les vrais combats, auxquels la guerre aurait nécessité qu'il participe activement, avec des armes, la trouille et la rage au ventre, et la détestation de l'ennemi au ventre, ce dont il était proprement incapable, et virilement, ajoute-t-il avec aigreur, il les a évités, et il n'a pas davantage lutté contre cette guerre pourtant honnie, et cette excellente quoique malheureuse raison est l'absence de Driss" (Lépront 25).

an object, that is, the fact that it is whole and has not been torn into two, becomes part of the memory enigma itself. Symbolically, and visually, the absence of a tear in the photograph echoes the absence of an irreparable rift between Driss and Alexandre during the war. This absence of a tear in the photograph therefore questions the entire narrative of hate that Ouhria inherited. Rather than being polar opposites, distinct enemies, Alexandre imagines a different dynamic in Ouhria's family, in which Driss and he become at odds yet inseparable:

> Il se représente la vieille femme époussetant tous les matins la photo : dans ce seul et unique geste Alexandre T. devrait donc voir une caresse pour le petit-fils aimé, une gifle pour le petit-fils (ainsi que Tidmi avait fini par l'appeler lui aussi) honni, puis Hadjila et Ijja prendre le relais, même geste, une caresse rituelle/un coup rituel. Il commence à calculer trois cent soixante-cinq jours multiplié par quarante-neuf ans, il n'ose pas poser l'opération et pense à Ariel Vals qui lui aurait donné immédiatement la solution, tant de caresses et tant de gifles, mais surtout il se dit que, non, Tidmi, elle en tout cas, n'aurait pas usé son énergie, ses dernières forces, à répéter un tel geste. Si elle avait éprouvé une haine sûre et, en quelque sorte, sans tache pour lui, elle aurait coupé en deux la photo et tant pis pour la marge absente et criante et pour le bord dentelé absent et criant, et il a encore une autre solution : lui aussi elle le caressait car elle savait. Ou alors lui aussi elle le caressait car elle avait fini par douter et par ce geste espérait que le visage d'Alexandre T. lui apporterait la réponse. Ou encore elle caressait du moins le souvenir qu'elle gardait de lui, précieusement, et secrètement, tel qu'elle

> l'avait connu jusqu'à la mort de Driss, puis il tente de penser à autre chose. (Lépront 46)

The two men become mirror images of each other "le petit-fils aimé et le petit fils honni," both receiving a slightly different gesture from Tidmi, although both are included in her daily rituals. Alexandre also contemplates the possibility that Tidmi never had any hate towards him at all, and that "elle savait," sharing the memory of his friendship with Driss, alleviating the feeling that this friendship is remembered by him alone. Of course, this excerpt only presents Alexandre's ponderings, and the narrative never reveals why Tidmi kept the picture intact. Of course, the other possibility is that the picture was kept intact because without the picture, the story of Driss's betrayal by a French soldier would only constitute hearsay, and therefore the national narrative of Algerian heroes vs. French traitors passed on in Ouhria's family would bear much less weight (Lépront 186-187). The photograph can therefore be either a proof of Driss and Alexandre's friendship, or a justification of an enmity narrative which Alexandre assumes is comforting to some of the women in Ouhria's family:

> Elles ont bien fait de toujours prêter à leur haine personnelle un caractère historique, parce que d'une part elles se déchargeaient un peu de ce fardeau sur le dos de la collectivité qu'on l'appelle patrie, nation, peuple, ou de quelque nom du même genre, d'autre part l'Histoire conférait à leur haine quelque chose de légitime et de maîtrisable, une sorte de tiédeur rationnelle qui empêchait qu'elles s'y brûlent et, en se consumant, entraînent la haine avec elles. (Lépront 161)

The novel evokes both possibilities, but does not disclose a definitive answer.

The new possibility of a less monolithic memory within Ouhria's family emerges.

At first, Ouhria rejects the possibility that her family might not constitute a memory unit, that is that her family might have conflicting takes on Driss's death, and on Driss and Alexandre's friendship: "Encore et toujours Tidmi, murmure la jeune fille Ouhria avec agacement – et comment pourrait-elle être agacée, se demande Alexandre T., si les femmes ne lui avaient pas transmis, avec la haine pour le soldat français, la détestation de cette trisaïeule qu'elle n'avait pas connue ?" (Lépront 102). Behind Ouhria's irritation hides her difficulty to move beyond the clear-cut narrative that she has inherited, something that Alexandre perceives clearly: "Qu'avons-nous fait ! se dit-il encore une fois. Nous avons gavé toute une génération de bons et de mauvais sentiments à l'égard des uns et des autres, sans lui laisser le moindre doute, sans lui offrir la possibilité de se faire ne serait-ce qu'une opinion sur eux et sur leur histoire" (102). The picture as a memory-object therefore ends up revealing different, and sometimes conflicting, aspects of the past as the narrative develops. At the beginning of the novel, the photograph is the proof that Alexandre knew Driss well enough to denounce him which lead to Driss's death. Later, the intact, un-torn photograph becomes a possible proof of Alexandre and Driss's friendship, and of Tidmi's remaining affection for Alexandre. Later still, the photograph reveals the internal dissensions within Ouhria's family regarding the family's past. The photograph brings up "les deux archétypes du roman familial" and the fact that once Driss was dead, his brother Norredine did not find the strength to fight the narrative embraced by some in the family, "pour seulement songer à instiller le doute dans l'esprit de Hadjila telle qu'elle était devenue, quand, dans le strict cadre familial, une fois Tidmi disparue, elle avait à son tour secoué le joug des hommes pour instaurer un ordre matriarcal, mais s'était dans le même temps ployée sous le joug, bien plus dur et implacable, de l'histoire officielle" (Lépront 189). Once Tidmi dead, the photograph which Tidmi might have kept as a token of affection both for Driss and for

Alexandre can be used for other means by Driss's mother: "elle faisait de son fils un héros non seulement historique mais romanesque ; histoire familiale et histoire nationale coïncidaient, ce qui est toujours plus facile ; et Hadjila [la veuve de Driss] pouvait enfin laisser s'épancher sa détestation d'Alexandre T. dont elle était jalouse" (Lépront 152). The photograph, when its meaning goes unquestioned, can therefore turn into a cliché:

> avec le temps la veuve de Driss, sa fille et sa petite-fille, dans leur adoration, avaient fini par substituer au fils, à l'époux, au père, à l'aïeul réels, un personnage de fiction, lui aussi élaboré d'autorité par d'autres et semblable à tous les autres archétypes de héros – un personnage qui aurait de surcroît été abusé par un autre personnage, autre archétype romanesque de soldat français, quelque agent du renseignement, chargé en mission spéciale de nouer des amitiés spéciales d'infiltré, à seule fin de les trahir. (Lépront 191)

The photograph as a memory-object therefore reveals various layers of memory rather than transmitting an objective, irrefutable truth. Unlike in other narratives, such as in Bey's *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, or in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, the photograph which plays a central role in Lépront's narrative is not reproduced for the reader to see. The readers therefore have to trust the characters' interpretations of the photograph without having access to the image themselves. This forces the readers to take into consideration the different interpretations of the photograph proposed in the narrative, without the filter of their own initial impression of the photograph. Furthermore, if the photograph does not hold any inherent irrefutable truth, then not having the photograph reproduced visually in the narrative, and having to create their own mental image might end up creating an even more haunting feeling in the readers who would not share Ouhria's sense that the photograph has always been a presence in her life anyways. By not

seeing the photograph, the readers get to feel the tension of absence and presence emerging from the photograph as a memory-object, as it is constantly referred to in the narrative but they cannot halt their reading to take a look at the picture themselves. In a way, this mirrors the mechanism of memory by which Alexandre and Ouhria both remember, and cannot go back in time to fact-check their interpretation of the past.

From questioning the photograph to image-creation

The photograph as a memory-object in *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi* transmits little historical information. The photograph is the reason given by Ouhria for her original visit to Alexandre, and she does end up acquiring information that she did not know before; by the end of the novel, Ouhria knows that while her grandfather Driss was found out as an FLN Independence fighter in Algeria by the French army, it was not Alexandre who denounced Driss as was claimed by Ouhria's family. Ouhria also comes to learn about conflictual family dynamics before her birth that she was not aware of before her visit to Alexandre. Yet, the image does not work as a prosthetic according to Landsberg's theorization strictly speaking. Ouhria is not made aware of the Algerian War of Independence through the sole photograph of her grandfather, nor does she only develop an affective link with the historical event solely after having the photograph in her possession. The photograph in *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi* does not exactly fit the typical use it is given by Marianne Hirsch in her concept of postmemory either — although Hirsch's work remains the most relevant theoretical framework here — as Hirsch does not address the potentiality to use the photograph to modify family history in one's own interest, like was the case with Driss's widow who used the photograph to pass on a slightly different memory of the historical events than what she knew was true. Ambiguity permits dialogue not as

reaching compromise, but as new roles. Alexander accepts his soldier past. Ouhria sees beyond the veil of the monolithic narrative passed on in her family.

Part of Landsberg's work on prosthetic memory still remains quite relevant when looking at Lépront's novel. Her claim that "Through the technologies of mass culture, it becomes possible for these memories to be acquired by anyone, regardless of skin color, ethnic background, or biology" (2), which aligns with Marianne Hirsch's idea of affiliative postmemory — postmemory that happens beyond the family setting — is particularly helpful to discuss Ouhria's progressive acceptance to engage with Alexandre's memory of the past. The difference with Hirsch's affiliative postmemory is that Hirsch does not discuss the possibility to engage with the memory of an event from conflicting sides: while someone might, through affiliative postmemory, carry the memory of the Holocaust despite not having any ties to the event in their own family, it is assumed that the postmemorial subject is either previously unaware of the historical event, or aware but emotionally uninvested, rather than invested in contesting the memory of said event. Landsberg's added concern with competitive memory, since she states that "unlike its precursors, prosthetic memory has the ability to challenge the essentialist logic of many group identities. Mass culture makes particular memories more widely available, so that people who have no 'natural' claim to them might nevertheless incorporate them into their own archive of experience" (8-9) works particularly well in Lépront's novel despite the fact that Ouhria was already invested in the memory of the Algerian War of Independence. It would not be accurate to claim that in *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*, Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory would work without pairing the concept with a discussion of Hirsch's postmemory. Yet, at the end of the novel, Ouhria, as claimed by Landsberg, does challenge the essentialist logic of group identity passed onto her in her family. As for Alexandre, socially crippled by the loss of

his wife at the beginning of the novel, he turns towards a new artistic project at the end of the novel: portraits of Ouhria's family members.

> Il lui demande [à Ouhria], puisqu'elle est là, de se rendre utile et de bien vouloir tenir l'extrémité d'un grand rectangle de papier Canson qu'il veut dérouler sur la table, et pendant qu'elle vient le rejoindre derrière la table et pose ses mains aux deux angles du papier Canson pour le maintenir à plat, il se met à rire et dit qu'il devrait les remercier, elle-même et les trois autres femmes, car elles ont fait preuve toutes ces années à son égard d'une grande constance, d'une certaine manière elles lui ont été fidèles, alors qu'en l'absence de tout signe d'elles il pensait avoir été effacé de la mémoire de Hadjila et d'Ijja, et que ni la petite Néfissa ni a fortiori la jeune fille Ouhria n'avaient jamais entendu parler de lui. (Lépront 158)

Alexandre symbolically includes Ouhria in the first step of his new project, the unrolling of the drawing paper. The end of the novel illustrates a way out of the competitive memory present at the beginning of the novel, but does not offer a simplistic, unifying resolution in which both characters' views on the past merge, or in which they feel a natural tenderness towards each other. Both Ouhria and Alexandre recognize that, in the face of history, they are still representatives of opposing sides of the conflict, but they do manage to consider and respect each other's experience and relationship to the past in a way that was not possible through mere dialogue at the beginning of the novel. The photograph therefore becomes a site of discussion and of negotiation of memory, as much as it is a vector of postmemory.

Chapter 3

WALKING THROUGH THE CITY: SPACE AS MEMORIAL PRACTICE IN PATRICK MODIANO'S *DORA BRUDER*

A lot of ink has been spilled on the fascination for history and memory in Modiano's texts, starting by his own. Following his nomination for the Nobel Prize of Literature in 2014, surprised journalists on the western side of the Atlantic have described him as a little known author[1], having bet rather on the success of bestselling, and New Yorker magazine published writer, Haruki Murakami. Except for the laureate himself, Modiano's success was less of a surprise in France,[2] where for several decades the "phénomène Modiano" has been a constant in book sales, starting with his striking first novel *La Place de l'étoile* published when the author

[1] Articles published in the media ranged in title from "Nobel Surprise" for the *Columbia Daily Spectator*, "Why you hadn't heard of Patrick Modiano until he won the Nobel, and why you must read him now" for *The Conversation*, "Why nobody knows what to think about Patrick Modiano winning the Nobel Prize for Literature" for *The New Statesman*, to a rather blunt "Who the hell is Patrick Modiano?" for the college population-oriented blog *The Daily Beast*.

[2] "Bien sûr, Patrick Modiano a trouvé *'bizarre'* de recevoir le prix Nobel de littérature, comme il l'a dit à son éditeur, Antoine Gallimard – *'irréel',* aussi, a ajouté l'écrivain lors d'une conférence de presse. *'Bizarre'*, d'abord parce que c'est sans doute le mot qui revient le plus dans la bouche de cet homme à la timidité et à la modestie presque légendaires, inquiet *'d'écrire toujours un peu le même livre'"* (Leyris).

was twenty-three. Modiano has been, fittingly, a muted but ever-present figure in French popular culture through the popularity of his novels[3] but also through his work with cinematographer Louis Malle for whom he wrote the script of *Lacombe Lucien*, or through less canonical allusions such as the homage paid to "Le baiser Modiano" by the *nouvelle chanson française's* Vincent Delerm. Delerm's song can only be qualified as a ballad due as much to its slow tempo as to its lyrics echoing one of Modiano's privileged themes: that of a melancholic walk in Paris.

But the surprise of non-European critics and readers can also be explained by the space depicted by Modiano, which will form the topic of this chapter. Indeed, reading Modiano means walking with Modiano, through the intersecting, sinuous streets, in a faded palimpsestic city (Huyssen), a city that could be drawn on a Freudian wax tablet. In "A note Upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad'," Freud comments on a popular plaything sometimes referred to as magic slates. One draws on a top sheet layer which is then simply lifted to erase the drawing. A trace of the drawing remains on a bottom waxy layer. Modiano's cityscape seems drawn on a Freudian wax tablet in the sense that the topographic present, i.e. what can be seen of Paris today, is metaphorically the drawing on the top sheet of the pad. This is the only part which is immediately visible. Yet, underneath the contemporary cityscape, lie traces of past cityscapes, just like the drawings that remain on the bottom waxy layer on the writing pad but were erased from the top layer. Thus, rather than remaining on the present layer ("present" in the sense of visible, but also in the sense of contemporary), Modiano presents his reader with an entire writing pad which includes the top, present layer, but also what lies beneath: what was

[3]Modiano himself remarks, not without some self-deprecating irony "au bout d'un certain nombre d'années, on devient comme un bruit de fond, comme un meuble" (Payot and Peras)

previously visible, but while erased contemporary topography, is still present beneath the surface. The author himself claims to have rewritten the same novel in each of his publications:

> Oui, j'ai toujours l'impression d'écrire le même livre. Chaque fois que j'en commence un, j'oublie, comme frappé d'amnésie, les précédents et les mêmes scènes reviennent. C'est comme un ressac, des vagues qui sans arrêt... Un photographe qui prendrait toujours le même sujet mais sous des angles différents. Avec mes livres, sans m'en apercevoir, je pourrais composer, tout comme ces plans de métro dont les lignes s'illuminent, une sorte de réseau avec des enchevêtrements. (Payot and Peras).

I would like to point out an exception: the uniqueness in Modiano's corpus of *La Place de l'étoile*, whose narrative shape, style, and tone set the novel apart. I have to concede to Modiano that his novels can be distinguished from each other mostly through the details, just as individuals can be identified by their personal traits. Just as his friend Serge Klarsfeld, whose influence on his work I will expound upon later, Modiano is interested in the uniqueness of the human experience, the singular life in history. It nonetheless seems wrong to talk of a blurred, nondescript, grey writing, a foggy state of mind in which the reader could only be engulfed without any possibility to understand, apprehend, or tease out the specificities of the historical experience of the Occupation, or the individuality of Modiano's characters. Modiano's art does not lack clarity, but rather offers an anti-baroque aesthetics; it is the art of restraint, verging on suppression, dear to Giacometti, which takes away details rather than adding ornaments, which highlights the absence rather than it fills the void. The difficult tasks for the critic therefore lies in noticing the muted details, and identifying the figures that seem to flee as soon as our hand grazes over them.

The characters, the "she"s and "her"s of the narratives, are not the only difficult figures to grasp, and if the reader accompanies Modiano's narrator (often a double of himself) in his Paris walks, it is not hand in hand, as the narrator never lets himself be known fully. The reading experience, through the eyes of a first person narrator (whose thoughts we at first seem to share before discovering that he is obscuring some of his thoughts as much as he is revealing others), is undoubtedly more familiarly uncanny to a European reader, used to serpentine cities, marked with memorial plaques and historical markers, and offering insiders routes and shortcuts, than to a North American reader familiar with blocks and parallel avenues, the logical topography of which contrasts with Modiano's sinuous memory-city.

Following the Nobel Prize announcement, Peter Englund, secretary of the Swedish Academy, compared Modiano to Marcel Proust because both writers work on memory[4]. While Proust's model is based on a sensory recall of personal memories (it is his own childhood memory that the narrator of Proust's *Combray* remembers when he bites into the famous *madeleine*[5]), cultural memory has played a crucial role in the works of French writers before

[4] "Le secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie suédoise Peter Englund a considéré à la télévision publique suédoise SVT que Modiano était le 'Marcel Proust de notre temps'. Il s'inscrit dans la tradition de Marcel Proust, mais il le fait vraiment à sa manière. Ce n'est pas quelqu'un qui croque dans une madeleine et tout revient à sa mémoire', a précisé M. Englund à l'AFP" (AFP).

[5] "In Proust's work, persons and places intermingle with one another in such a way that places take on the individuality of persons, while persons are themselves individuated and characterized by the relation to place […] In fact, the narrator of Proust's novel, Marcel, grasps his own life,

Modiano. "Le Cygne," Charles Baudelaire's poem featured in his *Tableaux Parisiens* evokes the erasure of the old Paris under Haussmann's restructuring of the French capital: "Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville/ Change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d'un mortel)" (v.7-8); "Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie/ N'a bougé! Palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,/ Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie/ Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs" (v. 25-28). Emile Zola also depicts the last days of a city to disappear in his *Ventre de Paris*, writing about *les grandes halles de Paris*, the capital's central market place, later replaced by the *quartier des Halles* for reasons of hygiene and public health. More than a century later, starting in 2010 and planned until 2018, the *quartier des halles* continues to undergo renovations for what one could bleakly call socio-hygienic reasons, for the area before its renovation was a hotspot for drug trafficking and small larceny. French philosophers have also paved the way for

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and the time in which it is lived, only through his recovery of the places in relation to which that life has been constituted. *Remembrance of Things Past* is thus an invocation and exploration of a multitude of places and, through those places, of the persons who appear with them" (Malpas 5). Noteworthy in Malpas's discussion of Proust is his insistence that while Marcel's memories are his own, and therefore the kind of memory we are here discussing is personal memory, there is nevertheless a discussion of the people in Marcel's past stemming from his evocation of places. The discussion of the relationships between Marcel and others is thus triggered by the recall of places (Combray) and spaces characters inhabited or not (Marcel's mother was not supposed to stay with him in his bedroom, a fact that leads to a discussion of the family dynamics between the mother, the father, and the young Marcel). This discussion of the other through place and space will be central to Modiano's Dora Bruder, as I will later show.

thinking about memory and space; Henri Bergson theorized a link between daily activities of the mind and spatiality, Gaston Bachelard dedicated his *Poétique de l'espace* to interior spaces. Other seminal works on *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora), and on space and place (Michel de Certeau) will be examined further in this chapter in dialogue with Modiano's work.

If Modiano inscribes himself in a tradition of writers thinking about space and identity, what then renders him unique? While he might not be the first French writer to offer a reflection on the ontological status of the past and the present, I will argue in this chapter that Modiano's depiction of what lays between memory and silence, distinguishing the work of the novelist from that of the historian, offers a needed complement to the often inefficient memory prosthetics discussed in Chapter 2. It took Patrick Modiano until 2014, with the publication of *Pour que tu ne te perdes pas dans le quartier*, to include the internet in his novels. The internet of Modiano's world of course provides no satisfactory answers[6] to any searches on online databases. This incapacity of memory prosthetics to pass on either information or a feeling of engagement with

[6] "Aucune trace de son père dans l'ordinateur. Pas plus que de Torstel ou de Perrin de Lara dont il avait tapé les noms sur le clavier, la veille, avant l'arrivée de Chantal Grippay. Dans le cas de Perrin de Lara, il s'était produit le phénomène habituel : des quantités de Perrin s'affichaient sur l'écran, et la nuit ne suffirait pas à épuiser leur liste. Ceux dont il aurait aimé avoir des nouvelles se cachaient souvent dans une foule d'anonymes, ou bien derrière un personnage célèbre qui portait le même nom. Et quand il tapait sur le clavier une question directe : 'Jacques Perrin de Lara est-il encore vivant ? Si oui, donnez-moi son adresse', l'ordinateur était incapable de répondre" (loc. 733, Kindle edition).

the historical reality they depict for future generations is underlined by Modiano himself when he notes: "Ce film présentait la version rose et anodine de ce qui était arrivé à Dora […]. Je n'y trouvais rien qui pût correspondre à la réalité, et d'ailleurs la plupart des scènes avaient été tournées en studio" (79). The studio is not the city and, as I will show, it is through the cityscape that Modiano finds a way for his narrator, and his readers, to engage with Dora's experience. It is consequently unsurprising that the first description he gives of the eponymous character, the missing person ad in the newspaper, both starts and ends by the word "Paris":

"PARIS

On recherche une jeune fille, Dora Bruder, 15 ans, 1m 55, visage ovale, yeux gris-marron, manteau sport gris, pull-over bordeaux, jupe et chapeau bleu marine, chaussures sport marron. Adresser toutes indications à M. et Mme Bruder, 41 boulevard Ornano, Paris." (7)

Writing by erasure

Remembering the time he ran away as a teenager, and was later dragged in front of judicial authorities to solve a conflict between his long-separated parents, Modiano's narrator recalls the sense of detachment that he felt from the documents presented to him as evidence of the familial conflict of which he was at the center. As I have proposed in chapter 2, tangible documents presented as proof that something happened often do not trigger the exact mechanism of prosthetic memory predicted by Alison Landsberg. The narrator of *Dora Bruder* being a literary double of the author Modiano, it is no surprise that literature takes the place of this missing affective link between chronological facts and a sense of involvement or concern felt by the person to whom these facts are presented. In *Dora Bruder*, the narrator cites Guillaume Apollinaire, a poet born in the Polish part of the former Russian Empire, i.e., in Eastern Europe

(like Dora's parents), living in Paris (like Dora herself), and whose contribution to war poetry reflected his lived experience of the First World War during which he was wounded, a wound that later lead to his death. This evocation of Apollinaire by Modiano should also be read as a concise homage to the power of literature to reveal what official documents cannot tell: "Tu es à Paris, chez le juge d'instruction, comme le disait Apollinaire dans son poème. Et le juge me présente des photos, des documents, des pièces à conviction. Et pourtant, ce n'était pas cela, ma vie" (36).

These photos, documents, and pieces of evidence could not convey the narrator's experience of his own past, just like documents, photos, and other pieces of evidence fail to transmit Dora's experience to those who hold these documents in their hands. Literature is left to say what documents cannot say, and it is not an extrapolation to claim that this is exactly what Modiano's novel does: the *Dora Bruder* of the title suddenly sounds more like an homage to the person behind the historical figure than the promise of an objective portrait.

But there is in Modiano's writing another means of accessing this lived experience that the historical documents have left behind: walking, following Dora's footsteps, and re-embodying her journeys become a complement to the written word of literature. Of course, as soon as this hypothesis is formulated, it instantly has to be amended, as the walks of Modiano's narrator are transcribed for the readers through literature. These complements to historical documents that belong to literature as an art, and walking as performance are therefore not two alternatives, but rather two sides of the same coin. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the erasure of places in Modiano's novel echoes the disappearance of Dora's voice. This use of places as a physical sign of the passing of time and the erasure that comes with it is not unique to Modiano, and it is also found for example in Catherine Lépront's novel *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi*

discussed in chapter 2: “Comme la parcelle était curieusement seule dans le voisinage à avoir été ainsi réduite à néant, Alexandre T. y avait vu l’exacte quoique insolite illustration d’un trou de mémoire – un oubli exclusif et bien circonscrit – un objet qui aurait été sous ses yeux et que, pourtant, il ne verrait pas” (32). However, Modiano makes use of this faded past in the Paris of his narrator’s present from the beginning to the end of *Dora Bruder*.

This disappearance of parts of the cityscape ranges from the smallest elements of the decor to the largest instances of architecture. At the beginning of his narrative, Modiano notes “Il faut longtemps pour que resurgisse à la lumière ce qui a été effacé. Des traces subsistent dans des registres et l’on ignore où ils sont cachés et quels gardiens veillent sur eux et si ces gardiens consentiront à vous les montrer. Ou peut-être ont-ils oublié tout simplement que ces registres existaient” (13). While these records would probably not end up revealing the complexity of Dora Bruder’s experience during the war, even the remaining traces of information are located in book records that are either hidden, or maybe forgotten, participating in the visual decor of Modiano’s novel where everything seems to vanish as soon as a mere trace of it can be glimpsed. Larger elements also do not necessarily leave more of a trace since “il ne reste plus rien du Saint-Cœur-de-Marie” (128), the religious boarding school for girls where Dora hid, which should have at least left some indication of its former existence. At an even larger scale, “De nouveau je ressentais un vide. Et je comprenais pourquoi. La plupart des immeubles du quartier avaient été détruits après la guerre, d’une manière méthodique, selon une décision administrative” (136). Here of course, the destruction is literal, but in other instances, the text seems to suggest that while some areas were not literally destroyed, they *appear* destroyed nonetheless: “On aurait dit que le quartier avait subi un bombardement, et l’impression de vide était encore plus forte à cause de l’échappée de cette rue vers la Seine” (133). The *conditionnel passé* of “aurait dit”

points out that the neighborhood looked *as if* it had been bombed, leaving the reader with a feeling of uncertainty, and no definite answer as to what really happened there. Between literal destruction and the fading away (what is often described as Modiano's grey cityscape, neither present nor absent, between the blank photograph and the clearly legible black ink of official records), the reader, like the narrator, comes to the unsatisfying conclusion: "j'en étais réduit aux suppositions" (61). The result of scrutiny is always incomplete: "Il me semblait que je ne parviendrais jamais à retrouver la moindre trace de Dora Bruder" (53), sighs the narrator. When traces do appear, it is not to set the narrator on a clear path leading to definitive answers: "Des signalisations apparaissent sans pour autant mener à un but, des nuées s'accumulent… Les ruelles de la mémoire paraissent destinées à se croiser, mais elles ne forment pas un réseau qui se laisse cartographier" (Burgelin 132). Those seeking a map of the narrator's investigation will be left unsatisfied, even more so considering that the same neighborhoods and places often appear in more than one of Modiano's novels.

Not all the sites Dora would have known were destroyed during the war, but even when the narrator finds an address, a building, or an area where potential information could be found, places seem to resist revealing the secrets the narrator tirelessly tries to uncover. Addresses where Dora lived only raise questions as to what she was doing when she was not there: "Il n'y a aucune trace d'elle entre le 14 décembre 1941, jour de sa fugue, et le 17 avril 1942 où, selon la main courante, elle réintègre le domicile maternel, c'est-à-dire la chambre d'hôtel du 41 boulevard Ornano" (88).

Even if it limits parameters to one address, the location itself does not reveal much of Dora's daily life: "J'ignore si Dora Bruder s'était fait des amies au Saint-Cœur-de-Marie. Ou

bien si elle demeurait à l'écart des autres" (42). Did her classmates know that Dora was hiding? Did she have friends to confide in? The influence of places on Dora's life events is also unclear: "J'ignore si la proximité de la gare de Lyon avait encouragé Dora à faire une fugue. J'ignore si elle entendait, du dortoir, dans le silence des nuits de black-out, le fracas des trains de marchandises ou ceux qui partaient de la gare de Lyon pour la zone libre" (74). The little amount that is known about people who later disappeared without further indication of their fate "se résume souvent à une simple adresse. Et cette précision topographique contraste avec ce qu'on ignorera toujours de leur vie – ce blanc, ce bloc d'inconnu et de silence" (29). Similarly, most of the information known about Dora's parents consist of places of birth, work status, addresses (21), but little is known about their personality or the family dynamics. The same can be said about Dora: "Ce que l'on sait d'elle se résume souvent à une simple adresse. Et cette précision topographique contraste avec ce que l'on ignorera pour toujours de leur vie - ce blanc, ce bloc d'inconnu et de silence" (28). The narrator suggests that "on dit qu'au moins les lieux gardent une légère empreinte des personnes qui les ont habités" (30), but admits: "J'ai ressenti une impression d'absence et de vide, chaque fois que je me suis trouvé dans un endroit où ils avaient vécu" (29).

This lack of information transmitted by sites plays a central role in the non-linearity of Modiano's narratives: "l'imaginaire de l'espace semble conduire l'auteur (*sic*) vers les 'maisons de la perte', celles qui signifient l'intimité menacée, la protection illusoire, appartements démeublés, demeures sous scellés, jardins en friche […] Toutefois il arrive que le seuil ne puisse être franchi ou ne débouche que sur le vide" (Julien 13). More surprisingly for someone who spends years searching for information on Dora, the narrator often hesitates to go and fetch

potential leads, leaving his inquiry half finished:

> Au cours des deux ou trois années qui ont précédé la guerre, Dora Bruder devait être inscrite dans l'une des écoles communales du quartier. J'ai écrit une lettre au directeur de chacune d'elles en lui demandant s'il pouvait retrouver son nom sur les registres :
>
> 8 rue Ferdinand-Flocon.
>
> 20 rue Hermel.
>
> 7 rue Championnet.
>
> 61 rue de Clignancourt.
>
> Ils m'ont répondu gentiment. Aucun n'avait retrouvé ce nom dans la liste des élèves des classes d'avant-guerre. Enfin, le directeur de l'ancienne école de filles du 69 rue Championnet m'a proposé de venir consulter moi-même les registres. Un jour, j'irai. Mais j'hésite. (14)

At first puzzling, this hesitancy to find out potentially crucial information is tied to the absence of any significant information on who Dora was as a person in the places the narrator could go to. Through the years, the narrator has learned that literal destruction through demolition is not necessary for forgetting to take place: "Je me suis dit que plus personne ne se souvenait de rien. Derrière le mur s'étendait un no man's land, une zone de vide et d'oubli. Les vieux bâtiments des Tourelles n'avaient pas été détruits comme le pensionnat de la rue Picpus, mais cela revenait au même." (131). Topographical marking and specific sites remain ineffectual in transmitting either information or a sense of acquaintance from the generation of the witness to the postgeneration: "La liste de leurs noms [des déportés] s'accompagne toujours des mêmes noms de rues. Et les numéros des immeubles et les noms des rues ne correspondent plus à rien" (136).

Before discussing how the erasure and lack of information linked to sites in the city can be partly remedied or completed by practices of walking through the city, I would like to briefly go over what would constitute memory prosthetics in *Dora Bruder*. As argued in chapter 2, prosthetics do not always suffice in order to transmit postmemory. I have already shown earlier how addresses and sites do not deliver information sought by the narrator, but I would like to suggest other potential prosthetics in this novel. It is noteworthy that Modiano sought the help of Serge Klarsfeld, the noted French historian of Nazi deportations, to find out more about the historical Dora. Klarsfeld would indeed be the expert for anyone seeking information on a real Dora Bruder, outside of Modiano's novel, starting with Modiano himself.

Modiano's debt to Klarsfeld was clear, at least to Klarsfeld, who wrote the former in April 1997 a letter reproduced in a volume of documents about Modiano published by L'Herne in 2012: 'The investigation, such as you narrate it, is more novelistic than truthful, because you delete me and God knows how I worked to discover and collect information about Dora and send it to you. How could you make me disappear? […] Might you be in love with Dora or her ghost and since we sought her together, you intend to keep her for yourself?' (Ivry).

Yet, as the excerpt from Klarseld's letter to Modiano shows, Modiano deleted much of the information gathered by the historian from his final narrative. Klarsfeld does not make a distinction between the author Modiano and the narrator of the novel, and his phrasing reveals that he is disputing his right to propriety over Dora as a historian who demands credit for his archival discovery, while Modiano's relationship to Dora appears to him as different in nature and belonging to the realm of feelings. It seems at first that Klarsfeld either misunderstands Modiano's literary project (which is not one of retrieving an all-encompassing historical truth), or that, despite understanding it, he still desires receiving public credit. However, the distinction

between Modiano and Klarsfeld's work, and Klarsfeld's surprise at Modiano's obsession with Dora, might also come from the different realms of memory involved. Klarsfeld's project focuses on retrieving cultural memory (the memory of Jewish deportation in France), while Modiano's project insists on the narrator's own connection with Dora. Through Dora, the narrator also investigates his own postmemory, linked with the memory of his father, a recurring figure who is associated with the black market during the Second World War in Modiano's work. Yet, just like the individual memory of every deported person ends up contributing to the cultural memory of deported Jews in Klarsfeld's project, much like a mosaic, Dora acts as a synecdoche (the individual Dora representing all deported Jews) and therefore involves the cultural postmemory of deportation in France. The novel mentions several photographs of Dora and her family (31-33; 90), which are not included in the narrative. Modiano's choice differs from that of other novelists writing about memory and who do include photographs, reproductions of letters or other media as part of the narrative, such as Philippe Artières in his *Vie et mort de Paul Gény*, or W.G. Sebald in *Austerlitz*. The absence of Dora's pictures leaves the reader without a direct way of interacting with the memory prosthetics (the photographs), who hence continue to have their own perception of Dora mediated by the narrator's. The photographs, as is to be expected in a Modiano novel, raise more questions than answers: "Qui a bien pu prendre cette photo ? Ernest Bruder ? Et s'il ne figure pas sur cette photo, cela veut-il dire qu'il a déjà été arrêté ?" (91).

Because the reader cannot rely on the memory prosthetics to convey much information, he is left with the specific atmosphere of Modiano's narrative. Unlike Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory evoked in chapter 2, which conveys both information and affect, sites of

memory in Modiano's work convey very little information, and focus instead on conveying a particular atmosphere linked with the historical past. While the atmosphere of Modiano's novel seems to provide much less historical or political insight on the Second World War as archival material might, the author himself reminds us, through a side story, how an artistic atmosphere can convey a sense of political commentary, and even potential for dissidence:

> Friedo Lampe [avait] commencé son premier roman, *Au bord de la nuit*. […] Il était indifférent à la politique. Lui, ce qui l'intéressait, c'était de décrire la lumière blanc et lilas des lampes à arc, les matelots, les catcheurs, les orchestres, la sonnerie des trams, le pont de chemin de fer, la sirène dans la nuit…Son roman était paru en octobre 1933, alors qu'Hitler était déjà au pouvoir. *Au bord de la nuit* avait été retiré des librairies et bibliothèques et mis au pilon, tandis que son auteur était déclaré 'suspect'. Il n'était même pas juif. Qu'est-ce qu'on pouvait bien lui reprocher ? Tout simplement la grâce et la mélancolie de son livre. Sa seule ambition - confiait-il dans une lettre - avait été de 'rendre sensibles quelques heures, le soir, entre huit heures et minuit, aux abords d'un port.' (93)

Interacting with a city's atmosphere can therefore prove to be more political than it appears, and Dora's interaction with the city - which first appears as a mere means of survival - can also be read as an act of dissidence.

Before discussing the relationship between the narrator's walks through the city and postmemory linked to Dora, I would like to go over the relationship between Dora's walks through Paris and the idea of resistance to the oppression inflicted by the Nazi Occupation of France at the time. If the novel's narrator walks so much through Paris (the whole novel is indeed a literary walk following him), it is because the traces of the ghost he is following, Dora,

are not found in a defined number of places, but rather seem to keep moving. Each discovery of a new place where Dora was or might have been leads the narrator to another place, forcing him to play a game of cat and mouse across the time that divides them throughout the city space that unites them. This theme of a narrator following the trace of someone who has disappeared underlies Modiano's work. In the introduction to the collective work *Modiano ou les Intermittences de la mémoire*, which she directed, Anne-Yvonne Julien notes that:

> beaucoup de protagonistes modianiens ont en partage une pure activité de flânerie, toute de lenteur : ils circulent dans la ville en s'abandonnant à l'impression du moment et leur état d'extrême réceptivité est un peu celui du promeneur baudelairien spleenétique ou de l'explorateur urbain surréaliste, sans toutefois la curiosité électrique pour le nouveau ou l'excitation un peu folle qui s'associait à de tels périples. (14)

Julien's remark might be true of the narrator who walks through the streets of Paris - sometimes purposefully directing himself where he knows Dora has been before, at other times wandering through the city while thinking of her - but one is of course reluctant to call Dora's travels through the city a "flânerie." Even in Baudelaire's times, only male walkers would be qualified as a "flâneur," for a single woman strolling alone without aim would have been perceived as *a femme de mauvaise vie,* while women who wandered through the city like Georges Sand for example were very few and wore men clothes in order to disguise their gender. And while a female individual would have been able to walk alone in the city in the mid-twentieth century, any aimless wanderings in times of war of a female teenager would have made Dora particularly noticeable: "Il n'y avait pas beaucoup de recours pour une fille de seize ans, livrée à elle-même, dans Paris, l'hiver 42, après s'être échappée d'un pensionnat. Aux yeux de la police et des

autorités de ce temps-là, elle était dans une situation doublement irrégulière : à la fois juive et mineure en cavale" (64). Here Modiano's wording, "cavale," stresses a very different type of walking than that of the *flâneur*. The word "cavale," on the run, the lam or the loose, defined by the Larousse dictionary as "état de fuite de quelqu'un recherché par la police," fits Dora's situation perfectly, as she was not abiding by laws such as "défense de sortir après huit heures du soir, port de l'étoile jaune, défense de franchir la ligne de démarcation pour passer en zone libre, défense d'utiliser un téléphone, d'avoir un vélo, un poste de TSF…" (112). Underage, potentially not wearing the yellow star that would identify her as a Jew, and probably out in the city after the eight o'clock curfew, Dora was indeed an outlaw. Modiano's term of "cavale" therefore applies, but also brings to light the absurdity of Dora's situation as it brings to mind the "cavale" of armed bandits or bank robbers on the lam, and not the daily existence of a teenage girl.

While Dora's running away would be necessary if she was no longer able to stay at the convent where she was previously hiding, it also highlights the agency and personality of the teenager trapped in a historical context that left her with very little freedom of action. Her running away ends up being the one fact that somewhat sheds light on Dora's personality, that of an independent, strong-willed, and non-compliant young woman: "Dora, qui était une rebelle, et avait voulu à plusieurs reprises, déchirer cette nasse tendue sur elle et ses parents" (110). Dora, who has to remain as invisible and silent as possible in order not to be identified by others as a Jew and as a teenage runaway once she leaves the convent, does not have many ways to reject "ces endroits, où l'on vous enfermait sans que vous sachiez très bien si vous en sortiriez un jour" (41). Disappearing, therefore, constitutes her only way of resisting an unfair system that tracked and classified individuals from their birth to the death it destined them to. Running away might

have been the only way for her to find "le sentiment illusoire que le cours du temps est suspendu, et qu'il suffit de se laisser glisser par cette brèche pour échapper à l'étau qui va se refermer sur vous." (59). Additionally, in an oppressive context which marked her as different due to her religious background, running away like many other teenagers did might have also provided her with a sense of not being so different from her peers: "Une fugue d'adolescente. Cela arrivait de plus en plus souvent en cette époque troublée" (77).

This shared experience as teenage runaways unites Dora and the narrator, who also had the same experience two decades later: "Qu'est-ce qui nous décide à faire une fugue ? Je me souviens de la mienne le 18 janvier 1960, à une époque qui n'avait pas la noirceur de décembre 1941 […] Mais il semble que ce qui vous pousse brusquement à la fugue, ce soit un jour de froid et de grisaille qui vous rend encore plus vive la solitude et vous fait sentir encore plus fort qu'un étau se resserre" (57). At a much more peaceful time, the narrator's biggest fear about having to perform his mandatory military service subjects him to the feeling of powerlessness and entrapment that he imagines Dora must have felt: "Je voulais me faire réformer et, pourtant, il n'y avait pas de guerre. Simplement, la perspective de vivre une vie de caserne comme je l'avais déjà vécue dans des pensionnats de onze à dix-sept ans me paraissait insurmontable" (96). It is important to insist on the clearly different contexts of Dora's running away and the narrator's, a point I will discuss further below. However, his experience as a teenage runaway triggers in the narrator what he feels to be an insight on Dora's experience, which he links to his own:

> Je me souviens de l'impression forte que j'ai éprouvée lors de ma fugue de janvier 1960 […]. C'était l'ivresse de trancher, d'un seul coup, tous les liens : rupture brutale et volontaire avec la discipline qu'on vous impose, le pensionnat, vos maîtres, vos camarades de classe. Désormais, vous n'aurez plus rien à faire avec

> ces gens-là ; rupture avec vos parents qui n'ont pas su vous aimer et dont vous vous dites qu'il n'y a aucun recours à espérer d'eux ; sentiment de révolte et de solitude porté à son incandescence et qui vous coupe le souffle et vous met en état d'apesanteur. Sans doute l'une des rares occasions de ma vie où j'ai été vraiment moi-même et où j'ai marché à mon pas. […] Vous éprouvez quand même un bref sentiment d'éternité. Vous n'avez pas seulement tranché les liens avec le monde, mais aussi avec le temps. (77-78)

Even before being a potential transmission of postmemory rendered possible by the act of walking, Dora's walks through Paris already work as an act of resistance in a context where Resisting[7] would have been extremely difficult for a lone, teenage, Jewish, runaway girl. De Certeau claims that:

> une comparaison avec l'acte de parler permet d'aller plus loin […]. L'acte de marcher est au système urbain ce que l'énonciation (le *speech act*) est à la langue ou aux énoncés proférés. Au niveau le plus élémentaire, il a en effet une triple fonction "énonciative" : c'est un procès d'appropriation du système topographique par le piéton (de même que le locuteur s'approprie et assume la langue); c'est une réalisation spatiale du lieu (de même que l'acte de parole est une réalisation sonore de la langue); enfin il implique des relations entre des positions différenciées, c'est-à-dire des "contrats" pragmatiques sous la forme de mouvements (de même que l'énonciation verbale est "allocution," "implante l'autre en face" du locuteur et met en jeu des contrats entre colocuteurs). La

[7] I here use the capital R of the French Resistance to the German occupant.

> marche semble donc trouver une première définition comme espace d'énonciation. (148)

Following de Certeau, we can therefore consider Dora's running away and elusive movements through the city as an act of resistance, at a time where voicing this resistance would have been impossible for her. To talk of the practice of walking as an act of resistance fits with de Certeau's own definition of some kinds of walks as "multiformes, résistantes, rusées, et têtues" (146).

Space and postmemorial walks

After this discussion of walking by the generation of the witness, I would like to turn to the role of walking for postmemory. Throughout *Dora Bruder*, the narrator rarely stops to think, and most of the text shows a narrator on the go, walking through the city. Incidentally, "Walking through the city" is the title of one of the chapters of Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life/L'Invention du quotidien,* which will play a significant role in the discussion to come. De Certeau's discussion of spatiality is particularly fitting to Modiano's work as it also reflects the importance of absence and erasure. De Certeau notes, "it is striking here that the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences. What can be seen designates what is no longer there: 'you *see*, here there used to be…,' but it can no longer be seen" (108). This observation could have just as well been made by *Dora Bruder's* narrator, as the entirety of the narrative is based on the relationship between the narrator's walks and absences (the absence of Dora's memory, the absence of clues, the absence of affect in historical documents). These absences within the cityscape are what leads to the creation of the narrative, as "stories about places are makeshift things. They are composed with the world's debris" (De Certeau 107).

De Certeau distinguishes place, "an instantaneous configuration of positions [, which] implies an indication of stability," and space, which he defines as "a practiced place" (117). A place, for him, is a permanent, localizable spot on a map, such as geographic coordinates comprised of latitudes and longitudes. A space is an environment practiced by agents having a particular relationship with it. Modiano's cityscape definitely constitutes a practiced space, where coordinates are not the important element, but rather where overlapping memories (Dora's, his own, possibly other individual's memories) engage with each other. Paris is not seen from a bird's-eye-view, as from a plane, in order to map its different sites and monuments, but rather from the narrator's eye level. We find the idea of the daily uncanny here again when De Certeau notes that, "escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. Within this ensemble, I shall try to locate the practices that are foreign to the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions" (93). Modiano's novel indeed tells us little, or little of importance, about the localization of places, and more about practiced spaces: what matters is less that Dora's parents lived rue Ornano, but rather that they lived in a popular area typically housing working class residents.

Although Modiano's narrator rarely finds answers in the cityscape he walks through, his practice ends up being more important than any clue he could gather. By engaging with the city, he becomes a practitioner of memory. He becomes the "ordinary practitioner of the city" evoked by de Certeau that "live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins.[8] They

[8] De Certeau is here referring to the overview of the city from an elevated point that would render it legible like a map.

walk - an elementary form of this experience of the city ; they are walkers, Wandersmänner whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban text they write without being able to read it" (93). By this practice of the city, these "acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions, these words operate in the name of an emptying-out and wearing-away of their primary role. They become liberated spaces that can be occupied" (105): these spaces, I argue, become occupied by memory.

This memorial act offers a complement to the historical information gathered by the narrator. Let me propose two of de Certeau's quotes on walking, narrative and memory, before engaging more closely with postmemorial practices of space in *Dora Bruder*: "Travel (like walking) is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different. What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, by a sort of reversal, 'an exploration of the deserted places of my memory'"? (106-107); "memory is a sort of an anti-museum: it is not localizable." (108). Modiano's narrator, through spatial practices of the city, renders possible aspects of postmemory that historical documents and prosthetics cannot.

If, following de Certeau, Modiano's depiction of the city turns places into spaces, we are still left to wonder what this means for the work of memory depicted in his novels. In order to understand how spaces relate to memory in a different way than sites do, I would like to take the time to go over the concept of affect before showing how it can be useful in this particular context. Affect theory has been on the rise in recent years within academic discourse, yet, the difficulty in engaging with affect theory lies in the fact that many of those who discuss affect propose their own definition of the term. The budding field has yet to be clearly defined. For the purpose of this chapter, I will use the definition given by Eric Shouse, which has the merit of

being clear, and of insisting on the non-linguistic characteristic of affect that unifies affect theory. According to Shouse, affect "cannot be fully realized in language, and [that is] because affect is always prior to and/or outside of consciousness […] Affect is the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience. The body has a grammar of its own" (1). The term "grammar" in Shouse's own definition may, however, be misleading as it suggests a possible prescriptiveness or predictability, although it is clear from context that Shouse means that the body has a nonverbal way of communicating.

Although it might sound counterintuitive to talk about affect in a literary text made up of words, that is of language, intradiegetically, the incapacity of the narrator to define what exactly is acting upon him constitutes an affective dimension to the narrative. The narrator thus describes, "Et pourtant, sous cette couche épaisse d'amnésie, on sentait bien quelque chose, de temps en temps, un écho lointain, étouffé, mais on aurait été incapable de dire quoi, précisément. C'était comme de se trouver au bord d'un champ magnétique, sans pendule pour en capter les ondes" (131). Here, the novel's text indicates both the extra-linguistic dimension of the phenomenon evoked ("on aurait été incapable de dire quoi, précisément"), and "the body's grammar" evoked by Shouse ("on sentait bien quelque chose", "C'était comme de se trouver au bord d'un champ magnétique", "les ondes"). The relationship between the environment surrounding the narrator (the metaphorical magnetic field) and the narrator's body feeling "something" echoes Shouse's claim that "affect plays an important role in determining the relationship between our bodies, our environment, and others, and the subjective experience that we feel/think as affect dissolves into experience" (3). Shouse's definition of affect is in line with the definition given by Teresa Brennan in *The Transmission of Affect*: "The transmission of

affect means that we are not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction between the 'individual' and the 'environment'" (6). Again, Brennan's insistence on the environment reminds us of Dora's agency when engaging with her oppressive environment as she was running away, as well as the importance of atmosphere-writing in Modiano's work generally; specifically, in *Dora Bruder*, this reminds the reader of the narrator's engagement with the atmosphere that he perceives. In the context of Modiano's work, I see the validity of Brennan's argument more in terms of how the city of Paris and its memory-space influence the narrator's thoughts and mood, rather than as a romantic understanding of synchronicity between the narrator's inner mood and the meteorological changes of the environment that surrounds him.

While atmosphere can be described in different ways, I want to avoid using the word "feeling" when referring to the description Modiano's narrator gives us of his surroundings. Unlike affect, feelings can be defined linguistically and the term consequently contradicts the indescribable effect the narrator's surroundings play on him. Shouse explains that, "A feeling is a sensation that has been checked against previous experiences and labeled. It is personal and biographical because every person has a distinct set of previous sensations from which they draw when interpreting and labeling their feelings. An infant does not experience feelings because she/he lacks both language and biography" (1). The term "labeling," identifying with specific words, seems to be unfit for Modiano's narrative, which insists so strongly on not knowing. It is also worth remembering that trauma theory insists on trauma precluding the possibility to name (the typical functioning of trauma within the psychoanalytical framework which gave birth to trauma theory being the "returned of the repressed," that is the originally traumatic event that cannot be addressed directly, is left out of the symbolic order, and comes back in the form of a symptom). I will therefore use the term "affect" rather than "feeling" to talk about the effect of

places and spaces upon the narrator of Modiano's *Dora Bruder.*

After clarifying my use of the word "affect," I now want to move on to a discussion of affect and space and their link to memory in *Dora Bruder*. While Diana Taylor's work focuses on embodied practices in Central and South America, her concept of the repertoire appears especially useful to consider in this chapter. In her influential book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas,* Taylor distinguishes between the archive, that is the verifiable, historical date or record, and the repertoire made up of embodied, performed modes of transmission involving the senses. While French theorist Pierre Nora's foundational work on sites of memory is often criticized for his idealistic, backward-looking, and potentially illusory conception of a unified national identity, it is worth reminding his readers that Nora also discusses the embodiment of what he terms "true" memory which "has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories" (13).

This link between memory and body leads us to consider affect theory as a complement to Nora's theorization of *lieux de mémoire.* Shouse defines affect as "the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience" (1), noting that "at any moment hundreds, perhaps thousands of stimuli impinge upon the human body and the body responds by enfolding them all at once and registering them as an intensity" (2). The role played by body, places, and identity at the core of the discussion of the novel is also explored by Shouse: "Affect plays an important role in determining the relationship between our bodies, our environment, and others, and the subjective experience that we feel/think as affect dissolves into experience" (3). Modiano's narrator thusly

notes that, "j'ai marché dans le quartier et au bout d'un moment j'ai senti peser la tristesse d'autres dimanches, quand il faillait rentrer au pensionnat" (129). The link between body and postmemory is also present in Kabir's advocacy of the consideration of non-linguistic memorial practices: "The body, therefore, must be returned to the center-stage of analysis; the original meaning of 'trauma'- a bodily wound […] must be revived in our consideration of how people cope with traumatic histories, even when those histories operate through transgenerational (post)memorialization" (72). When Modiano's narrator describes "cette sensation d'étrangeté est la même que celle qui vous prend lorsque vous marchez en rêve dans un quartier inconnu. Au réveil, vous réalisez peu à peu que les rues de ce quartier étaient décalquées sur celles qui vous sont familières le jour" (51), he also describes the affective weight placed upon him by the memorial process, which he has felt before "à vingt ans, dans un autre quartier de Paris, je me souviens d'avoir éprouvé cette même sensation de vide que devant le mur des Tourelles, sans savoir quelle en était la vraie raison" (132).

What then does this tell us about the functioning of postmemory in Modiano's *Dora Bruder*? I have already qualified Modiano's writing as a writing of restraint. Similarly, the working of postmemory in his novels is one that lies in the daily uncanny evoked by de Certeau when he states that "échappant aux totalisations imaginaires de l'œil, il y une étrangeté du quotidien qui ne fait pas surface" (142). This daily uncanny that eludes linguistic description is by nature difficult to share with others, as words do not suffice to translate the experience in a communicable exchange. Surely, this is why Modiano's narrator claims that "j'ai l'impression d'être tout seul à faire le lien entre le Paris de ce temps-là et celui d'aujourd'hui, le seul à me souvenir de tous ces détails. Par moment, le lien s'amenuise et risque de se rompre, d'autres soirs

la ville d'hier m'apparaît en reflets furtifs derrière celle d'aujourd'hui" (50-51). Yet, this solitude that he describes might also be the condition of his affective engagement with Dora, another lonely figure in the city, an ungraspable kindred spirit.

The concept of affect that I have just discussed, and its nonverbal characteristics, interests me not only as a (ironically) labeling or diagnostic tool, but even more so in its potential for memory transmission and a way out of transgenerational silence. I have already quoted Ananya Jahanara Kabir in this chapter, but would like to bring her work into the discussion again, as I believe it is central to questions of transgenerational trauma in contexts where the memory transmission between generations does not occur naturally. While Kabir recognizes the inheritance of trauma studies in her own work when she claims that "I took on board the axiom that 'telling the story,' was necessary to heal the traumatized subject and/or society - a direct inheritance from the Freudian emphasis on 'the talking cure'" (65), she later distances herself from this linguistic approach and shifts towards a discussion of embodied practices and memory. In her line of thought, though my analysis of places differs from Kabir's approach, I want to see if there are other ways of curing than talking, and if walking could be an alternative, a walking cure of sorts rather than a Freudian talking cure. What if the constant physical, bodily and geographical displacement was not a symptom but a possible cure? Kabir argues, "the transformative capacities of non-narrative, even non-linguistic reparation, may be the best way out of the silence versus testimony binary" (66).

Dora Bruder illustrates the disappearance of people from the public space as they fall victim to Nazi atrocities during the Second World War. The novel's narrator is constantly looking for a trace of Dora, while she herself is constantly described as in hiding. This

disappearance of bodies from the public eye, first through hiding then often through death, that characterizes the persecution of Jews and other victims during the Occupation leads me to discuss the embodiment characterizing the narrator's walks through the city. Can the narrator's walks be read as a re-embodiment, a re-population of the partially deserted city? Is the narrator lending his body to the memory of Dora Bruder? When the narrator describes, "je regarde le plan du métro et j'essaye d'imaginer le trajet qu'elle suivait" (45), is he giving a physicality that was denied to Dora as she had to constantly hide, turning her travels into an escape rather than a mindful strolling?

There are two fundamental precautions to keep in mind during this discussion. The point that I will first discuss is the danger of reading Modiano's novel as a reparative enterprise. The second point that I will develop later, and which is tied to the first one, is that the narrator's walks remain very different in nature from Dora's walks. Modiano's aesthetics are not that of repair, which would erase or make the original trauma forgotten; it keeps the none-answers, the silence and the mystery. Following Plato, acknowledging the meaning of mimesis as recognition, the narrator's re-tracing of Dora's path can be read as a recognition of the other, rather than as a reparative walk that would restore the unfair erasure of her presence in the city, or rather than a path to collect historical documents and clues about her story. This repetition of the path originally walked by Dora therefore becomes the body's Socratic question: the narrator distances himself from the original utterance rather than appropriating it in a unifying gesture (for more on repetition as either sophistry or Socratic questioning, see Connerton 115). An utterance can be repeated for insistence – this might be the case for example when an orator wants to make sure that a specific sentence is heard and noticed by an audience – or it can be repeated as to question this utterance. In the second case, the repetition is meant to trigger explanations or additional

thought from the original speaker. My reader will easily remember a time when one of their sentences were repeated to them by their schoolteacher, not merely to check that the schoolteacher had indeed heard the sentence correctly, but to elicit more from their student. In Modiano's novel, the narrator repeats Dora's walks in hope that these walks will elicit new elements to bring into his inquiry.

To anticipate on my next chapter that explores melancholic and productive outcomes of postmemory, I argue that the walks of Modiano's narrators are therefore not melancholic repetitions of a past that cannot be worked through, but rather a reflection on Dora's memorial legacy.

This last point leads me directly to the idea of retracing the walk or journey performed by one's family members during the historical events considered, involving the body in the walking process. This act qualifies as performance as theorized by Diana Taylor, who proposes that: "performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and sense of identity through reiterated […] behavior" (quoted from Hirsch 2-3). This reenactment of the original journeys is reminiscent of Susan Silas's work "Helmbrechts walk, 1998-2003" where she retraces Holocaust death walks. On the website documenting her project, the artist states:

> this work is a visual representation of the 225 miles that the prisoners were forced to march from the camp in Germany into the occupied portion of Czechoslovakia then known as the Sudetenland. I set out to retrace the path of these women — 22 days in Germany and the Czech Republic on the 53rd anniversary of the march. I documented this journey on video, in still images and in writings. I created a limited edition unbound book, *Helmbrechts walk, 1998 - 2003*, which contains 48

- 13” x 19” archival color plates. The images are contextualized by a diary of my own experiences juxtaposed with news clips drawn from the front pages of *The New York Times* on the same days in 1998 — thus drawing a connection between the violent events of the past and those being witnessed in the present.

In her in-depth discussion of Silas’s work, Brett Kaplan proposes that it opens up a dialogue between history and experience” (101). Just like the walks performed by Modiano’s narrator, the history evoked by Kaplan is still active in the present, while the experience of walking is a shared one between the victims (Dora in Modiano’s novel) and the walker belonging to the generation of postmemory (Silas herself, or the narrator of Modiano’s *Dora Bruder*).

One must, however, keep several things in mind. First, the “repetition” of the journeys is not truly a repetition of the first walks or travels, as the historical conditions are obviously very distinct, that is to say that one walks in the same path as the victims but the two walks are of different nature. The path traveled by Modiano’s narrator will never be Dora’s flight for life, and Silas’s memorial walks will never be part of the torture the historical victims endured before their death. To be fair to both Silas and Modiano, neither of them claims a similarity in nature between the original walks and the postmemorial walks, yet, I insist on this difference as I want my readers to keep this distinction in mind at all times when thinking about postmemorial walks. Modiano himself stresses the difference in nature between his narrator’s walk and Dora’s running away when he notes: “je pense à Dora Bruder. Je me dis que sa fugue n’était pas aussi simple que la mienne une vingtaine d’années plus tard, dans un monde redevenu inoffensif” (78). Again, I insist on the fact that if the narrator’s walks constitute re-membering (rendering physically present the memory of Dora whose existence had to be lived in hiding) and an affective connection with the runaway who remains constantly on his mind while he walks the

city, these postmemorial walks are not reparative in the sense that they will never make up for the persecution endured by Dora. By remembering the two events jointly, Dora's running away and his own, the narrator brings Dora in his own personal history, and includes himself in hers (at least in his own remembering of her), giving both histories a new significance. If, like proposed by Michel de Certeau, "marcher, c'est manquer de lieu. C'est le procès indéfini d'être absent et en quête d'un propre" (155), then the walks of Modiano's narrator might have created some space for Dora's memory.

An Alternative Approach to Memory

In 2008, Hélène Berr's *Journal*, in which she wrote from 1942 to 1944 before her deportation and subsequent death at Auschwitz, was published for the first time.[9] In his preface, Modiano describes his close identification with Berr as a reader: "Plus d'un demi siècle s'est écoulé depuis, mais nous sommes, à chaque page, avec elle, au présent" (7). Passionately following Berr's trajectory, Modiano retraced her steps in Paris and Neuilly-sur-Seine to feel closer to her despite the temporal distance: "j'ai voulu, un après-midi, suivre ces mêmes rues pour mieux me rendre compte de ce qu'avait pu être la solitude d'Hélène Berr" (13). He concludes his preface by advising that "au seuil de ce livre, il faut se taire maintenant, écouter la voix d'Hélène et marcher à ses côtés. Une voix et une présence qui nous accompagneront toute notre vie" (14). The resemblance between his attachment to Hélène's story and to that of Dora is clear, however, unlike Hélène, Dora (the historical person who inspired Modiano's text) never left a journal.

[9] The manuscript has been displayed to the public at the Paris Memorial de la Shoah since 2002.

Modiano, as a writer, seems to be haunted by the prospect of the disappearance of Dora's memory, as much as he seems haunted by her ghost. Who will leave a trace of Dora's story if not he? Yet, as Paul Celan's famous phrase goes: "nul ne témoigne pour le témoin." Coincidence or not, Dora's name also brings to mind Freud's patient, renamed Dora in his writings, whose real name was Ida Bauer. Ida "Dora" Bauer, whose name uncannily resembles Dora Bruder's, suffered, among other symptoms, from a loss of voice. Modiano's text does not propose to restore Dora's voice by speaking for her (the text is not a first-person narrative from a character named Dora, a fictional diary). At the core of his text, however, Modiano includes letters sent to the *préfet de police* in their integrality (84-86; 121-127), letting the historical witnesses speak for themselves, rather than having his narrator speak for them. To his narrator, he leaves the task of describing a personal approach to memory across temporal boundaries. While Modiano states in his preface to Berr's journal that, "au seuil de ce livre, il faut se taire maintenant, écouter la voix d'Hélène," (14) the fact that the narrator of Dora Bruder does not keep silent to let Dora's voice be heard can be explained precisely by the fact that no diary, letters, or recordings are left of Dora's voice. Hence, unlike Hélène who was able to record her story herself, the narrator's voice is the only way for Dora not to stay silent forever.

From the very first page of *Dora Bruder*, the link between Dora and the narrator happens through space, specifically through a shared acquaintance with the quartier Ornano, a space before a space of inquiry, of physical practice, and of projection, "un espace d'échappées, d'invention, de création. Ce que d'habitude, on projette dans l'avenir est ici lancé dans le passé" (Burgelin 136). This idea of projection, of imagining what might have happened, is also shared by Boualem Sansal, an author whose work I will discuss more thoroughly in my next chapter,

when he states: “C’est par le rêve et l’imagination que l’on peut sonder le passé lointain et c’est bien ainsi” (41).

The personal experience of space enables the narrator, and potentially the reader of Modiano’s text as well, to establish an affective connection with Dora. However, Dora’s full story is never completely told, and remains full of silences and questions. The story’s starting point is silence and it ends in silence, in a hermeneutic cycle that defies the totalizing aim of historical knowledge. In *The Spirit of Mourning*, Paul Connerton calls upon Gadamer in order to reflect on what constitutes genuine questioning: “the essence of genuine question, says Gadamer, is ‘the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities’” (110). Rather than approaching memory like a historian who would gather clues to push his investigation of what happened further, Modiano is more interested in gathering more paths of investigations, questions, or possibilities that add to his non-linear approach to memory. While the inquiry of historians, like Klarsfeld, could be best represented as a linear progress towards a goal i.e. a complete profile of each Holocaust victim, the inquiry about Dora in Modiano’s text does not follow a similar linear process. Instead of looking for definite answers, Modiano opens up possibilities about the past and the present. Finding out that Dora was a runaway is, therefore, not so much a lead on finding her hiding place, as it is a link to the narrator’s own experience as a teenage runaway. Each new possibility about Dora’s life opens up other possibilities about her family dynamics, her friendship with other teenagers, the experiences she and the narrator might have in common. Each new supposition can be linked with previous suppositions, or suppositions to come. Modiano’s work is, therefore, much different from Klarsfeld’s work that aims at retrieving factual information and does not hypothesize on Holocaust victim’s psychological state.

Modiano's Dora Bruder, and his literary work in general, is most definitely a questioning text that keeps possibilities open rather than one that looks for definite answers. In that sense, his work is very different in nature, and I believe complementary, to the work of his friend Serge Klarsfeld who aims at retrieving as much information as possible about the disappeared victims of the Shoah. Modiano closes his narrative with a non-ending, or rather an ending that does not solve or summarize his findings about Dora:

> J'ignorai toujours à quoi elle passait ses journées, où elle se cachait, en compagnie de qui elle se trouvait pendant les mois d'hiver de se 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 Dépot, les casernes, les camps, l'Histoire, le temps _ tout ce qui vous souillait vous détruit _ n'auront pas pu lui voler" (144-145)

Modiano's approach to offering a memory of Dora to his readers is therefore twofold: first, he leaves the genuine questioning evoked by Gadamer open, as a way to keep Dora's memory alive rather than having her case filed away in the archives of memory; second, he proposes an approach to memory that differs from the work of historians in its affective involvement between the reader and Dora's character.

As a complement to historical information and memory prosthesis, Modiano therefore proposes a narrative that aims at rememorizing Dora rather than commemorating her. I use here the meaning of commemoration as implying official, often state-sanctioned, commemorative activities and not the idea of a memory practice aiming at togetherness, which is present in

Modiano's text. My point is that Modiano's novel is not a literary monument to Dora's memory proposing an official version of her story, but rather a project to keep her memory alive in the present despite the lack of information about what happened to her. This enables a personal involvement with Dora's memory that might be jeopardized by an official biography. This memory process remains open to change, and Modiano reminds his reader that his project of remembering Dora through literary creation had already begun before he wrote *Dora Bruder*, in a previous novel: "Alors le manque que j'éprouvais m'a poussé à l'écriture d'un roman, *Voyage de noces*, un moyen comme un autre pour continuer à concentrer mon attention sur Dora Bruder" (*Dora Bruder* 53), and "Dans le roman que j'ai écrit [*Voyage de noces*], sans presque rien savoir de Dora Bruder, mais pour que sa pensée continue à m'occuper l'esprit, la jeune fille de son âge que j'avais appelée Ingrid se réfugie avec un ami en zone libre" (74). Modiano reflects furthermore on his own work as a writer, as he often does in his works, and the back-and-forth movement between historical details and the work of imagination demanded of his art "fait simplement partie du métier [d'écrivain] : les efforts d'imagination, nécessaires à ce métier, le besoin de fixer son esprit sur des points de détail - et cela de manière obsessionnelle - pour ne pas perdre le fil et se laisser aller à sa paresse -, toute cette tension, cette gymnastique cérébrale peut sans doute provoquer à la longue de brèves intuitions 'concernant des événements passés ou futurs'" (53).

Modiano's concern with telling what remains unsaid by the works of historians is mentioned in a lesser-read work in which he tells an anecdote about his father, which like most anecdotes about his father ends up haunting him: "Un soir, dans l'escalier, mon père m'a dit une phrase que je n'ai pas très bien comprise sur le moment, - l'une des rares confidences qu'il m'ait faites: 'On ne doit jamais négliger les petits détails. Moi, malheureusement, j'ai toujours négligé

les petits détails…'" (*Ephéméride* 25-26).

Throughout his work, the author never ceases to scrutinize "certains personnages de cette époque et de[s] détails infirmes et troublants de ceux qu'aucun livre d'Histoire ne mentionne" (*Livret de famille* 116). As noted by critics, "il importe de saisir les signes des années noires par-delà les reconstructions natives de l'Histoire et le réaménagement urbain de la capitale, rues qu'il vaut de parcourir en pèlerin, parce que la marche habitée est le seul mode de communication possible avec l'invisible" (Julien 14). In this sense, we come back here to de Certeau's claim that the novel is like a zoo of daily practices, which favors the minuscule rather than the great events of history. While the French language likes to distinguish Histoire (history) from histoire (story), Modiano's writing finds a space in between these two terms.

It is always delicate to extrapolate an affective effect for readers from a literary text. I have here used the concept of affect intra-diegetically to analyze the way Modiano's narrator feels drawn towards Dora's story. Yet, in addition to the large interest displayed by readers, literary critics, and academics alike for *Dora Bruder* that constitutes the quantitative indication that the novel has interested many, the affect triggered on the reader by the text remains hard to verify. The gap between literary practices of space and official monumentalization will soon be bridged as a spot in Paris, a *promenade,* a fitting noun also describing a walking practice, will bear Dora Bruder's name. All the more fitting, the current spot is a *terre-plein*, an empty area filled with architectural absence, "entre la rue Leibnitz et la rue Belliard, dans ce quartier entre la porte de Clignancourt et celle de Saint-Ouen. La proposition de la maire [de Paris, Anne Hidalgo] sera soumise à la commission de dénomination qui se réunit le 5 février" (Cosnard). The decision to name a place after Dora's name was taken in homage to Modiano, but also from

a desire to inscribe, officially this time, Dora's memory in the city:

> En choisissant de donner le nom de Dora Bruder à un lieu de Paris – sous réserve que le conseil municipal vote le projet –, Anne Hidalgo rend évidemment hommage au lauréat du prix Nobel, dont l'œuvre est nourrie par cette ville, de *La Place de l'étoile* (1968) à *Paris tendresse* (1990). Mais elle prolonge aussi le travail de Modiano et de Klarsfeld, qui ont voulu arracher Dora Bruder et bien d'autres à l'oubli qui les menaçait. Entre un livre majeur et une promenade à son nom, Dora Bruder ne pourra pas disparaître de sitôt des mémoires. (Cosnard)

What can Modiano's approach to an embodied form of postmemory tell us about other historical contexts? While Modiano is known for writing about the Occupation in France, references to the Algerian War of Independence are also present in his work through allusions or details. He speaks the most directly about this topic in *Ephéméride*, describing, "Mon père m'exposait les projets qu'il avait formés pour mon avenir. Il souhaitait que je parte au service militaire en devançant l'appel. Les quatre années qui ont suivi _ jusqu'à ce que j'atteigne l'âge de la majorité _ il n'a pas renoncé à ce projet. Il voulait lui-même régler toutes les formalités à la caserne de Reuilly. Puis ce serait le départ pour une autre caserne, vers l'Est" (13-14).

This inclusion of the Algerian War of Independence is unsurprising in two ways: first, the war that lasted from 1954 to 1962 happened when a clearly precocious Modiano (who after all published his first novel at age 23) would have been old enough to start becoming interested in international politics, and secondly because this particular conflict had direct effects in Paris. In *Ephéméride*, Modiano recalls:

> ces années étranges de mon adolescence, Alger était le prolongement de Paris et Paris recevait les ondes et les échos d'Alger, comme le sirocco qui aurait soufflé

sur les arbres des Tuileries en apportant un peu de sable du désert. A Alger et à Paris, les mêmes Vespa, les mêmes affiches de films, les mêmes chansons dans les juke-boxes des cafés, les mêmes voitures dans les rues. Le même été, à Alger, que sur les Champs-Elysées.

Ce soir-là, au Koutoubia, étions-nous à Paris ou à Alger? Quelque temps plus tard, ils ont plastiqué le Koutoubia.

Un autre soir à Saint-Germain-des-Prés ou à Alger? On venait de plastiquer le magasin du chemisier Jack Romoli" (27-28)

This echoes House and McMaster's in-depth research, which claims that the Algerian War of Independence was "an exception to the exogenous nature of colonial warfare, in the fact that the conflict spilled over directly into the metropolitan heartland" (25). While Modiano remains a distinctly Parisian writer[10], it is false to claim that he restricts his focus to the confines of the French capital during the Occupation period. This mention of the Algerian War of Independence is found again later in *Ephéméride*[11], and briefly in *Dora Bruder* (8). Modiano's intra-diegetical use of walking as a postmemorial practice thus echoes Kabir's work that aims at "finding ways of analyzing these traumas that acknowledge the myriad odes of consolation memorializing and reconciliation which are deployed by traumatized subjects who may never have heard of Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis, and indeed, 'trauma theory'" (64).

[10] Some of his works do take place in other French places, such as *Voyage de noces* which evokes the *zone libre,* yet, most of Modiano's novels are set in Paris.

[11] "Au printemps 1966, à Paris, j'ai remarqué un changement dans l'atmosphère, une variation de climat que j'avais déjà sentie, à treize ans en 1958, puis à la fin de la guerre d'Algérie" (34)

Furthermore, the idea of sinuosity of the Parisian cityscape can inspire more complex considerations of complex identities, a winding exploration of an identity that does not always appear straightforwardly clear even to its inheritors. Modiano himself, in Dora Bruder, questions the labeling of supposedly monolithic identities: “On vous classe dans des catégories bizarres dont vous n’avez jamais entendu parler et qui ne correspondent pas à ce que vous êtes tellement. On vous convoque. On vous interne. Vous aimeriez bien comprendre pourquoi” (37-38). He opens the door for other modes of memory inheritance and empathy with those whom he calls friends, “amis que je n’ai pas connus [et qui] ont disparu en 1945, l’année de ma naissance” (98).

Chapter 4

POSTMEMORIAL GUILT AND TRANSCATEGORICAL POSTMEMORY IN BOUALEM SANSAL'S *LE VILLAGE DE L'ALLEMAND OU LE JOURNAL DES FRERES SCHILLER*

Sommes-nous comptables des crimes de nos pères,
des crimes de nos frères et de nos enfants ?
Boualem Sansal

Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory has been seminal in memory studies, opening up issues of memory to generations who have not lived the events remembered, but rather inherited these memories from their parents or grandparents. Yet, Hirsch's concept addresses only the postmemory of victims. Hirsch's founding article "The Generation of Postmemory" focuses on Art, the narrator inheriting his father's memories of the latter's camp experience at Auschwitz during the Holocaust. Much research has been done on postmemory within memory studies based on literary, photographic, cinematographic and other media representations. Until now, however, little has been said about the inherited memory of perpetrators within the framework described by Hirsch. This gap in research is due in great part to the fact that the founding work on postmemory has been carried out mainly by the victim postgeneration. Marianne Hirsch herself is the daughter of Jewish parents from Czernowitz (modern-day Ukraine, then Romania) who survived the Holocaust. She evokes the postmemory of her own family in her works, in particular the book co-authored with her husband, historian Leo Spitzer, *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory* (2011), as well as in their article "What's Wrong With This Picture? Archival Photographs in Contemporary Narratives" (2006).

Perpetrator Postmemory

While Hirsch herself asks the question of whether postmemory is "limited to victims," or if it can "include bystanders and perpetrators, or could one argue that it complicates the delineations of these positions which, in Holocaust studies, have come to be taken for granted?," she leaves the question open for others to answer ("The Generation of Postmemory" 107).

Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory has circulated widely within the field of memory studies and beyond, and has given rise to numerous projects involving works of fiction, memoirs, photography, performance arts, and testimonies about recovering one's familial past, among others. Hirsch's concept has been so influential that one could make a case for the existence of a subfield of postmemory studies. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, victim postmemory makes up the vast majority of both creative and academic projects; the postmemory of perpetrators constitutes a large gap in the field. There are a few notable exceptions. Unsurprisingly, the theme of perpetrator postmemory, in the context of the Second World War in particular but as a research area in general, has developed primarily within German studies. This can be explained in part by Germany's defeat in the Second World War, and the indictment of famed Nazi officers, which prevents former perpetrators from claiming a respectable or even admirable hero status, unlike – to cite a contrasting example – former self-styled Indonesian "gangsters" whose established social position enabled them to rebrand their crimes during the Indonesian killings of 1965-1966 as admirable deeds.[1] Germany's Nazi past has been denounced in Germany as well as internationally, and perpetrators of the Second World War are clearly

[1] About this topic, see Joshua Oppenheimer and Christine Cynn's 2012 documentary *The Act of Killing*.

identified. Post-war efforts within the German educational system to inform students about the country's dark past, as well as representations, which have at times been accused of being somewhat whitewashing, of German guilt in more popular culture (such as the 2013 German TV miniseries *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*, or the 2011 documentary by Israeli-German director Chanoch Zeevi's *Hitler's Children)* also contribute to the discussion of perpetrator postmemory in the German context. An exhaustive review of academic works tackling perpetrator postmemory in the German context would be an academic project of its own that would derail us too much from the present topic. Worth mentioning, however, are Peter Sichrovsky's 1989 *Born Guilty: Children of Nazi Families*, Dan Bar-On's 1989 *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich*, Gerald Posner's 1991 *Hitler's Children: Sons and Daughters of Leaders of the Third Reich talk about their Fathers and Themselves*, Eric McGlothlin's 2006 *Second-Generation Holocaust Literature: Legacies of Survival and Perpetration,* and Gabriele Schwab's 2010 *Haunting Legacies, Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma,* all of which constitute seminal academic research about the topic of perpetrator postmemory in the German context. Additionally, Gertrud Hardtmann's chapter in *The International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma,* created under the direction of Yael Danieli focuses on grandchildren of Nazis, while the handbook as a whole takes a more general approach to multigenerational trauma across the victim/perpetrator divide, and across national lines: the second generation of Hibakusha, the Japanese survivors of the atomic bomb; children of collaborators; offspring of both the Turkish genocide of the Armenians and the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia; those revealed after the fall of communism, such as in the former Yugoslavia, unified Germany, and Hungary; indigenous peoples such as the Australian aborigines, Native Americans, and Africans; and those following repressive regimes including

Stalin's purge, the dictatorship in Chile and Argentina, South Africa under apartheid, and the Baha'is in Iran. (Erll 398)

All of this is not to say that the concept of perpetrator memory has not been considered at all in the French and Francophone context. While it is true that the memory of the witness has prevailed in France, discussions from abroad have seeped in and entered into dialogue with the French context. Citing two Italian authors, Debarati Sanyal notes that:

> si nous vivons dans ce qu'Annette Wieviorka appelle l'*ère du témoin,* quand la victime se voit conférer une autorité mémorielle et historique sans précédent dans la sphère publique, de tels discours [le concept de zone grise développé par Primo Levi dans *Les Naufragés et les rescapés: quarante ans après Auschwitz* et la réflexion de Giorgio Agamben sur le système concentrationnaire et ses implications pour la relation que nous entretenons avec l'Histoire dans *ce qu'il reste d'Auschwitz*] questionnent au contraire la place inconfortable de la complicité et du statut du bourreau dans la mémoire. (215)

It would however be erroneous to think that the consideration of perpetrator postmemory has been a mere import from foreign influence. The most prominent example of such a consideration is Henri Rousso's 1987 influential book, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours*. In his magnum opus, Rousso analyzes the memory of the Vichy regime in France, thus already establishing a temporal distance between the time of the historical period and the time of remembrance. As can be inferred by the title, Rousso favors a psychoanalytic approach, proposing different steps in the remembrance of Vichy, evoking in particular the repression of French collaboration in favor of the myth of the resistance, and evoking a return of the repressed.

Rousso's work pinpoints the societal desire in France to remember the heroes and victims (and resistants were both), and to forget the perpetrators (the collaborators).

The fact that the return to a public acknowledgment of the Vichy period within French society has been widely characterized as a screen memory for the ills of French colonization, leads us to mention that David Prochaska develops a parallel concept to the Vichy syndrome, which he names the Algerian syndrome, noting that 'both [are] defining moments of twentieth century French history, both historical blind spots, freighted combinations of willed forgetfulness, collective denial, misremembering and, first for Vichy and now increasingly for Algeria, the return of what has been repressed, occluded, ignored, put away' (Prochaska 450). Both concepts can be criticized (and Rousso's Vichy syndrome certainly has been) for applying a psychoanalytic vocabulary and process based on the individual subject to collective processes. Nonetheless, both works provide grounds to think in terms of perpetrator memory (and postmemory) within the French and Francophone context. The fact that both works focus on the implications of perpetrator memory at a societal or group level leads me to move from a discussion of perpetrator memory to a more direct discussion of perpetrator postmemory.

Indeed, it is impossible to deny that the phenomenon described by Hirsch –inheriting memories of an event not personally experienced- can be observed even in the case of perpetrators. The 2011 documentary *Hitler's Children* by Chanoch Zeevi provides a striking example, as it consists of a series of interviews with children and grandchildren of prominent Nazi officers. Some of the interviewees – among whom the descendants of Göring, Himmler, Höß, Göth, and Hans Frank – have gone as far as undergoing voluntary sterilization in order to put an end to the family line and to prevent passing on the shameful surname or the potential

Nazi biological inheritance. This decision appears particularly disturbing as its logic would give credence to the inheritability of morality or lack thereof. Besides, given the insistence of Nazi ideology on moral decay embedded in genetics (Jews and other non-Aryan races being portrayed as degenerate for instance), to claim —whether explicitly or implicitly—that a putative "Nazi gene" could be inherited seems to give credence to the very logic of genetic inheritance valued by the Nazis, the very same ideology that their descendants are trying to cut themselves from. This logic also finds a minor potential place in a 2011 novel more thoroughly discussed in the next chapter: Alexandre Jardin's *Des gens très bien*. In the novel, Zac carries with him both his father's Jewish inheritance and the Nazi past of his mother's German parents. At the time of his death, "Zac n'avait pas eu de fils (ni d'enfant) pour réciter le kaddish; comme s'il avait – consciemment ? – renoncé à perpétuer son lignage difficile. Stériliser son ADN partiellement nazi semblait avoir été sa réponse instinctive " (227). We see here again the logic of inherited guilt present in *Hitler's Children,* which we will find again later in this chapter when discussing the suicide of Rachel in Boualem Sansal's 2009 novel *Le Village de l'Allemand, ou le Journal des Frères Schiller*.

Victim Postmemory and Perpetrator Postmemory

As already mentioned, postmemory explores the mechanism of memories being passed on to younger generations who have not lived through the memorialized event. While Hirsch's own work focuses solely on victimhood, one could imagine a similar mechanism within the framework of perpetration. For example, the son or grandson of a Nazi officer could inherit memories that would lead him to take on a Neo-Nazi identity. This form of perpetrator postmemory could manifest itself in several ways: expressed either by denial of the existence of

past crimes altogether (negationism) or of their criminal nature (relativism), or by the continuation of prior crimes (adherence to neo-Fascism or neo-Nazism, for example).

Passing on perpetrator postmemory implies specific conditions. In a society which has recognized -potentially even legally- the crimes in question (as is the case with Nazi crimes for example), passing on the memory of this perpetration, casting it in a positive light, would have to be done in secret, either within the family, or within a social group sharing the same beliefs. While the postmemory of victimhood can be passed on in the family even when mainstream society does not want to put the memory of this event on the public stage (as was the case with the Holocaust, a phenomenon Annette Wiewiorka analyses in *L'ère du témoin*), passing on perpetrator postmemory publicly might imply illicit activity. While law does not punish historical relativism, France (like other countries) has instated laws against negationism and incitement to racial hatred. The acting out of hateful perceptions seems to imply larger social structures/groups permitting the possibility of these perceptions. The individual acting out violently based on his hateful perceptions often finds legitimization for his beliefs from others. Victim postmemory and perpetrator postmemory therefore appear to be quite distinct in their potential outcomes and challenges. Victim postmemory seems to face the challenge of silence, but would not encounter any legal prosecutions, while perpetrator postmemory would rather be faced with public (but not private) silencing under threat of legal repercussions.

Transcategorical Postmemory, or When the Perpetrator Postgeneration Sympathizes with the Victims

While Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory keeps a direct line between the memories of the victims (who have directly suffered from the events discussed) and the

postmemories of their descendants empathizing with the victimhood of their ancestors, I would like to propose here a new configuration linked to postmemory.

Here, visual representation might prove useful in anticipation of further developments in conceptualization. This first table should be read horizontally:

Generation	**Role**
1st generation	Victim
Generation of postmemory	Empathizes with the victimhood of their ancestors

Table 4.1: Table illustrating postmemory as theorized by Hirsch.

Another, more negative schema illustrated by the added right column can be imagined:

Generation	**Role**	**Role**
1st generation	Victim	Perpetrator
Generation of postmemory	Empathizes with the victimhood of their ancestors *(Hirsch's model of postmemory)*	Empathizes with their ancestors as perpetrators *("perpetrator postmemory")*

Table 4.2: Table illustrating different agency roles across generations.

Of course, this new development (far right column), would assume that the postgeneration acknowledges the perpetrator status of their ancestors, rather than perceiving them as either misguided or obedient victims following orders without knowing any better, or possibly even unsung heroes trying to soften the blow of the Nazi occupation by collaborating to take a concrete example.

In the case that interests us, and for which we will later provide more detailed literary illustrations, however, sons and grandsons of perpetrators empathize with the victims of their ancestors (or vice versa). This constitutes a new dynamics within postmemory, when the postgeneration's empathy does not align with the role (perpetrator/victim) played by their ancestors. I propose to name this configuration **transcategorical postmemory,** as the memory of

the historical event traverses role categories (transcategorical) and generations (postmemory). Hirsch's concept of affiliative postmemory ("Generation" 115) implicitly allows for this possibility, as it extends the logic of postmemory outside of the familial realm. While Hirsch's work has focused on postmemory within the family, her concept of affiliative postmemory remains significantly underexploited despite its fruitful potential. Transcategorical postmemory therefore constitutes a new development in thinking about Hirsch's concept, while keeping in line with Hirsch's point that postmemory is "not an identity position, but a generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation." (*Generation* 35). Consequently, the transfer between categories (from victim to perpetrator, or from perpetrator to victim), does not jeopardize the concept of postmemory, but rather refines it. As postmemory is a "structure of transmission" and not "an identity position," transmission is still possible from one category to the other and transcategorical postmemory becomes a specific dynamics within the "generational structure of transmission" that is postmemory.

	Victim Category	**Perpetrator Category**
1st generation	Victims	Perpetrators
Traditional configuration of postmemory	Descendant of victims empathizes with the victim *(Hirsch's model of postmemory)*	Descendants of perpetrators empathize with the perpetration of their ancestors *("perpetrator postmemory")*
Transcategorical postmemory	Descendants of victims engage with the perpetrators of their forefathers	Descendants of perpetrators engage with the victims of their forefathers

 Transcategorical postmemory: the generation of postmemory empathizes with victims of their ancestors' crimes.

Table 4.3: Table illustrating transcategorical postmemory.

The above diagram shows that transcategorical postmemory occurs when descendants of victims engage with the perpetrators of their forefathers, or when descendants of perpetrators engage with the victims of their forefathers. The postmemorial aspect is retained from Hirsch's

theorization, in that memory is passed on from one generation to another in a family context. The transcategorical aspect is illustrated by the arrows going across victim and perpetrator categories. One could also imagine the opposite diagonal movement where the first generation would be victims, and the generation of postmemory would empathize with the victimizer (perpetrator) of their ancestors. Two observations then need to be made. First, I have not observed this configuration in any historical, literary, or more generally artistic works I have encountered, which does not mean that this configuration has not occurred. One might think, in rather heated political discussions, of the accusations sometimes made against "self-hating Jews," implying a compliance with beliefs and practices that would go against one's Jewish identity. But since these accusations are typically used as *ad hominem* rather than as a description of sympathy mechanisms (how groups develop sympathy or strong opposition towards other groups, rather than the *ad hominem* accusation which targets an individual and not a group) I shall abandon their discussion here. Second, the term empathy would here have to be replaced by another term, as the logic would be one of transfer (rather than empathy).

Implicated subjects

While the terms perpetrator and victim have been, and continue to be, useful within trauma and memory studies, the call to avoid considering these categories as watertight has been a concern in these academic fields for decades. The distinction between victim and perpetrator is, of course, crucial when legal prosecution is concerned, but it hides the reality of what Primo Levi, in *The Drowned and The Saved*, defines as the grey zone between victimhood and perpetration. A concentration camp survivor himself, Levi places in this grey zone all the small deeds which prisoners had to do in order to survive, deeds which often precipitated the suffering

or death of others. The analytical legacy of Levi's concept is still strong, and the grey zone still helps us to reflect on the various dynamics between role categories.

In his 2014 publication in *Profession* entitled "Trauma History, Implicated Subjects, and the Question of Israel/Palestine," Michael Rothberg develops his concept of implicated subjects. Not unlike Levi, Rothberg is interested in reflecting on the boundaries between victim and perpetrator, terms that have dominated trauma and memory studies. Rothberg starts by noting that "trauma, victims, and perpetrators are necessary categories for thinking about violence, suffering, and vulnerability, but they are not sufficient." He consequently offers to "supplement" [these categories] with "concepts of implication and implicated subjects". Highlighting the limitations of "clean distinctions between traumatized victims and traumatizing perpetrators," Rothberg calls for a closer look at "modes of responsibility beyond the criminal guilt of the perpetrator." He consequently proposes a category of implicated subjects, which "describes the indirect responsibility of subjects situated at a temporal or geographic distance from the production of suffering."

While I agree with Rothberg that there is a need for more than the "sole focus on trauma and victimization," I believe that one needs to be more specific when looking at the grey zones and constantly evolving dynamics between categories of victims and perpetrators. While Rothberg's term "implicated subject" might seem to suggest that the subject in question evades a primary category of either victim or perpetrator, the "indirect *responsibility*" (italics mine) of the implicated subject reveals its closer link with a mechanism of perpetration, help towards perpetration, or non-intervention when witnessing perpetration. Those involved in transcategorical postmemory can be considered as implicated subjects since they have, to use Rothberg's words, an "indirect responsibility." I insist here on specifying that these subjects can

have an indirect role regardless of victim/perpetrator/bystander premises, or hybrid result of these categories. These implicated subjects are "situated at a temporal or geographic distance from the production of suffering." I would like to argue that transcategorical postmemory permits us to identify more specific dynamic relationships across time and space between perpetrator/victim/bystander roles without considering these categories as watertight or fixed.

Some Preliminary Implications of Postmemorial Guilt for Transcategorical Postmemory

In order to give a more extensive example of the theoretical tools previously described, let us now turn towards a concrete literary illustration. I will discuss Alexandre Jardin's 2011 novel *Des gens très bien* more in detail in my next chapter, with a specific focus on writing as a form of rebuttal to a previous narrative, however, I would like to briefly introduce the novel here in order to highlight the main stakes of transcategorical postmemory. Guilt-ridden by his family's past, bestselling French novelist Alexandre Jardin tries – through the writing and publication of *Des gens très bien* (2011)– to make up for the role played by his grandfather, nicknamed *le nain jaune*, during the Occupation period. Alexandre Jardin at once denounces his grandfather's implication in the Vichy regime, and tries to expiate these crimes, and to erase the guilt that falls onto him by the fact that they are relatives. This yearning for reparation constitutes a red thread throughout the book, where the word "réparer" (to fix, to repair, to amend, to make whole again) keeps reappearing. Thus, Jardin explains that life "me permit de réparer. A ma façon. Pour supporter mon intolérable ressemblance avec le Nain Jaune" (165). This idea comes back later when he explains that being "[t]rop fondamentalement Jardin pour renier son legs et notre blason, je ne parvenais pas à m'arracher à ma filiation. Ne restait plus qu'à réparer…" (174).

While this fantasy of repair is clearly problematic in its own way, another issue stemming from Jardin's postmemorial guilt arises later in his text. Announced by the very title of one of the text's chapters, the idea of "becoming Jewish" ["Devenir Juif"] will establish itself as the main theme of the next hundred pages. This new program can be illustrated by two successive quotes, when in less than four pages, Jardin goes from "compiler livre sur livre sur le Talmud" (198) to attending a synagogue where, speaking about himself in a third person that suddenly disassociates the narrative voice from the grandson of the perpetrator in a strikingly telling way, he announces that "C'est dans une synagogue que le petit-fils du Nain Jaune s'est rencontré ; et que je me suis défatigué de mon hérédité pour filer vers une identité toujours diverse. Comme s'il m'avait fallu ranimer en moi la lumière juive que mon aïeul s'était appliqué à éteindre depuis le deuxième étage de l'hôtel du Parc" (198-199). The Manichaeism of Jardin's backlash can best be found in the concision of his plan: "Le Nain Jaune avait contribué à desenjuiver la France ; cela fait dix ans que j'essaye de l'enjuiver" (201). Jardin here intends to "enjuiver" France, but also to "enjuiver" himself through his marriage to a Jewish woman and through his Jewish daughter.

It is worth noting that this logic of becoming Jewish in order to disassociate oneself from the familial guilt does not, in Jardin's account, stop at the generation which would convert to Judaism (the term conversion being employed here both *sensu stricto* and *sensu lato*). The following generation would push the logic even further by being born Jewish, as Jardin explains that "[i]rriguée par du sang sémite en provenance de son père, L. m'a donné une fille un peu juive ; notre enfant chérie que nous avons confiée pendant ses trois premières années à la crèche israélite de Paris. Etablissement sur la façade duquel est apposée une plaque mémorielle qui, à chaque fois que je la lis, me tord le ventre" (276). This phenomenon had already been

foreshadowed by the confession uttered by Zac's mother earlier in the text, upon facing her own mother, when she states: "Ma mère, toujours la même…nazie. Intelligente, subtile et sincère : les pires. Tout ce que j'ai quitté en me mariant ici, à Paris, pour faire des enfants juifs." (205).

Alexandre Jardin's *Des gens très bien* therefore allows us to point out that while transcategorical postmemory, which enables the postgeneration to move from the inheritance of the perpetrator towards identification with the victim, might seem at first a positive translation within the role category, *the concept of transcategorical postmemory in itself is neither positive nor negative*, and can give rise to problematic consequences. This project will consequently discuss two outcomes of transcategorical postmemory in more intricate details: one melancholic, the other productive.

Melancholic Transcategorical Postmemory versus Productive Transcategorical Postmemory

As we have formulated it so far, transcategorical postmemory is a descriptive concept: neither intrinsically positive nor negative, neither moral nor immoral, neither sound nor pathological. However, I would like to offer two concrete illustrations to readers who might already have wondered about the possible implications of this concept. Boualem Sansal's *Le Village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller* depicts two possible outcomes of transcategorical postmemory, one melancholic, the other productive. Each scenario can be illustrated by one of the Schiller brothers.

Rachel Schiller, after learning about his father's history and discovering his Nazi past, first starts by treading in his father's footsteps, following the latter's geographical trail, while distancing himself from Hans Schiller's Nazism. Later on, however, Rachel's body will be found in his garage after his suicide by gas poisoning. At the moment of his death, Rachel was wearing

the striped pajamas of concentration camp prisoners, and had shaved the blond hair inherited from his father. Rachel's suicide, ultimate culmination of the guilt he felt for his father's deeds, aims at replicating the death of his father's victims. While it appears clearly that his self-sacrifice could never expiate his father's crime (the Nazi genocide being both of a different scale and of a different nature), Rachel's suicide raises the question of the postmemorial subject's positionality in relation to that of his progenitor's victims. Here, Rachel's suicide reveals his inability to distance his own subjectivity from that of the victims, the melancholic merging of both positions (postmemorial subject and victim) leading to his death. Trapped by perpetrator postmemory, Rachel Schiller is unable to reinvest in present and future projects, and falls victim to melancholic postmemory. A more detailed analysis of Rachel's suicide first through a Lévinasian perspective, then through a Freudian approach, will be provided in the following pages. For now, the central concern is that Rachel Schiller's postmemory takes on a melancholic form, preventing him from engaging with any other present or future objects of concern.

Unlike his older brother, Malrich Schiller – who undergoes the same process of discovering his father's Nazi past, and also follows his father's geographical displacements – does not adopt a form of postmemory that could be categorized as melancholic. Instead of being trapped in the memory of his father's guilt, and in his own responsibility towards it, he chooses to invest his newly acquired knowledge and affective involvement in a separate, present and future-oriented political project to educate others about the risks of totalitarian ideologies. Indeed, at the end of the novel, Malrich decides that it is now his duty to educate his friends and the other youth of the *cité* he lives in, not to linger on the memory of the Second World War and the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis, but to prevent different projects he deems totalitarian to arise in the future, as well as to remedy to potential threats of totalitarianism he identifies in the

present.

Marianne Hirsch offers a vertical, generational, conceptualization of postmemory, which invites those who do not share any familial link with the memory of the event in question to carry on its postmemory. Hirsch explains affiliative postmemory thus:

> To delineate the border between the respective structures of transmission—between to what I would like to refer to as familial and '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 intragenerational horizontal identification that makes that child's position more broadly available to other contemporaries. ("Generation" 36)

In Malrich's case the postmemory itself is familial, but his project to transmit it to his friends in the *cité*, constitutes a case of affiliative postmemory. Yet, and this is important, I do not want to automatically conclude that all productive (non-melancholic) postmemory has to be oriented towards people outside of the family (affiliative postmemory). I assert that a future-oriented project within familial postmemory (i.e. a productive familial postmemory) is equally as possible as an affiliative productive postmemory. On an additional note, it is worth saying that postmemory does not need to be transcategorical in order to be melancholic or productive, although transcategorical postmemory is the concept at the core of the present chapter.

The Shock of Rachel's Suicide

Although, as was developed in the third chapter of this dissertation, prosthetics can offer some ways out of postmemorial silence and enable the postgeneration to reconstruct the link between the generation of memory and themselves, two potential issues can arise. I shall not

examine the potential failure of affect (that is, this link is not felt by the postgeneration which still feels excluded from the family memory circle, despite the presence of prosthetics), as I have already addressed this issue at the end of chapter 2. Instead, I would like to take a closer look at what happens when the affective link is indeed recreated thanks to prosthetics, or places as prosthetics, and leads to an ethical outcome.

In order both to render this description clearer to readers and to keep this analysis in touch with concreteness, I propose to look at Rachel's suicide in Boualem Sansal's *Le Village de l'Allemand, ou le Journal des frères Schiller*. The fact that Rachel and Malrich have followed the same path (literally and metaphorically) to retrieve the memory of the paternal past permits us to underline once more the unguaranteed character of affect, and provides the closest thing to what the experimental sciences would call a control group. While Rachel's suicide definitely constitutes a shock for the reader due to its graphic force, reinforced by the association with the reader's personal archive of images of Holocaust victims, we want to take a closer look at what – beyond its immediate graphic shock- is so disturbing in Rachel's suicide. After all, there could be a sense of relief that Hans's crime is no longer left unacknowledged. If the postgeneration of Holocaust victims are still suffering, then shouldn't the postgeneration of perpetrators expiate this suffering? It clearly appears, as soon as this is formulated, that this claim falls short, as it would be transposing inappropriately personal guilt from one generation to the other, while personal guilt is by definition based on the individual. While the feeling of guilt can be inherited by the descendant of perpetrators, the crime itself is only committed by the perpetrator and not by his or her descendants.

Why then does Rachel's suicide leave the reader feeling uneasy, even after the original shock of its narration? In order to discuss how Rachel's suicide falls short on any sentiment of

closure let's look at this episode first in light of Emmanuel Lévinas's theorization of the relationship with the face of the other in Jewish theology, before bringing in Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia.

Before delving deeper into the theological and psychoanalytical implications raised by Rachel's suicide, clarity calls for a more detailed summary of the event. After both of his parents have been killed in an Islamist bombing by the *Groupe Islamiste Armé* (GIA) during the civil war that ravaged Algeria in the 1990s, Rachel uncovers his father Hans's past as a Nazi officer who fled Europe for Algeria in order to escape sanctions after the end of the Second World War. While Rachel had always known that his father was German, Hans's death foreclosed any possibility for Rachel to confront his father about the recent discovery of the latter's Nazi past, leaving Rachel alone to face the paternal guilt, and to figure out what his father's past means for his own position and potential responsibility as the son of a perpetrator. Before finding out about his father's past, Rachel had to deal with the grief of losing both of his parents in tragic circumstances, but at the time he identified his parents solely as victims of Islamist violence, stating: "Et là, j'étais une victime, la victime, la douleur est vraie, profonde, mystérieuse, indicible." (Sansal 25). In an insightful article devoted to Sansal's novel, Debarati Sanyal argues that through his "itinéraire de repentance et de sacrifice, l'aîné Rachel plonge dans la zone grise diagnostiquée par Primo Levi, zone de complicité où innocence et culpabilité sont en constante circulation. Il suit les pas de son père d'Allemagne aux camps de l'Europe de l'est à la Turquie et à l'Egypte, en essayant de comprendre l'extermination alternativement – et même simultanément – du point de vue de la victime et du bourreau" (217-18). While Sanyal is right in saying that Rachel does, indeed, attempt to understand his father's crime both from Hans Schiller's perspective and from the perspective of the victim, I would argue that her use of Levi's concept

of the grey zone is slightly problematic. Rachel entering the grey zone, as Sanyal suggests, would mean that he would be able to see both the victims of the Holocaust and his own father (a perpetrator) as implicated in mechanisms of victimhood and perpetration at the same time. But at no point in the novel does Rachel question the absolute victimhood of those who perished in the Holocaust. As a matter of fact, those who survived the Holocaust, and what they had to do in order to survive – a key discussion in Levi's text – are not mentioned at all. At no point either does Rachel imagine his father empathizing with his victims or attempting to provide any sort of help to them. While Rachel might attempt to consider the Holocaust from both the victim's and the perpetrator's perspectives, he does not blur either of these categories in the way he reflects on the Holocaust. The uncovering of his father's past seems to replace his father's victimhood in the bombing, since instead of seeing his father as both victim (of the bombing) and perpetrator (as a Nazi), the perpetrator identity becomes the only one Rachel seems to see in his father.

Unable to bear the feeling of guilt stemming from being the son of a Nazi, Rachel commits suicide by gas poisoning in his garage. His suicide appears as a staged putative mirror image of the gassing of Holocaust victims. Rachel's suicide is conveyed to the reader through the diary of his younger brother Malrich, who at the beginning of the novel has no background knowledge about the Holocaust, and seems to be blind to the morbid imagery staged by his brother during his own suicide. While the clear reference to Holocaust victims seems to go over Malrich's head, the way Rachel staged his suicide is too sadly iconic for the reader not to recognize the reference to the Holocaust instantly: "Rachel était dans le garage, assis par terre, dos contre le mur, jambes allongées, le menton sur la poitrine, la bouche ouverte. On aurait dit qu'il roupillait. Son visage était couvert de suie. Toute la nuit, il a baigné dans les gaz d'échappement de sa tire. Il portait un drôle de pyjama, a pyjama rayé que je ne lui connaissais

pas et il avait la tête rasée comme au bagne, tout de travers. Que c'est bizarre." (Sansal 12). As this scene features on one of the first pages of the novel, and as the title *Le Village de l'Allemand ou le Journal des Frères Schiller* indicates that Rachel (being one of the two Schiller brothers) is one of the main characters of the novel, this suicide comes as a surprise due to its early position in the text. Furthermore, the graphic strength of the scene adds another layer of shock for the reader. Yet, the reader is already one step ahead of Malrich, having recognized that this suicide must have a link to the Holocaust, knowing therefore that there has to be more to this suicide than Rachel's personal reasons.

It is only later on in the novel, again through Malrich's references to the Second World War, that he seems to partially grasp thanks to the notes in his brother's diary, but that the reader recognizes instantly and checks against his/her personal archive of knowledge about the Holocaust, that the cause for Rachel's suicide – the postmemorial guilt stemming from his father's Nazi past – becomes clear. Malrich describes the content of a suitcase that once belonged to Hans Schiller, and which had been in Rachel's possession. The suitcase contains:

> Des papiers, des photos, des lettres, des coupures de journaux, une revue. Jaunis, écornés, tavelés. Une vieille montre en acier trempé, datant de l'autre siècle, arrêtée sur 6h22. Trois médailles. Rachel s'était documenté, l'une est l'insigne des *Hitlerjugends*, les Jeunesses hitlériennes, la deuxième est une médaille de la Wehrmacht, gagnée au combat, la troisième est l'insigne des Waffen SS. Il y a un morceau de tissu avec une tête de mort, l'emblème des SS, le *Totenkopf*. (52-53)

Additionally, the suitcase also contains various pictures of Hans Schiller, one of which shows him in Egypt in front of a pyramid, letters in German and in French, magazine clippings about "[le] procès de Nuremberg contre les dignitaires nazis, Bormann, Göring, van Ribbentrop,

Dönitz, Hess, von Schirach et compagnie. [Un magazine] parle de ceux qui ont été retrouvés plus tard, Adolf Eichmann, Franz Stangl, Gustav Wagner, Klaus Barbie" (54). All of these elements (the picture of Hans Schiller in Egypt, the letter in French from Jean, 92) will be tied back to the plot and to Hans Schiller's past, later in the novel.

A Lévinasian Perspective: Rachel's Suicide as a Disengagement from the Gaze of the Other

The very graphic association between Rachel's self-staged suicide and the death of concentration camps victims, most of whom were Jewish, leads us to reconsider this suicide scene through the prism of Emmanuel Lévinas's definition of the ethical relationship in the face of the other, as developed in *Difficile liberté*. For Lévinas, the engagement with the face of the other constitutes the basis for an ethical engagement at the center of Jewish ethical life. Unlike the Christian injunction to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31), the difference from the other is at the core of the relationship described by Lévinas. Simon Critchley points out that "Lévinas makes the extreme claim that my relation to the other is not some benign benevolence [or] compassionate care" (60). Looking at the face of the other is therefore a different relationship than caring about or for the other, understanding the other, finding similarities with the other, or loving the other. Critchley also observes that "the ethical relation begins when I experience being placed in question by the face of the other, an experience that happens both when I respond generously to what Lévinas, recalling the Hebrew Bible, calls 'the widow, the orphan, the stranger', but also when I pass them on the street, silently wishing they were somehow invisible and wincing internally at my callousness." (56). Critchley's example highlights the fact that feeling discomfort while encountering the other, and not desiring to engage with them still constitutes an ethical encounter with the other, in the Lévinasian sense,

since the encounter with the other happened, regardless of how disagreeable it might have been. Following Lévinas's argument, there is no injunction to make up for outrage, or to push similarities with the other to force oneself to recognize sameness in the face of the other, unlike what Alexandre Jardin's narrative double in *Des gens très bien* seems to think. For Lévinas, the other remains precisely that: absolutely other, and distance between the self and the other remains unbridgeable. As Critchley puts it, "the ethnical subject is marked by an experience of hetero-affectivity […] the core of my subjectivity is exposed to otherness" (Critchley 61).

Rachel, in his attempt to conflate himself with the other through his death (let's remember that at the moment of his death, Rachel has dressed up like a concentration camp inmate, and has shaved his head before opening the gas valve of his car), is therefore not in line with Lévinas's conceptualization of an ethical relationship with the other, as he fails to recognize the other as entirely distinct and distant from himself, in another word: other. Furthermore, Lévinas claims that "[le] mal n'est pas un principe mystique que l'on peut effacer par un rite, il est une offense que l'homme fait à l'homme. Personne, et pas même dieu, ne peut se substituer à la victime" (41). This claim aborts, in this perspective, any possibility for expiation. While Rachel's suicide might appear to him as the greatest act of sympathy towards the victim, by inscribing himself in the community of (mainly Jewish) victims, it disregards the fact that, for Lévinas, "[e]thical experience is heteronomous" (Critchley 56). Judith Butler, who draws extensively on Lévinas for her own discussion of the ethical relation in the face of the other, which she also identifies as a core Jewish value, notes that "the suffering of others formulates the substance of the ethical demand that is continuously upon us. For Lévinas, there is no 'evasion'

of this responsibility" (41), including – and this is what Rachel Schiller fails to recognize suicide. In this vein, Butler remarks, that:

> in the face of the other, one is aware of the vulnerability of that other, that the other's life is precarious, exposed, and subject to death; but one is *also* aware of one's own violence, one's own capacity to cause the death of the other, to be the agent who could expose the Other to his dissolution. Thus the face signifies the precariousness of the Other, and so also a damage that can be caused by my own violence; it signifies as well the interdiction against violence that produces a fear in me of my own violence. (56)

Unlike in the Freudian reading that we shall develop hereafter and which proposes a conflation of Rachel's ego with the victims of the Holocaust, Rachel's suicide might be viewed as a recognition of his own potential violence, which is unbearable to him. Yet, turning away from this potential violence would still be unethical according to Lévinas, as Rachel's potential violence against the other is not avoided, but merely redirected at himself. To return to Lévinas: "Tout seul, le moi se trouve dans un état de déchirement et de déséquilibre. Cela veut dire: il se retrouve comme celui qui a déjà empiété sur autrui, comme arbitraire et violent." (35). Although Rachel has not repeated his father's deeds, this impossibility to distinguish the other from the self, that is to see the other as the other, would signify, for Lévinas, Rachel's failure at establishing an ethical relation with the other. His suicide is also a refusal to be with the other, a radical act of rupture with the other, which goes against Lévinas's injunction.

Lévinas's insistence that "la relation éthique apparaîtra au judaïsme comme relation exceptionnelle: en elle, le contact avec un être extérieur, au lieu de compromettre la

souveraineté humaine, l'institue et l'investit" (35) echoes Rachel's problematic suicide. While Lévinas would certainly have preferred the term unethical to the term melancholic, his philosophy finds strong echoes in the distinction between melancholic transcategorical postmemory (which does not establish self-sovereignty, an independent ego, but rather where the self is not distinguishable from the lost object) and productive transferential postmemory (where sovereignty is maintained, and which permits future-oriented projects).

A Freudian Perspective: Rachel's Suicide and Postmemorial Melancholia

The implications of Rachel's suicide are manifold. As the engagement with Lévinas's philosophy of the other discussed above shows, Rachel's suicide does not expiate his father's crimes. Looking at this suicide through another theoretical perspective seems necessary. Indeed, bringing in a psychoanalytic framework through Freud's notion of melancholia seems particularly appropriate to complete the discussion. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud distinguishes between the "normal" process of mourning and the "pathological" melancholic state (243), which he describes thus:

> The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning – an extraordinary diminution of his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished. He abases himself before everyone and commiserates with his own relatives for being connected with anyone so unworthy. He is not of the opinion that a change has taken place in

> him, but extends his self-criticism back over the past; he declares that he was never any better. This picture of a delusion of (mainly moral) inferiority is completed by sleeplessness and refusal to take nourishment, and – what is psychologically very remarkable – by an overcoming of the instinct which compels every living thing to cling to life (246)

In order to take a closer look at how Rachel's suicide engages with Freud's conceptualization of melancholia, it seems useful to describe what the normal – to employ Freud's adjective – process of mourning would look like in Rachel's case. Imagining an alternate scenario is, of course, somewhat artificial, but it will provide a clearer image of the distinction between mourning and melancholia in the case at hand. Here is a possible scenario of what mourning would have looked like for Rachel Schiller: after the death of his parents, and the discovery that his father Hans Schiller was a Nazi officer implicated in the Holocaust and therefore guilty of persecution and genocide, Rachel Schiller comes to the conclusion that his father was a despicable human being and that he is better off with his genitor dead. Rachel therefore moves on to continue his own life, feeling that Hans Schiller's guilt has no bearing on it. Another possibility could present itself: after the death of his parents, and the discovery that his father Hans Schiller was a Nazi officer implicated in the Holocaust, Rachel Schiller attempts to come to terms with his own burdensome inheritance, by reinvesting his feeling of postmemorial guilt in a project to fight against discrimination. In yet another possible scenario, Rachel Schiller considers the death of his father in an Islamic bombing by the GIA as a divine punishment for Hans Schiller's guilt during the Holocaust, and does not place the burden of the paternal guilt on his own shoulders. Other possibilities could be imagined, and each one of these possibilities carries its own set of implications and potential difficulties. However, the main point

is that, had he been able to *mourn* both his father's Nazi past and the fact that his father will never be tried or forced to recognize his crimes, Rachel Schiller – after a probable mourning period – would have been able to turn to other objects of consideration and other future projects.

In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud stresses that melancholia is characterized by the "*identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (249). In Rachel's case it seems that the abandoned object is really a murdered people: the victims of his father's crime. So full is the identification that Rachel's physical appearance ("Il portait un drôle de pyjama, un pyjama rayé", "il avait la tête rasée comme au bagne," 12) has merged with that of concentration camps victims. Other symptoms of Rachel's melancholia can be found in the novel: "sleeplessness and refusal to take nourishment" (Freud 246), Rachel loses weight and spends all night reading about the Holocaust; he abases "himself before everyone and commiserates with his own relatives for being connected with anyone so unworthy" (Freud 246): "Mon pauvre Malrich, tu portes bien ton surnom. La vie n'a pas été chic avec toi. Je me sens coupable […]. Le plus terrible est que je sais que tu ne m'en veux pas. Tu penses même que je suis un type bien" (Sansal 47-48); and the presence of manic episodes: "un truc s'est cassé dans sa tête, il s'est mis à courir entre la France, l'Algérie, l'Allemagne, l'Autriche, la Pologne, la Turquie, l'Egypte" (Sansal 11). Sansal's text provides literary illustrations of Freud's diagnosis of melancholia. Additionally, as Rachel does not blame the exterior world for being full of violence and discrimination, but rather takes on the guilt onto himself, his fate confirms Freud's words that "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself." (246). But the most striking symptom of Rachel's melancholia is, of course, the suppression of his own life, which corresponds directly to the self-erasure mentioned by Freud: "One might emphasize the presence

in [the melancholic subject] of an almost opposite trait of insistent communicativeness which finds satisfaction in self-erasure." (247).

This self-erasure, according to Freud, stems from the subject's "narcissistic identification with the object" (249). Developing the idea of identification further, Freud notes that incapable to distinguish between his/her own ego and the lost object, conflating the two to the point where s/he cannot recognize the independent existence of his/her ego, the melancholic subject's suicide presents itself as the last step in the total suppression of his/her ego. As Freud puts it, "[in] this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification." (249). The "instinct which compels every living thing to cling to life" (246) is no more, and the melancholic subject lets his/her own life slip from his/her hands. Not unlike Freud's description, which highlights the melancholic subject's tendency to deprive himself of food and/or sleep, Rachel deprives himself of breathable air when he poisons himself with gas in his garage. While, in his melancholia, the conflation of Rachel's ego seems at first to be with the victims of his father's crime as the visual staging of his suicide mirrors the image of Holocaust victims dying in the gas chambers, his punishment of himself for his father's crime seems to suggest that Rachel is actually conflating his own ego with the objective guilt of his father, the latter absent to pay for his own crimes. This desire for self-punishment resonates once more with Freud's remark that "where there is a disposition to obsessional neurosis the conflict due to ambivalence gives a pathological cast to mourning and forces it to express itself in the form of self-reproaches to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved object, i.e. that he has willed it" (251). While "the loss of the lost object," or here of human lives, has not originally been willed by Rachel who was not even born at the time, his suicide does take

"the form of self-reproaches to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved object, i.e. that he has willed it."

Rachel's staging of his own suicide as a mirror image of the death of Holocaust victims therefore is a failure to recognize the distinction between his own ego and Holocaust victims, but also between his ego and Hans Schiller's. Debarati Sanyal highlights this idea of conflation by repeating the blur between past and present for the melancholic subject expressed by Freud (although she does not mention Freud directly), and pushes this idea of conflation further, by proposing that what is at play is also a conflation between event and representation of the event: "la réception tragique de la Shoah par Rachel est un modèle de l'amalgame entre évènement et représentation, entre victimisation et survie littérales et métaphoriques." (128). The inherent inability for Rachel to either make up for his father's crimes, or separate his own ego from the paternal guilt, entraps him in the melancholic repetition of the past: "Piégée dans la reconstitution, qui ratera toujours sa cible, d'un évènement catastrophique, [la] quête épistémologique [de Rachel] se transforme en une sorte de besoin ontologique insatiable" (218). The same insatiable ontological need that will consume the little oxygen Rachel had left before he lets the gas of his car leak into his lungs.

Rachel's younger brother Malrich exemplifies a different outcome to transcategorical postmemory. While confronting the same familial past, Malrich seems more in line with the principle of anamnesis than his brother. In the foreword to *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, Graham Harman defines anamnesis thus: "Anamnesis means remembrance or reminiscence, the collection and recollection of what has been lost, forgotten, or effaced. It is therefore a matter of the very old, of what has made us who we are. But anamnesis is also a work that transforms its subject, always producing something new. To recollect the old, to produce the

new: that is the task of Anamnesis." Unlike his brother, and while he also recognizes Hans Schiller's crime and comes to empathize with Holocaust victims, Malrich distances himself both from the paternal responsibility and from the victims' position regarding the crime. This enables him to divert his focus outward, drawing from his newly acquired knowledge of his father's crime in order to envision societal changes in a different context – that of the French suburbs. While Sansal's examination of the link between genocide awareness and engagement with social justice could benefit from a more elaborated and subtle analysis (especially considering Rachel's suicide, which precisely disproves a straightforward move from awareness to sociopolitical engagement), Malrich's case does constitute a potential alternative to both perpetrator transmission and melancholic transcategorical postmemory. As the definition of anamnesis previously cited points out, the anamnetic recollection also produces something new. As Sanyal remarks about Malrich, "[sa] quête n'est pas commémorative, mais une tentative d'utiliser le passé nazi au service du présent. A la différence de son frère qui a plongé dans l'unicité irrévocable de la Shoah, Malrich formule au contraire des correspondances serrées entre le passé et le présent, regardant les configurations du pouvoir sous le nazisme comme identiques à celles qui structurent son expérience présente en France" (219). Again, the equation ("identiques") presents a problem of conflation, which should be remedied by a more nuanced view of how the two situations are at once relatable and distinct. However, the fact that Malrich is able to draw from his acquired knowledge and emotional investment points towards the possibility of a more refined view in the future. Furthermore, Malrich's investment in the present and future-oriented projects enables him to escape a melancholic dynamic and to engage with productive transcategorical postmemory.

This chapter's prime goal was to introduce the concept of **transcategorical postmemory** within the already established discourse of postmemory founded by Marianne Hirsch. Hirsch's seminal idea - that descendants of those who have witnessed specific historical events can inherit the memory of the events they haven't lived – has given rise to prolific research and artistic projects across academic fields, engaging with a variety of historical contexts and related topics. Postmemory has been used beyond the field of Holocaust studies, and has become a widely circulated term in fields such as Jewish studies, diaspora studies, Soviet and post-Soviet studies, migration studies, indigenous studies, and others. Postmemory has engaged with issues of media and memory, artistic representation, digital media, transnationalism, and identity politics among others. While Hirsch included affiliative postmemory as a possibility for postmemory to extend beyond the family, most of the academic research and artistic projects that have come to exist have been restricted to victim postmemory, therefore creating a gap in the subfield of postmemory studies.

While some research has approached perpetrator memory in the French and Francophone context at a societal level, the amount of research looking at specific instances of perpetrator postmemory remains particularly limited. Even more limited are works of literature depicting perpetrator postmemory. Yet, it is striking that among these works, the perpetrator postgeneration empathizes with the victims of their forefathers. This has led me to coin the term **transcategorical postmemory**, which develops Marianne Hirsch's concept further by describing the mechanism by which the generation of postmemory comes not to empathize with their own forefathers, but with those against whom their forefathers defined themselves. In this way, the descendants of perpetrators come to empathize with the victims of their forefathers; mutatis mutandis, the descendants of victims could come to empathize with the perpetrators of their

forefathers. It is important to note that transcategorical postmemory is a purely descriptive term, and does not carry an intrinsic positive or negative evaluation.

While both movements (from first generation perpetrator to victim postmemory, or inversely, from first generation victim to perpetrator postmemory) are conceivable, because - to our knowledge- the existing literary material illustrating transcategorical postmemory include a first-generation perpetrator to victim postmemory, I concentrate my analysis on the latter movement of transcategorical postmemory. In this chapter, I have proposed two possible outcomes for transcategorical postmemory: one melancholic, where the subject is not capable of distinguishing his ego from that of the victims of his forefathers, and fails to establish a distinction between himself and the other whose memory he is facing; the other, productive, which enables the subject to reinvest his energy into present and future oriented projects, whether artistic creation, or political activism for example.

The next chapter, entitled "Rewriting Postmemory: Transcategorical Postmemory in Action," will be looking at rewrites or counter-writings of first generation narratives. This enterprise of rewriting the Memory of the Other is aimed either at countering (Jardin, Daoud) or completing (Ruillier) the existing first generation narratives. In line with Marianne Hirsch's concept of affiliative postmemory, which extends the mechanism of postmemory beyond the strict familial realm, one of the authors examined in this chapter rewrites the narratives of his own family (Jardin), while another rewrites the works of Albert Camus, who does not belong to his own family line (Daoud). A third author proposes a rewrite combining both familial and external postmemory (Ruillier) by including an added element (his own father's past) into the narrative he is rewriting. This chapter also introduces other narrative forms beyond that of the

novel by looking at a filmed documentary (*Mémoires d'Immigrés, l'Héritage Maghrébin* by Yamina Benguigui), and graphic novel (*Les Mohamed* by Jérôme Ruillier). Within the genre of the novel, the chapter will also analyze Kamel Daoud's 2014 Goncourt nominated novel *Meursault, Contre-enquête,* which bridges the concept of affiliative postmemory and the literary mechanisms of recuperation and reaffirmation of the self stemming from postcolonial theory. This fifth chapter therefore not only provides illustrations of how transcategorical postmemory can be used for literary analysis, but also how the concept engages with other core research issues within the humanities such as media of memory, formats of representation, identity formation, and transnational dynamics and their socio-political implications. This final chapter will also explore the role of the works analyzed as vectors of memory for the reader, and how the questions raised by the authors can be expended beyond the realm of literature.

Chapter 5

TRANSCATEGORICAL POSTMEMORY IN ACTION AND TRANSGENERATIONAL REWRITES

Rewrites or adaptations of previous works in a different medium enable us to consider how the postgeneration engages with the narratives they inherit, and how they can contest or complete the inherited narratives. New writings by the postgeneration stem from the younger authors' desire to add another dimension to the previous narrative: either by complementing previous work (rewriting) or by disproving previous work (counter-writing), usually to add victim-oriented sympathy. In order to illustrate my concept of transcategorical postmemory theorized in the previous chapter in further detail, and to explore more thoroughly how transcategorical postmemory functions in literature, I propose to look at three concrete examples in French and francophone literature across genres.

The first example, *Des gens très bien* (2011), is a family portrait penned by French author Alexandre Jardin as a response to his father's own family chronicle *Le Nain jaune* (Pascal Jardin, 1978). Burdened by what he deems an immorally laudative portrait of the family patriarch, who served as a dignitary in the Vichy government during the Occupation period in France, Alexandre Jardin casts his book as a direct rebuttal of the glorification of his grandfather by Alexandre's father, a glorification that granted his father the approval and recognition of literary critics and the general public alike.

The second example is a transnational cross-media rewrite. In his graphic novel *Les Mohamed* (2011), Jérôme Ruillier adapts Yamina Benguigui's award-winning documentary

Mémoires d'immigrés (1997), while simultaneously including his own father's military past as a French soldier in North Africa during the period of decolonization.

The third, and last, example is a recently published novel by Algerian author Kamel Daoud, giving voice to the brother of the unnamed Arab killed by Meursault in Camus' *L'Etranger* (1942). Although the plot of Daoud's novel, entitled *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2013) is a direct response to *L'Etranger*, the monologue format of the narration echoes that of Camus' last complete work *La Chute (1956).* While the characters of *Meursault, contre-enquête* do not belong to the generation of postmemory, but rather to the same generation as Camus's Meursault (the narrator himself was a young child at the time of the murder, hence belonging to what Susan Suleiman has named the 1.5 generation) the novel can be read as a postcolonial response to Camus by the Algerian postgeneration.

Reversing the Perpetrator Postmemory of Very Respectable People

When Alexandre Jardin published *Des gens très bien* in 2011, he was responding to the double inheritance of his father and grandfather. Jardin's grandfather, both endearingly and maybe bitterly nicknamed the yellow dwarf (*le nain jaune*) after a strategy game, was Pierre Laval's chief of staff during the Occupation. But who is, then, the yellow dwarf haunting the Jardin family generation after generation? Jean Jardin was Pierre Laval's chief of staff. Laval served in office under Petain as head of government from April 1942 to August 1944 and was executed in 1945 for his collaboration with the occupying Nazi authorities. In this context, it would be difficult to contest that Jean Jardin was in charge of drafting documents and was directly involved in other tasks regarding Laval's agenda, including the deportation of Jews from France.

Despite a family history that many might have tried to downplay, Pascal Jardin – Jean Jardin's son, and Alexandre Jardin's father – penned a biography of his putatively guiltless father, tapping into the French desire to displace any national blame on the Nazi occupant, in a novel entitled *Le Nain jaune* (which received the 1978 Novel Grand Prix from the French Academy). In this work, Pascal Jardin goes over his father's successive appointments, from employee of the "chemins de fer" (86) before the war, to "chargé d'affaires à l'ambassade de France" (98) in 1944, before recounting how a friend of his father's, Bertrand de Jouvenel, reminisced that "à Vichy votre père m'avait ménagé une entrevue avec Laval" (119). These close relations between his father and Laval are brushed off by Pascal Jardin, who offers this sole commentary: "Il eut été voleur que c'eut été pareil, et le fait qu'il ait conduit telle entrevue avec Laval en 1942, ou telle autre au moment des accords d'Évian, ne change rien à l'affaire" (120). He downplays the historical implications of the *nain jaune*'s actions in favor of his skillfulness.

The great popularity of the novel, and his own coming to terms with both his grandfather's past and his father's glorification of this past, led Alexandre Jardin to write his novel *Des gens très bien*. In this novel, Alexandre Jardin reconsiders the family legend that Jean Jardin had become, and paints a portrait in striking contrast with the one drafted by his father in *Le Nain jaune*. Alexandre Jardin depicts how these "very respectable people" described by his father happen, under closer scrutiny, to turn their gaze away from any moral responsibility which should arise from Jean Jardin's professional activity, given the context of normalized, socially accepted anti-Semitism.

It is worth noting that another novel addressing perpetrator postmemory, also written by an author whose familial past came back to haunt him, was published that same year in 2011. Like Alexandre Jardin, German author Ferdinand von Schirach was a recognized author before

writing his number two best-selling novel, entitled *Der Fall Collini*, or *The Collini Case* in English translation. His grandfather, Baldur von Schirach, was the head of the *Hitler-Jugend*, the Hitler Youth, as well as a party leader (*Gauleiter*) and Reich Governor (*Reichsstatthalter*) of Vienna. Baldur Von Schirach was tried at Nuremberg and served a 20-year sentence in the Spandau Prison before retiring in the very small municipality of Kröv in 1974. Like Alexandre Jardin, Ferdinand von Schirach's grandfather had been long dead when he published his novel. However, unlike Alexandre Jardin, *Der Fall Collini'*s protagonist (who, like the novel's author, is a criminal lawyer by profession) is not explicitly a double of the author. Unlike the protagonist of *Des gens très bien*, Von Schirach's protagonist does not bear his name; the reader accesses the narrative through a third person omniscient narrator. But just like in *Des gens très bien*, the protagonist will slowly detach himself from the figure of the patriarch[1] as he discovers his guilty past, and comes to understand Nazi officer Meyer's assassin (the Collini of the title), a feeling that seems shared by Alexandre Jardin's obsession with making up for his grandfather's past.

Guilt-ridden by his family's past, bestselling French novelist Alexandre Jardin tries – through the writing and publication of *Des gens très bien* to atone for the role played by his grandfather. Jardin's position toward his grandfather's guilt keeps changing slightly throughout the narrative: at times, Alexandre Jardin rejects the genealogical logic that would link him to his grandfather; elsewhere, he seems to see himself as a truth bearer regarding Jean Jardin's past; at other times, he is the father of a Jewish daughter, putatively reversing the ethnographic erasure

[1] While in *Der Fall Collini*, the protagonist, Caspar Leinen, is not biologically the grandson of the former Nazi Hans Meyer, he is a friend of the family since childhood, and Hans Meyer has developed into a grandfather figure for Leinen from a tender age.

of Jews attempted by his grandfather; in other rarer instances, he is the counter-witness to his own father's narrative *Le Nain jaune,* although Alexandre Jardin mostly offers his novel as a counter-narrative without direct reference to his father's words. This yearning for reparation constitutes a recurring theme throughout the book, where the word "réparer" (to fix, to repair, to amend, to make whole again) reappears. Thus, Jardin explains that life "me permit de réparer. A ma façon. Pour supporter mon intolérable ressemblance avec le Nain Jaune" (165). This idea comes back later when he explains that being "[t]rop fondamentalement Jardin pour renier son legs et notre blason, je ne parvenais pas à m'arracher à ma filiation. Ne restait plus qu'à réparer…" (174). This idea of repair, problematic in itself, ties in with Alexandre Jardin's fascination and deep appreciation for Jewish culture, in a way that appears to the reader as overcompensation. While Jardin's consideration of Judaism seems like a rather problematic approach – developing an obsession with Judaism as a backlash stemming from guilt, placing Judaism on a pedestal rather than delving into any theological complexity – the intersection of the position he occupies genealogically (in terms of generations) and positionally (in terms of perpetrator, victim, or bystander) is precisely what interests us.

While the reader might sympathize with Jardin's heartfelt pain regarding the burden of his inheritance, it is, however, difficult not to feel discomfort at the mere idea that such repair is possible. Indeed, Jardin seems to conflate two related, but nonetheless distinct, realms: his own phenomenological experience as the bearer of perpetrator postmemory and the realm of historical possibility. While his own feeling of guilt might, hypothetically, be replaced by some sense of letting go of his own link with his grandfather's crimes, there is no going back in time to change history. Nor is there any future possibility for an action that would come to wipe the board clean and erase crimes committed in the past. The dead, after all, are dead; nothing can buy back

human life. Jardin himself seems to grasp this impossibility when he tries to intercept René Bousquet's grandson in the street "pour lui demander comment nous, les fils et petits-fils de, nous pourrions prendre une initiative pour réparer les actes de nos parents et grands-parents. Au motif que – même si nous portons des regards très différents sur leur passé – l'histoire et la morale ne nous permettent plus de nous dérober" (191)[2]. Jardin soon abandons the idea "prenant conscience que l'on ne demande pas des comptes à rebours à un fils de. Ma proposition de réparation collective, soudain, m'est apparue totalement farfelue" (193). Yet, only ten pages later, Jardin ends up falling back on his logic of reparation, albeit somewhat uncomfortably, acknowledging: "Je me suis toujours gardé de révéler qu'il s'agissait, à mes yeux de petits-fils du Nain jaune, de réparer l'horreur du Vel d'Hiv" (203).

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[2] Bousquet was shot in his Parisian apartment on June 8th, 1993 by Christian Didier who received a ten-year sentence for the crime and was released in 2000 before passing away in 2015. Prior to shooting Bousquet, Didier had planned a failed assassination of Klaus Barbie. During Didier's trial regarding Bousquet's assassination, the defense team, represented by Thierry Lévy and Arnaud Montebourg had pleaded for a dismissal "in the name of history." This request was not granted by the court, which however condemned Didier with extenuating circumstances. Didier, who identified himself as a Catholic but declared admiration for Jews, explained that his actions stemmed from Bousquet's responsibility in the persecution of Jews during the Second World War in France, in particular from Bousquet's ordering of the Vel-d'Hiv roundup. Jardin following Bousquet's grandson in front of the latter's Parisian apartment with the goal of asking him to explain his grandfather's acts might read as an abridged repetition of Didier's hunt down of Bousquet a generation before.

While this fantasy of repair is clearly problematic in its own way, another issue stemming from Jardin's postmemorial guilt arises later in his text. Announced by the very title of one of the text's chapters, the idea of "becoming Jewish" ("Devenir Juif") will establish itself as the main theme of the next hundred pages, although Jardin is not speaking about a religious conversion to Judaism. This new program of "becoming Jewish" can be illustrated by two successive quotes, from which we see that in less than four pages, Jardin goes from "compiler livre sur livre sur le Talmud" (198) to attending a synagogue: here, speaking about himself in a third person that suddenly disassociates the narrative voice from the grandson of the perpetrator in a strikingly telling way, he announces that "C'est dans une synagogue que le petit-fils du Nain Jaune s'est rencontré ; et que je me suis défatigué de mon hérédité pour filer vers une identité toujours diverse. Comme s'il m'avait fallu ranimer en moi la lumière juive que mon aïeul s'était appliqué à éteindre depuis le deuxième étage de l'hôtel du Parc" (198-199). The Manichaeism of Jardin's backlash is most visible in his concision: "Le Nain Jaune avait contribué à desenjuiver la France; cela fait dix ans que j'essaye de l'enjuiver" (201).

It is worth noting that this logic of becoming Jewish in order to disassociate oneself from familial guilt does not, in Jardin's account, stop at the generation which would convert to Judaism (the term conversion being employed here both *sensu stricto* and *sensu lato*). The following generation would push this logic even further by being born Jewish, as Jardin explains that "[i]rriguée par du sang sémite en provenance de son père, L. m'a donné une fille un peu juive; notre enfant chérie que nous avons confiée pendant ses trois premières années à la crèche israélite de Paris. Etablissement sur la façade duquel est apposée une plaque mémorielle qui, à chaque fois que je la lis, me tord le ventre" (276). This phenomenon had already been foreshadowed by the confession uttered by Zac's mother earlier in the text, upon facing her own

mother, when she states: "Ma mère, toujours la même…nazie. Intelligente, subtile et sincère : les pires. Tout ce que j'ai quitté en me mariant ici, à Paris, pour faire des enfants juifs" (205).

Alexandre Jardin seems, at first sight, to offer a future-oriented outlook on the idea of filiation. While most of his narrative addresses the familial past, the author here appears to offer a way out of the past and into the future, defining himself not as the descendant of a perpetrator, but as the forefather of a new Jewish progeny. Yet, the hinge phrase "tout ce que j'ai quitté" offers a false reality, despite what Jardin seems to think or desire, and eludes the reality that one can be *both* the descendant of perpetrators and the forefather of a progeny associated with past victims (here, through religious identity). This idea of a moment, or a way, out of perpetrator postmemory is also found when Alexandre Jardin evokes Frédéric Mitterrand, French Minister of Culture and Communication at the time of *Des gens très bien*'s publication, and nephew of François Mitterrand. François Mitterrand, who officiated as France's President from 1981 to 1995, had worked as a functionary in the Vichy government and was honored with the *Ordre de la Francisque* by Marechal Pétain himself in 1943. When talking about Frédéric, Alexandre Jardin notes "Les Mitterrand et les Jardin partageaient alors cette aptitude infernale; ce génie noir du détachement qui autorise tout. Fréderic en est sans doute devenu un gay magnifique, moi un Juif taciturne. A chacun sa porte de sortie" (57). Just like he uses the verb "quitter" in a perfective aspect (205), he here uses the expression "porte de sortie" as a metaphorical boundary, forgetting that what he sees as an exit door can also be an entrance door to the past.[3] Jardin's take

[3] A 2013 television movie entitled *Le Métis de Dieu* (English title: *The Jewish Cardinal*) depicts Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger's ascension in the Catholic Clergy. As the son of Jewish victims (his mother died in Auschwitz in 1943; Lustiger converted to Catholicism in order to hide as a

on filiation therefore appears ambivalent: while on the one hand he bases his whole book on his own position as the grandson of a perpetrator, he describes on several occasions his desire, conscious or unconscious, to close the door on the past and turn towards the future.

This ambivalence about his moral heritage is found throughout the book, and Jardin's position seems to shift back and forth between his intention of writing "pour ne plus m'inscrire dans un lignage sans remords ; et cesser d'être complice" (33), closing the door of memory and

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Jewish child during WW2 but chose to embrace the Catholic faith and become a priest) attempting to give the Jewish Holocaust more recognition by the Catholic Church, he is accused in turn by his father of forgetting his Jewish identity when the latter claims "Aaron [Lustiger's first name prior to his conversion to Catholicism], tu ne peux pas pardonner aussi vite. Même si tu ne veux plus être juif, même si tu es un Juif honteux" (5'58), while some within the Catholic Church accuse him of "enjuiver l'évangile" and of refusing to "reconnaitre le rôle des tiens [les Juifs] dans la mort du Christ" (12'20). Later, when told by the Great Rabbi of France, Jacob Kaplan, that "on est juif ou chrétien Monseigneur, pas les deux à la fois," Lustiger affirms his Jewishness by stating "Rabbi Kaplan, sachez que je suis aussi juif que vous et que les membres de ma famille assassinés à Auschwitz […]. Je ne renierai pas mes ancêtres ; je n'abjurerai pas mon père et ma mère pour vous faire plaisir" (33').

While *Le Métis de Dieu* deals with a different mechanism of memory. Although his mother's death haunts Lustiger, the film depicts personal memory rather than postmemory, and shows how inheritance and personal belief play a role in Lustiger's particular role within the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the film is not a rewrite of a previous work, and I consequently do not include it in the corpus of this chapter.

responsibility behind him, and his impression of himself: “et moi je restais là, possédé par une mémoire qui n’était pas la mienne, une culpabilité qui ne me concernait pas directement, une honte qui n’effleurait même pas les miens” (179). The narrator seems stuck with the guilt of actions that were not his but his grandfather’s, while grappling with the following question in the face of his grandfather’s lack of remorse: “Comment pourra-t-on enterrer ce passe si personne ne s’en sent responsable ?” (177-178). Yet, this question comes a couple of pages after his announcement that “Je signe ces pages comme on refuse un héritage devant notaire. Pour sectionner une filiation après l’avoir reconnue” (175). Here, the narrator shows again the relentless back and forth of his position: the severed lineage seemingly mends itself after each fracture.

How does Jardin’s project engage with the concept of transcategorical postmemory theorized in the previous chapter? It is clear enough that Alexandre Jardin’s *Des gens très bien* was written as a direct accusation against the author’s grandfather, exposing him as the collaborator that he was but who was never publicly acknowledged as such after the war by the State, or by his own family. *Des gens très bien* is a direct response and counter-narrative to Pascal Jardin’s publicly acclaimed novel *Le Nain jaune*, but it is also Alexandre Jardin’s response to his own father’s responsibility in whitewashing of the familial past, which Alexandre sees as furthering *le nain jaune*’s complicity in Nazi crimes.

In my previous chapter I have proposed two outcomes for transcategorical postmemory: melancholic and productive. Alexandre Jardin evokes the possibility for melancholic transcategorical postmemory when he states: “Personne ne peut admettre tranquillement que son grand-père a bien été aux affaires, au deuxième étage de l’hôtel du Parc, le matin de la rafle du

Vel d'Hiv. Quand la réalité exagère et que le déshonneur rode, ne reste plus que l'oxygène de la négation ; ou plutôt le retrait de soi. Cette forme de suicide provisoire" (71). While Jardin is not talking about suicide in a way that would mirror Rachel's suicide in Sansal's *Le Village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller*, which I have analyzed in chapter 4 in order to describe melancholic transcategorical postmemory, this "retrait de soi" linked to the "déshonneur" Jardin feels for his familial past still distinguishes his ego from his grandfather's acts, expressed in the expression "négation". Jardin distinguishes his ego from his grandfather's person and acts, and by this very act of counter-writing, he creates a new role for himself within the Jardin family: "[Le nain jaune] ignore encore que l'un de ses petits-enfants, le petit Alexandre, moins sous l'emprise de son charme, viendra plus tard interroger ses mânes, appuyé sur d'autres connaissances; et paniqué à l'idée de son propre regard puisse faire de lui le complice d'un silence de famille" (101-102). This creation of a role and an ego distinct both from his grandfather's acts, and from his father's position regarding these acts, therefore excludes Alexandre Jardin's narrator-double from the melancholic outcome of transcategorical postmemory. Within the framework of transcategorical postmemory, Jardin's narrator creates a new position for himself in his familial past, while giving birth to a new project as he pens *Des gens très bien* (the narrator of the novel indeed states that he writes the book). Intradiegetically, the narrator therefore finds himself at the heart of a productive transcategorical postmemory mechanism, while extradiegetically the author Alexandre Jardin finds himself in a separate but similar mechanism of productive transcategorical postmemory.

However, Jardin's problematic self-inscription in the community of victims (here, the Jews persecuted by his grandfather during the Second World War) raises a question which my previous chapter touches upon, but does not ask directly: within a transcategorical postmemory

framework, while the subject may have separated his ego from his forefather's acts of perpetration and while this may give rise to a future-oriented project (here the novel written by the author's character-double), can we still talk about *productive* transcategorical postmemory when the subject described has not separated his ego from the *victims* of the crimes? While the case of Rachel in Sansal's *Le Village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller* clearly is a case of melancholic transcategorical postmemory because Rachel distinguishes his ego *neither* from the victims of the Holocaust nor from his own Nazi father, the case presented in Jardin's novel is slightly different. Indeed, this is a case where *productiv*e transcategorical postmemory would apply only if we were to look at the relationship between Jardin's narrator-double ego and his relationship with his forefathers; however, it does not apply with regards to Jardin's narrator-double ego and his relationship to the victims of his forefathers, as the narrator-double seems to conflate his ego with the victims (*melancholic* transcategorical postmemory). This specific case within transcategorical postmemory therefore seems to constitute yet another dynamic: a hybrid between melancholic and productive transcategorical postmemory, which should give rise to more research.

While Jardin's novel proposes a counter-narrative written to rectify the truth about his grandfather's role during the Second World War in France and to prove his own father's novel *Le Nain jaune* as counter-factual, the next pair of rewrites that I will discuss proposes a different dynamic: one where the rewrite proposed by Jérôme Ruillier does not contest, but rather completes the narrative originally created by Yamina Benguigui.

From Benguigui to Ruillier: Giving the Nation's "Mohameds" More Than a Voice

French-born director Yamina Benguigui (born 1955) is the daughter of Algerian immigrants who made their way to France. Growing up, she never learned why her parents left

Algeria, a topic that was taboo in the family. Yet, her North African heritage is central to all of her works, from her first documentary *Femmes d'Islam* (1994) to her more recent political work. Benguigui has become a key figure in the representation of *beur* identity in France, that is French-born of North African descent. Her 1997 documentary *Mémoires d'immigrés*, which required two years of research and footage collection, and nine months of editing, was the result of 350 interviews with North African immigrants in France. The documentary was originally shown on the French TV channel *Canal+*, which decided to broadcast it again a month later due to the documentary's popularity; it was shown in cinemas later that same year. The documentary film received a prize at the *Festival international des programmes audiovisuels*, it was awarded best documentary at the 7 d'or ceremony, and received the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival in 1997. A book, bearing the same title as the documentary film, which presents a collection of testimonies and their transcriptions as written monologues, came out a few months after the film.

Benguigui had already adopted the double format of a documentary movie followed by a book. For her previous project *Femmes d'Islam,* the documentary was broadcast on France 2 in 1994 and followed two years later by a book bearing the same title published by Albin Michel; the book received the Rachid Mimouni Prize. She later published a novel based on her first fictional feature film *Inch'Allah dimanche* (2001 for both works). Both the documentary film *Mémoires d'Immigrés* and the book are divided into three parts entitled "fathers" (les pères)– who usually were the first wave of immigrants -, "mothers" (les mères), and "children" (les enfants) born in France. France has the largest population of immigrants from Africa in Europe, most of them from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Yet, France stopped collecting official religious or ethnic data at the end of the 19th century, and the State practices a color-and-faith-

blind policy that does not differentiate between its citizens according to their ethnic or religious background. Benguigui's work at large has therefore been an effort to unearth this North African heritage and bring it to light. Considering that the estimate for French citizens of North African descent (who were born in North Africa and have accessed citizenship afterward, or who were born French and have North African ancestry by way of their parents or grandparents) is at about 4.5 million people, it is hardly surprising that Benguigui's work has found such popularity in France.

In 2011, Jérôme Ruillier, a French graphic novelist with no North African heritage, published his graphic novel *Les Mohamed,* an adaptation of Benguigui's work *Mémoires d'immigrés*.

Figure 5.1: The cover of Jérôme Ruillier's graphic novel *Les Mohamed.* The cover of the graphic novel shows four drawn figures. The reader understands that these are four old men of North African descent, the "Mohameds" evoked by the title. The four characters are not drawn as fully human, but as bear-headed creatures with a human body. All humans are represented as such throughout the graphic novel. At their feet, two smaller figures are shown walking and possibly speaking to each other. They clearly appear as younger than the four seated characters. The reader infers that one of them must be the narrator of the graphic novel.

On the cover, right below the title *Les Mohamed*, a subtitle indicates "D'après le roman MÉMOIRES D'IMMIGRÉS de Yamina Benguigui. This subtitle would be difficult to miss considering that the title of Benguigui's book is capitalized, and that Yamina Benguigui's name is written in the same font and size as Ruillier's, despite her not being a co-author of the graphic novel. Interestingly, Ruillier uses the word "roman" (novel) rather than "livre" (book) to qualify

Benguigui's book-form documentary, an element that we could interpret as contributing to the blurring of genres that I will discuss later. Additionally, the title of Ruillier's work is different from Benguigui's. Instead of using *Mémoires d'Immigrés*, he titles his work *Les Mohamed*, after one of the sentences uttered by Khémaïs, one of the witnesses, which he transcribes twice in his graphic novel. In his testimony, one of the retired Algerian workers states that the French supervisors at the automobile factory called all blue-collar North African workers "Mohamed," regardless of their actual name: "Quand on entre chez Renault, on regarde comment vous vous appelez. Si c'est Mohamed, on vous envoie à la chaine. Khémaïs ou Mohamed, hein, c'est pareil !" (11); a fact Ruillier restates on page 20: "Mon nom, c'est Khémaïs. Khémaïs ou Mohamed, hein, c'est pareil !".

Figure 5.2: Khémaïs testifies to his experience as an employee of the Renault factory (11)

Figure 5.3: Khémaïs explains that all Arab workers were nicknamed Mohamed (20)

Yet, despite the title of his graphic novel, which seems to indicate that Ruillier will focus only on the "fathers," he organizes his graphic novel in the same manner as Benguigui's with three equal parts dedicated to "fathers", "mothers", and "children".

Whether Ruillier's work is an adaptation of Benguigui's original film or of her book remains somewhat unclear. In her preface to Ruillier's graphic novel, Benguigui notes "ma fille […] venait de m'informer qu'un auteur, Jérôme Ruillier, était venu la voir. Devant ses yeux, il avait sorti de son sac à dos, de manière solennelle, trois tomes de plusieurs centaines de pages entièrement dessinées au crayon de papier, adaptées de mon documentaire 'Mémoires d'immigrés, l'héritage magrébin' en bande dessinée." It is highly unlikely that the original French "documentaire" would refer to Benguigui's book rather than to the "film documentaire," yet Ruillier's graphic novel shows the graphic artist reading Benguigui's book.

Figure 5.4: The narrator of Les Mohamed refers to Yamina Benguigui's book (9)

The most interesting aspect of this ambiguity regarding the original source is not really to know if Ruillier's original source is the book or the film (and undoubtedly, Ruillier probably drew inspiration from both sources), but to note the intermediality at the core of this project.

It is worth noting that Ruillier's project, unique insofar as it is an adaptation of another preexisting documentary project (Benguigui's), draws on an already existing tradition of documentary comics:

> Les BD reportages vont commencer à fleurir sous forme d'albums, timidement, à partir de la fin des années 60, aux Etats-Unis puis en France. Les biographies en cases et en bulles seront la locomotive de ce mouvement durant les années 70 et 80, avec deux pionniers : Robert Crumb et Will Eisner. La consécration est atteinte en 1992, lorsqu'Art Spiegelman obtiendra le prix Pulitzer. Une reconnaissance du sérieux et de la qualité de cet art factuel. Aujourd'hui, le grand nom de la BD reportage moderne américaine est celui de Joe Sacco." (Mal)

The most notable work on the Algerian War of Independence in comics form remains Jacques Ferrandez's series *Carnets d'Orients*, which is not a postmemorial narrative.

While two forms of media (film documentary and book) may seem to suffice to present these testimonies, the graphic novel used by Ruillier to adapt Benguigui's work does more than merely merge the film's images with the book's words. Unlike the viewer of a film documentary, the reader of the graphic novel can flip through pages, or go back in the narration to change his interpretation, creating a new role for the recipient of these testimonies. In his seminal work *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Scott McCloud points out that the audience can

disrupt the chronological order of the story by looking around the page as "comics panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments" (67), an argument substantiated by Cédric Mal in his article "BD interactive: Dessine moi un webdocumentaire": "Le dessin, à l'instar de la photographie, permet au regard du spectateur de se porter sur l'ensemble de l'œuvre de manière libre et non programmatique : une géographie du regard, en quelque sorte, comparé à un regard porté sur une histoire." While McCloud's claim that the moments are "unconnected" seems disputable (their lack of a chronological sequence does not make them unconnected), this fragmentation in images echoes that of the testimony collection genre, and can be linked to the fragmentation of trauma narratives. In another article titled "Bande dessinée et documentaire," Cédric Mal claims that

> il faut penser la narration à mi-chemin entre la puissance de l'image (telle qu'on peut la percevoir sur des chaînes de diffusion 24/24, parfois très "brute", dénuée de recul) et l'analyse écrite (plus posée, réfléchie, telle qu'on peut la lire dans la presse papier). Un exercice d'équilibriste difficile dont la plupart des auteurs de bande dessinée se sont affranchis en assumant la subjectivité de leurs propos. Quoi de plus juste quand on peut changer les points de vue ? Raconter visuellement un témoignage que l'on nous a rapporté ? Imaginer des cadrages impossibles sur tous les autres médias ? Construire les images non pas seulement comme on les a vécues mais également comme on souhaite les montrer ?

Based on a documentary project, Ruillier's graphic novel illustrates –literally- this idea of "constructing images … as one wishes to show them"[4]. Mal argues furthermore that "la BD reportage est une rencontre littéraire entre la presse et les bulles, entre le factuel du reportage et

[4]The translation from above quote is mine.

la subjectivité qu'apporte le dessin" and that "voir un dessin documentaire, c'est accéder à une réalité tout en sachant qu'elle est vue par le prisme de la liberté de l'auteur du dessin."

Indeed, the characters of Ruillier's graphic novel are not represented as humans, but rather as animal-faced semi-anthropomorphic figures resembling bears, or maybe mice. While the use of mice might echo Art Spiegelman's classic graphic novel *Maus,* I want to point out that both Algerian and French characters are represented by the same animal, unlike Spiegelman's characters that were depicted by different animals according to their ethnic background. Ruillier's choice might be explained by Scott McCloud's argument that "by de-emphasizing the appearance of the physical world in favor of the idea of form, the cartoon places itself in the world of concepts. Through traditional realism, the comics artist can portray the world without – and through the cartoon, the world within" (41).

Another significant change made by Ruillier when we compare his work to Benguigui's lies in the incipit of his graphic novel. While Benguigui's film documentary starts with archival images of North African men getting off a boat, walking into a corridor towards what looks like temporary lodgings, or walking in the streets of Paris –that is to say with archival footage showing the arrival of first generation immigrants in the past, Ruillier's graphic novel is from the get go a postmemorial project from an author of metropolitan (French) heritage. Not only does Ruillier change Benguigui's chronology, starting with the second generation rather than the parents' generation of Algerian immigrants arriving in France to work, Ruillier also changes the relationship of the first character that appears in the narrative to the event described: Ruillier's narrator-double is the French-born son of French parents, while Benguigui's first interviewee is an Algerian immigrant in France.

While it is not a new device for a graphic novelist to include himself as the drawn narrator in his work (we can once more cite Spiegelman's *Maus* as an example), Ruillier's inclusion of himself as a narrator creates a particularly new dynamic. While Benguigui had clear ties with those she interviewed for her documentary, she never offered any information about her family in her project, acting as an external interviewer. Ruillier's graphic novel, *a contrario*, follows the description given by Cédric Mal when he declares: "La richesse de la BD reportage vient donc surtout du fait qu'un BD reporter ne suit pas *stricto senso* le travail d'un journaliste : il étale ses émotions et se place souvent au cœur de l'histoire. Au lieu de clamer une objectivité totale, Saint Graal du Journaliste, le BD reporter affirme clairement sa différence : à défaut d'être neutre, il est honnête, et c'est déjà ça." We learn later in the graphic novel that Ruillier is not totally devoid of genealogical ties with North Africa, as his father served in the French Army in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence. The Algerian War of Independence was characterized by extreme violence both on behalf of the French Army and of Algerian Freedom Fighters. The use of torture by the French Army however evaded any code of war, and Algerian civilians were regularly tortured and massacred by orders unofficially given by the French State. Ruillier's father appears particularly unrepentant of his actions against Algerians, or those who refused to fight them: "les objecteurs de conscience qui refusaient de porter les armes, je les mettais, la nuit, tout seuls aux avant-postes dans un trou…je t'assure que le lendemain ils avaient changé d'avis…s'ils étaient encore vivants ! HA HA HA !" (82).

Figure 5.5: The narrator's father shares his experience in the French army during the Algerian War of Independence (82)

The father is shown as a perpetrator figure, therefore redefining Ruillier's narrator as the son of a perpetrator, rather than an unimplicated subject. Yet, it is clear throughout *Les Mohamed* that Ruillier's narrator distances himself from his father's views and comes to empathize with the very North African men his father was persecuting. Furthermore, his own familial history regarding Franco-Algerian history permits the narrator to implicate readers who do not come from a North African background.

Not only did these North African immigrants work in France, where most of them still live and raise their French-born children, but, like Ruillier, many French citizens who did not realize they had a tie with Algerian history may come to rediscover a State-censored, taboo past until they choose to investigate their family's past. Ruillier includes Franco-Algerian history as part of French history at large, rather than as the sole history of the North African community in France. The gigantic figure of the father, appearing in the above image both as a literal father, but also as a Freudian father figure who dictates the official narrative, was a soldier, that is a representative of the French State, the institution par excellence dictating the official narrative – acting as a symbol for the state-sanctioned voice. While the first generation –the father -therefore fulfills the definition of perpetrator, the second generation – Ruillier's narrator – rather than staying in the same role category and developing perpetrator postmemory comes to empathize with the victims of his father's implied crimes.

It is clear throughout *Les Mohamed* that the narrator distances himself from his father's views, and instead he comes to empathize both with the very Maghrebi his father was fighting during the Algerian war and with his co-citizens whom the father treated as cheap labor at the Renault factory. While the French characters of the first generation therefore fulfill the definition of perpetrator (either through armed opposition in the case of the father, or by socioeconomic

exploitations in the case of the factory recruiters), the second generation, rather than staying in the same role category and developing perpetrator postmemory, comes to empathize with the victims. We have already observed this phenomenon, which I call transcategorical postmemory, in Boualem Sansal's *Le village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller* (when the novel retraces the story of brothers Malrich and Rachel, who discover that their father served as a Nazi officer during the Second World War). When both brothers reject their father's Nazi past and instead empathize strongly with the victims of the Holocaust, the second generation rejects a potential perpetrator postmemory and instead comes to empathize with the victims of the paternal crime, following the mechanism of transcategorical postmemory.

In the case of Ruillier's narrator, the mechanism of transcategorical postmemory that I have established in more detail in chapter 4 turns out to have a productive outcome. While, unlike in Spiegelman's *Maus*, we do not see the author's narrator creating the work that the reader ends up having in hand, Ruillier's decision to adapt Benguigui's work is part of the narrative of *Les Mohamed*. Out of the difficulty of bearing the responsibility for his father's and his nation's actions, Ruillier's narrator ends up creating a future-oriented project (the decision to adapt Benguigui's documentary, which is depicted in the graphic novel,) as well as a new subject position for himself regarding the historical events described.

From its start a double format –film and book- project, Ruillier's adaptation of the narrative into a graphic novel builds on the different positionality (daughter of immigrants, son of perpetrator) of Benguigui and Ruillier. *Les Mohamed* proposes a dynamic, evolving way of looking at a part of French history – the history of its North African immigrants – that has mainly been regarded as personal or familial history. Ruillier therefore inspires us to rethink modes of

identity representation between the national and the personal, as well as our own situatedness as readers within these national and personal frameworks.

L'Etranger s'appelait M.

Qui sait si Moussa avait un revolver, une philosophie ou une insolation?
Kamel Daoud Meursault, contre-enquête (14)

The last pair of rewrites that this chapter will analyze presents a different dynamic than the two I have just discussed. Indeed, in this case, the second narrative does not present a character that empathizes with the victims of his/her forefather. Yet, this rewrite can also inform us about memory dynamics and subject positions across generations. In 2014, exactly fifty years after the Algeria's independence from France, Algerian author, and Arabic native speaker Kamel Daoud published *Meursault, contre-enquête*[5], a first novel that was nominated for the Goncourt prize, and was awarded the prix François Mauriac and the Prix littéraire des cinq continents. Had it been a rewrite of *The Iliad*, the first verse would have proclaimed "Sing, o muse, of the rage of Haroun," for Daoud's narrative gives voice to the cry of the Arab shot by Meursault in Albert Camus's *The Stranger*. The dead Arab, named Moussa, left behind a mother (M'ma) and a brother (Haroun), the novel's narrator. While Daoud titled his novel *Meursault, contre-enquête*, it seems that the narrative serves rather as a *contre-témoignage*, as the narrator Haroun refutes Meursault, whom he posits as the writer and narrator of Camus's *L'Etranger*, wiping away Camus from the equation altogether. Interestingly, the back cover of Daoud's novel also leaves

[5]Title in translation: *The Meursault Investigation*, translated by John Cullen and published by Other Press (2015).

out Camus's name as it presents a summary of *Meursault, contre-enquête*:

> Il est le frère de 'l'Arabe' tué par un certain Meursault dont le crime est relaté dans un célèbre roman du XXe siècle. Soixante-dix ans après les faits, Haroun, qui depuis l'enfance a vécu dans l'ombre et le souvenir de l'absent, ne se résigne pas à laisser celui-ci dans l'anonymat : il redonne un nom et une histoire à Moussa, mort par hasard sur une plage trop ensoleillée.
>
> Haroun est un viel homme tourmenté par la frustration. Soir après soir, dans un bar d'Oran, il rumine sa solitude, sa colère contre les hommes qui ont tant besoin d'un dieu, son désarroi face a un pays qui l'a déçu. Étranger parmi les siens, il voudrait mourir enfin…

The back cover is not the only time Camus's novel is directly evoked, and the narrator of *Meursault, contre-enquête* gives several satirical accounts of *The Stranger*. Before proposing his counter-testimony, Haroun announces:

> Je vais te résumer l'histoire avant de te la raconter : un homme qui sait écrire tue un Arabe qui n'a même pas de nom ce jour-là […] puis se met à expliquer que c'est la faute d'un Dieu qui n'existe pas et à cause de ce qu'il vient de comprendre sous le soleil et parce que le sel de la mer l'oblige à fermer les yeux. Du coup, le meurtre est un acte absolument impuni et n'est déjà pas un crime parce qu'il n'y a pas de loi entre midi et quatorze heures. (15)

In Haroun's account, the absurd is less an existentialist concept than a racial privilege that enables Meursault to downplay his murder.

Daoud builds on the minimal role given to the victim, the unnamed Arab, and how little his death played in Meursault's condemnation, an element already present in Camus's novel:

"L'assassin est condamné à mort pour avoir mal enterré sa mère et avoir parlé d'elle avec une trop grande indifférence" (63). Daoud's novel is the artistic counterpart to Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of Camus's novel, in which the sociologist assesses that "the European gradually created an environment that reflected his own image…a world in which he no longer felt himself to be a stranger and in which by a natural reversal, the Algerian was finally considered to be a stranger" (131). Camus's original title *L'Etranger* remains famously ambiguous about who this stranger actually is; throughout the narrative, Meursault is never called "the stranger," nor is the man he kills who is only called "the Arab." While this last naming places the murdered man in a specific ethnic group and therefore denies him a universal nature, the quote by Bourdieu (and most postcolonial commentators of Camus's novel) would identify Meursault as being the stranger. The astuteness of Camus's title is, of course, that this ambiguity as to who the stranger is remains unexplained, and unexplainable, mirroring the reality of the ethnographic situation in colonial Algeria. The title I gave to the present section of my chapter, "L'Etranger s'appelait M.", could therefore be "L'Etranger s'appelait Moussa" (the name given by Daoud to the murdered Arab) or "L'Etranger s'appelait Meursault."

"Aujourd'hui, M'ma est encore vivante" (11): the sentence that starts Daoud's novel echoes the opening line of Camus's *L'Etranger*, like the reverberation of a gunshot fired at midday on an Algerian beach seventy years earlier. From the very first line, Daoud's narrator is placed in parallel with Camus' narrator: Meursault, who is also named in the title of Daoud's novel. While Daoud's novel is a postcolonial rewrite, the first sentence does not draw a parallel between the narrator (Haroun) and his dead brother (Moussa), but between the narrator and the French colonial subject Meursault. As further ammunition, Daoud casts a narrative that counts the exact same number of printed signs as Camus's (Kaplan 3). Moreover, the structure of the

narrative mirrors that of *L'Etranger*, with a rupture in the middle of the novel between chapters VIII and IX blinding Meursault's crime to the reader like a midday sun (Kaplan 6). Yet, *Meursault, contre-enquête* is in fact a double rewrite: in content and, as we have seen, partly in form, it is a rewrite of *L'Etranger*; but the narrative structure is more an adaptation of another work by Camus: *La Chute*, which proposes a dramatic monologue, a retroactive tirade displaced in time and space from the event reflected upon by the narrator, and addressed to a silent interlocutor. While *La Chute* addresses the Second World War, the memories of the Second World War and of the Algerian War of Independence are closely intertwined as we have seen in previous chapters. I will discuss another rewrite of *La Chute* in a postcolonial context, but I will first go over the elements that Daoud draws directly from Camus's *L'Etranger* to build his own narrative.

L'Etranger's storyline constitutes the premise of *Meursault, contre-enquête*, and is the most obvious point of convergence, but Daoud does more than use the basic plot of Camus's novel:

> On retrouve à travers la tirade de Haroun à-la-manière-de-La-Chute, quantités de détails de *L'Etranger* adaptés à l'Algérie contemporaine : Meursault s'ennuie le dimanche ; Haroun le vendredi…. Salamano passe toute la journée à hurler contre son chien ; le voisin de Haroun récite le Coran à tue-tête pendant la nuit ; les Algériens de *L'Etranger* regardent les Européens en silence ; dans *Meursault, Contre- Enquête*, ce sont des Roumi (Européens) qui reviennent en Algérie, qui errent en silence "essayant de retrouver qui une rue, qui une maison, qui un arbre avec un tronc gravé d'initiales." (Kaplan 3)

Again, these parallels between Camus and Daoud's novels illustrate a parallel between Haroun, the postcolonial subject, and Meursault, the colonial settler, rather than between Haroun and his dead brother Moussa, the colonial *indigène*.

From the pleasure reader, who had been assigned *L'Etranger* in school decades ago and who had picked up *Meursault, contre-enquête* somewhat at random, to the Camus scholar who can identify details drawn from the original narrative, Daoud's novel targets a large, but nationally defined public. Indeed, Daoud slightly modified elements of his novel according to the country of publication: "Dans l'édition algérienne de *Meursault, contre-enquête*, celle de 2013, le livre qu'il lit s'appelle *L'Etranger*. Dans l'édition française, celle de 2014, il s'appelle *L'Autre*." ; "Albert Meursault, l'auteur de *L'Etranger* dans l'édition algérienne, devient, dans l'édition française, simplement 'Meursault.' L'assassin de Moussa n'est plus l'auteur du livre, c'est le narrateur" (Kaplan 5). These more explicit references in the Algerian version, which might have appeared overkill if left in the French edition, might be explained by the fact that while *L'Etranger* remains widely read and assigned in schools, a must-read classic in France, that a young Algerian readership has necessarily read Camus's original novel is less of a given. Making Meursault the narrator of the original novel (while in reality Camus's *L'Etranger* is a third-person narrative, and part of the strength of Camus's treatment of the existentialist absurd is that the reader does not have access to Meursault's thoughts), rather than conflating him with the author Camus is indeed a smart political move on Daoud's part in order to bypass the unavoidable debate on *pied-noir* identity in colonial Algeria, which would assuredly stir controversy among Daoud's French readership. This also has complex implications with regards of transcategorical postmemory. If Meursault and Camus are two separate entities (as the French edition of Daoud's text postulates), then transcategorical postmemory operates intradiegetically:

Haroun, the narrator, comes to relate both to his brother in the shadow of whom he grew up, in a more typical postmemory configuration, *and* to Meursault through the constant parallels drawn by Daoud. If Meursault and Camus are the same entity, named Albert Camus in the Algerian edition, then Daoud also taps into the likely sentiment of his Algerian readers that Camus was a colonizer, while including Camus in the Algerian literary canon (as opposed to the French canon). Transcategorical postmemory therefore seems to work both on the intradiegetical level (Haroun empathizes in part with Meursault, follows some of his steps, and shares the sentiment of absurdity in the face of life expressed by Meursault), and on the extradiegetical level (Haroun empathizes with Albert Meursault who is in part Albert Camus). The argument for an extradiegetical reading of postmemory finds its limit in the fact that Albert Meursault, despite being largely inspired by Albert Camus, remains a character of Daoud's text, and even a character based entirely on Albert Camus would remain a character. So, while the Algerian edition of *Meursault, contre-enquête* constitutes an interesting litmus test for transcategorical postmemory at the boundary of history and literature, the mechanism of transcategorical postmemory has to be either intradiegetic (between Haroun and Albert Meursault in the Algerian edition, and between Haroun and Meursault in the French edition) or extradiegetic (between a postcolonial Algerian reader and the writer Albert Camus).

If Daoud's novel rejects the vision of Meursault proposed in Camus's preface to the US edition of *L'Etranger*, where "the young Franco-Algerian is described as a martyr for the absurd. He is a man who refuses to cheat." (Azar) - that is, Meursault as a victim- it does offer an application of the existentialist absurd to postcolonial Algeria in the episode of the police interrogation

Haroun, tout comme Meursault, est arrêté, et il doit faire face non pas à un

> procureur mais à un Colonel de l'AFN, qui lui demande non pas s'il croit en Dieu mais s'il croit à la Révolution. Meursault, dans *L'Etranger*, doit répondre du fait de ne pas avoir pleuré à l'enterrement de sa mère. Haroun doit expliquer pourquoi il n'a pas pris les armes pour libérer le pays. L'absurde s'avère être une question de dates, et les dialogues qui s'ensuivent sont savoureux : "Le Français, il fallait le tuer avec nous, pendant la guerre, pas cette semaine !" (Kaplan 4)

These rewritten scenes that Daoud draws directly from Camus's *L'Etranger* illustrate both the convergence and divergence of the two narratives, the homage as well as the rebuttal. Similarly, Haroun, the narrator of *Meursault, contre-enquête*, points out that "Je me suis senti tout à la fois insulté et révélé à moi-même" (140) while reading Camus's novel. The denial by the French colonial system of the colonial *indigène*'s right to define him/herself is best found in the absence of a name, turning Meursault's victim into a nameless indiscriminate Arab devoid of any specific traits and humanity. The victim remains nameless and devoid of any identity decades later, with Algeria's independence having failed to implement any symbolic restitution of identity for its colonial victims: "Songes-y, c'est l'un des livres les plus lus au monde, mon frère aurait pu être célèbre si ton auteur avait seulement daigné lui attribuer un prénom" (Daoud 62). Franz Fanon points out, before Algeria's independence, that in the representation of Algeria "les Algériens, les femmes en 'haïk', les palmeraies et les chameaux forment le panorama, la toile de fond *naturelle* de la présence humaine française" (240). Similarly, regarding *La Peste*, Edward Said notes that "Arabs die of plague in Oran, but they are not named" (*Culture* 174). These remarks directly echo Daoud's novel when Haroun notes that "Mon frère, lui, n'a eu droit à aucun mot dans cette histoire" (16), "même mort assassiné, on ne cesse de le désigner avec le prénom d'un courant d'air et deux aiguilles d'horloges" (13). Moussa, therefore, only appears to

have lived for the two hours depicted by Camus, only to be shot by Meursault: "Un Arabe […] qui a vécu deux heures et qui est mort soixante-dix ans sans interruption" (Daoud 13). Beyond the question of representation, which remains an ethical one, this erasure of the colonial subject triggers real consequences for the family of the victim, who cannot prove "qu'il avait existé alors qu'il avait été tué publiquement" (23). The narrator is therefore prevented from asking legal reparations for his brother's murder, or a pension from the Algerian State.

Haroun, considering that "le second mort, celui qui a été assassiné, [était] mon frère […] Il ne reste que moi pour parler à sa place." (11). He decides to give him "un prénom un demi-siècle après sa mort et sa naissance" (23) by bringing his brother's story to the reader's awareness. Haroun thus places himself in the position of an interlocutor for Camus's readers. This role of interlocutor constitutes a new position for Haroun, who, just like his brother Moussa, would have been denied this privilege under French colonial rule:

> An interlocutor in the colonial situation is therefore by definition either someone who is compliant and belongs to the category of what the French in Algeria called an *évolué, notable*, or *caid* (the liberation group reserved the designation of *beni-wéwé* or white man's nigger for the class), or someone who, like Fanon's native intellectual, simply refuses to talk, deciding that only a radically, antagonistic, perhaps violent riposte is the only interlocution that is possible with colonial power. (Said, "Representing" 209-210)

Here Daoud proposes something else: neither silence, nor agreement with the colonizer. Yet, Daoud's choice to write in French might raise questions as to why the author chose the language of the colonizer, or the Algerian elite described by Said, since Daoud's native language is Algerian Arabic. Of course, many renowned authors of Algerian literature still produce work

in French (Sebbar, Djebar, Khadra), although this is less and less the case. With Algeria's independence establishing the country as a self-ruling nation, the call for independence and the cultural push for absolute separation and differentiation from France might be less present than in the immediate aftermath of the war of independence. The push to write in Algerian Arabic might consequently be less strong than in the immediate aftermath of Algeria's Independence; on the other side of the same coin "Le français n'est plus, comme au temps de Kateb Yacine, 'un butin de guerre', car le pouvoir en Algérie ne parle plus cette langue"(Kaplan 1). If Daoud still has to convince some readers to look at the formerly obscured, non-European, elements (subjects, culture) in colonial Algeria, these readers are unlikely to be current Algerian citizens, but rather former pied-noirs and their descendants, as well as Camus's French readership, a readership which therefore calls for French as the language of the narrative: not as a submissive adoption of the former colonizer's superior language, but as a political tool of affirmation of the narrator's position.

By writing in French, Daoud inscribes his work in a transnational, transgenerational, conversation.

> It is true that literary production in Arabic has increased since independence [in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria], and that some writers, like the late Kateb Yacine and Rachid Boudjedra, have abandoned French for Arabic. Nevertheless, it is equally true that many other writers continue to produce works in French, and in 'the metropole'. Rather than entertain the thought of belonging totally to the French literary tradition, these writers have assumed their bilingualism as an effective means with which to contest all forms of domination all kinds of exclusion within their own 'native' cultures and their 'host' cultures as well.

> Despite the heated debates on nationalism and national literatures, these postcolonial bilingual writers chose the word over silence. (Mehrez 123)

Again, then, Daoud's novel does not constitute a simple adaptation, a mere temporal translation of Camus's narrative, but the affirmation of a new narrative: "Le meurtrier est devenu célèbre et son histoire est trop bien écrite pour que j'aie dans l'idée de l'imiter" (12). Daoud weaves his own narrative using Camus's canvas, not merely adding details that embellish the original narrative, but rather bringing to life a dynamic system of relations, including both homage and rebuttal, between the two texts, illustrating that "our notions of formerly stable things such as authors, texts, and objects are, quite literally, un-printable, and certainly unpronounceable" (Said, "Representing" 206). Rather than a sheer rebuttal, Daoud therefore brings his postcolonial Algerian readership to empathize with the figure of Albert Camus as a *pied-noir* writer.

Helen Tiffin provides a useful summary of postcolonial rewrites and counter-narratives in her article "Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse," which sheds light on the relationship between post-colonial rewrites and the colonizer's culture.

> Post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridized, involving dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity. Decolonization is process, not arrival; it invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dis/mantling. Since it is not possible to create or recreate national or regional formations wholly independent of their historical implication in the European colonial enterprise, it has been the project of post-colonial writing to

> interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from a privileged position within (and between) two worlds. (99)

Tiffin's point shows once more how Daoud's narrative enters into dialogue with Camus's, to provide a different perspective on Camus's seminal thoughts on the relationship between the individual, his/her environment (including his/her political environment), and self-definition through choice.

It is worth noting that *Meursault, contre-enquête* is not the first rewrite drawing on Camus's *The Fall*. In 1974, Indian writer Arun Joshi published *The Apprentice*, an adaptation of *The Fall* portraying the aftermath of the Indo-China war of 1962. More recently, in 2007, Pakistani author Mohsin Hamid published an English-language novel titled *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,*[6] which was adapted into a movie by the same title in 2012. Hamid's novel uses the same frame structure as Camus's *The Fall*, and is also written as a dramatic monologue. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* of Hamid's title is Changez, a Pakistani Princeton graduate in finance, who climbs the socioeconomic ladder of his host country before facing discrimination after 9/11. Seated at a café in Lahore, Changez's monologue addressed to a silent, younger foreigner recounts his path from Ivy-educated financial analyst in the United States before 9/11, to anti-

[6] Interestingly, the expression "une croyante récalcitrante" (45) is also found in Yasmina Khadra's 2005 novel *L'Attentat* in which the wife of a Palestinian doctor, who has climbed the socioeconomic ladder as a gifted surgeon and obtained Israeli citizenship, is suspected to be the female terrorist who died in a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv; the novel then focuses on the narrator's (the surgeon's) life and social persecution after the bombing.

imperialist, disillusioned activist in Pakistan, branding him the eponymous hero. The novel ends with Changez noticing the glint of a metallic object in the foreigner's pocket, possibly a business card holder, although Hamid's use of Camus's *La Chute* makes it hard for the reader not to think of Meursault's gun in the glimmering sun, the weapon of *L'Etranger'*s ellipsed crime.

Just as in *The Fall*, and later in *Meursault, contre-enquête*, the narrative consists of a monologue uttered by an aging man to a silent foreign listener. Just as in *La Chute*, and later in *Meursault, contre-enquête*, the narrator interrupts his narrative in order to comment on the silent waiter who works at the café where the two interlocutors meet over a series of days. Just as in *La Chute*, and in later *Meursault, contre-enquête*, the narratives end on a tension such that the feeling of insecurity and acrimony seems to seep out of the pages. Just as in *La Chute*, and later in *Meursault, contre-enquête*, the narrative turns the tables on the receptor of the confession and leaves his right to answer inaccessible to the reader through textually enforced silence.

Despite this previous postcolonial rewrite of Camus's works, Hamid and Daoud's novels function very differently with regard to situatedness. Daoud's novel refocuses the narrative of the story previously told by Camus on its Algerian setting. Unlike the universalist claim of the human experience facing the absurd, the human experience depicted by Daoud is a very specific, situated one that does not make any claim for universalism. Daoud's narrative claims that what happened on the Algerian beach at midday before Algeria's independence is a specific experience tied with a particular geopolitical and historical context. Daoud insists on the specifically Algerian setting already present in *L'Etranger*, and in "challenging the notion of literary universality," he, like many "post-colonial writers and critics[,] engage[s] in counter-discourse" (Tifflin 99-100).

That Daoud chose to enter into dialogue with Camus is no surprise: Camus remains, in France and abroad, one of the most recognized names of Algerian literature. Furthermore, non-metropolitan writers have favored the detective genre evoked in the title *Meursault, contre-enquête* to deconstruct what they perceive as the hegemonic narrative: told by a first-person or omniscient single narrator, in chronological order, with the resolution of the initial situation presented at the end of the novel. Authors from the French West Indies in particular have proposed a plurality of narrators, often belonging to minority or subaltern positions, reminiscing about a single event or several events which they evoke in non-chronological order, and leaving the reader to piece together the elements of an enigma which often remains unclear. *Traversée de la mangrove*, by Guadeloupian author Maryse Condé constitutes a prime example. A third explanation for Daoud's choice of Camus as a posthumous interlocutor lies in the fact that "Camus is particularly important in the ugly colonial turbulence of France's twentieth-century decolonizing travail. He is a very late imperial figure who not only survived the heyday of empire, but survives today as a 'universalist' writer with roots in a new forgotten colonialism" (Said, *Culture* 172). Edward Said's analysis of Camus's work finds a literary resonance in *Meursault, contre-enquête* when he notes:

> Once again the interrelationship between geography and the political contest must be reanimated exactly where, in the novels, Camus covers it with a superstructure celebrated by Sartre as providing "a climate of the absurd." Both *L'Etranger* and *La Peste* are about the deaths of Arabs, deaths that highlight and silently inform the French characters' difficulties of conscience and reflection. Moreover, the structure of civil society so vividly presented – the municipality, the legal apparatus, hospitals, restaurants, clubs, entertainments, schools – is French,

> although in the main it administers the non-French population. The correspondence between how Camus writes about this and how the French schoolbooks do is arresting: the novels and short stories narrate the result of a victory won over a pacified, decimated Muslim population whose rights to the land have been severely curtailed. In thus confirming and consolidating French priority, Camus neither disputes nor dissents from the campaign for sovereignty waged against Algerian Muslims for over a hundred years. (181)

Despite his in-depth knowledge of the *indigènes*' condition, depicted in detail in *Chroniques algériennes*, Camus's idealist attachment to an Algeria where *pieds-noirs* and non-European Algerians could live side by side remains tinted with French colonial paternalism.[7] Unlike

[7] Camus's claim that "une Algérie purement arabe ne pourrait accéder à l'indépendance économique sans laquelle l'indépendance politique n'est qu'un leurre. Si insuffisant que soit l'effort français, il est d'une telle envergure qu'aucun pays, à l'heure actuelle, ne consentirait à le prendre en charge" (*Essais* 113) appears particularly problematic as it seems to hint at (possibly unconsciously) a need for an exterior nation to rule Algeria, whether this nation be France or not, dismissing Algeria's right to self-determination because of economic concerns. Yet, this tension in Camus' thinking between recognizing and highlighting the economic, political, and social discrepancy between *indigènes* and *pied-noirs* in Algeria and his reluctance to advocate for a full Algerian independence is precisely what makes his writings such a fruitful basis for Daoud's rewrite. Like Meursault, and like Camus (whose philosophy is echoed by Albert Meursault in the Algerian edition of Daoud's novel), Haroun has trouble navigating the difference between postcolonial revenge and personal revenge, between his own identity, his identity as M'ma's son

Camus, Daoud does dispute France's campaign for sovereignty waged against Algerian Muslims (and other non-Muslim *indigènes*), and turns Camus's idea of the absurd against France's colonialism by showing both the absurdity of the system and the absurdity faced by the colonial and postcolonial subjects (I again refer the reader to the police interrogation scene of *Meursault, contre-enquête* among other examples) grappling with the absurd in their daily lives.

Despite his insistence on the Algerian setting, Daoud does not contest Camus's claim that "les Arabes ne forment pas à eux seuls toute l'Algérie" (*Essais* 112), and chronicles that "cette chanson est oranaise, la bière arabe, le whiskey européen, les barmans sont kabyles, les rues françaises, les vieux portiques espagnols" (32). He does, however, contest Camus's claim that "en ce qui concerne l'Algérie, l'Indépendance nationale est une formule purement passionnelle. Il n'y a jamais eu encore de nation algérienne. Les Juifs, les Turcs, les Grecs, les Italiens, les Berbères, auraient autant de droit à réclamer la direction de cette nation virtuelle" (112). Daoud's vision of multiculturalism is not a rejection of other communities, but is rather in line with the decolonization claimed by Mehrez when he states

> these texts seek to decolonize themselves from two oppressors at once, namely the western ex-colonizer who naively boasts of their existence and ultimately recuperates them and the 'traditional', 'national' cultures which shortsightedly deny their importance and consequently marginalize them […]. It was crucial for the postcolonial text to challenge both its own indigenous, conventional models as well as the structures and institutions of the colonizer in a newly forged language

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and Moussa's brother, and his identity as a contemporary Algerian who does not live during the Algerian War of Independence.

> that would accomplish this double movement. Indeed, the ultimate goal of such literature was to subvert hierarchies by bringing together the 'dominant' and the 'underdeveloped,' by exploding and confounding different symbolic worlds and separate systems of signification in order to create a mutual interdependence and intersignification" (121-122).

This statement by Mehrez seems particularly relevant with regard to Daoud's project which is based on reclaiming an Algerian identity, and a right to testimony while acknowledging its heritage to Camus's narrative. At the same time, Kamel Daoud is famously and virulently opposed to current ultranationalist politics in Algeria that push for an essentialist, unified Muslim, Arabic Algerian identity, and has been targeted by a fatwa.[8]

The biggest criticism postcolonial rewrites face aligns with Naipaul's formula, famously quoted by Said in "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," that "the colonized are people condemned to use the telephone, never to invent it" (Said 207). While I have pointed out the elements that Daoud draws from Camus in his narrative, I have also highlighted that Daoud's text is not a mere repetition of *L'Etranger* from an opposing perspective, even less so of *La Chute* from which it borrows its narrative form. *Meursault, contre-enquête* raises new questions about national identity, memory inheritance, and the position of the speaker in a postcolonial context. Said's point about Martiniquais author Franz Fanon is particularly pertinent here: "Despite its bitterness and violence, the whole point of

[8] For more information, see Doreen Carvajal's article "An Algerian Author Fights Against a Fatwa," published in the New York Times on January 4, 2015.

Fanon's work is to force the European metropolis to think its history together with the history of colonies awakening from the cruel stupor and abused immobility of imperial dominion" (223). Daoud uses the language of the French colonizer (including its cultural references) in order to urge his metropolitan audience to rethink their own position concerning Camus's classic novel. Those who have read *Meursault, contre-enquête* will have to conceive of Camus's novel together with Daoud's, of Meursault together with Moussa. To quote Tiffin, the "operation of post-colonial counter-discourse is dynamic, not static: it does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but, in Wilson Harris's formulation, to evolve textual strategies which continually 'consume' their 'own biases' at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse" (99). Daoud's text is therefore not a rewrite penned to set things right, a concept I have already opposed. Rather, it gives another account, proposes one way to complete the picture, and forces the reader to rethink canonical texts across shifting national borders, cultural references, theoretical frameworks (here postcolonial theory), and timeframes.

The three pairs of works that I have addressed in this chapter all address the memory of a historical event through time, and with reference to a previous work addressing the same topic. The first pair of works by Pascal and Alexandre Jardin illustrate a postmemorial rewrite within a family setting: Alexandre Jardin's work serves to disprove his father's previously published narrative using the same form (a novel written in the first person singular), and offers a counter-testimony to Pascal Jardin's account of their forefather Jean Jardin. The second pair of works also proposes a similarly structured take on the same topic, but Ruillier's rewrite of Yamina Benguigui's documentary adds information, rather than contradicting the information of the previous narrative, as was the case with the Jardins. Ruillier's rewrite also proposes a new

medium, that of the graphic novel rather than that of a film or of a book documentary, which enables him to include himself in his narrative rewrite, a new narrator position already used in Alexandre Jardin's rewrite in a more direct way. The last pair of rewrites does not belong to the postmemorial realm of the author (Kamel Daoud is not related to Albert Camus, while Alexandre Jardin is Pascal Jardin's son, and Jérôme Ruillier's narrator-double addresses his own link with the historical event at play through his own father). The postmemorial element exists intradiegetically as Daoud's narrator is related to the Arab of Camus's novel. Daoud's rewrite, however, proposes something not included in the previous rewrite: a strongly asserted postcolonial position.

The three pairs of works I have analyzed in this chapter illustrate how transcategorical postmemory can function in literary and cinematographic works. To summarize which outcome (melancholic, productive, or mixed) of transcategorical postmemory each work belongs to, I propose a concise chart which should help explain more clearly how the works I discuss engage with transcategorical postmemory.

The table below should read from left to right.

Transcategorical Postmemory	**Productive** outcome	**Agrees** with the original work and **adds** information	Jérôme Ruillier ***Les Mohamed***
		Disagrees with the original work and **adds** information	Kamel Daoud ***Meursault, contre-enquête***
	Mixed outcome	**Mix of productive and melancholic** outcome	Alexandre Jardin ***Des gens très bien*** (Productive with regards to his forefathers, melancholic with regards to the victims).
	Melancholic outcome		Rachel in Boualem Sansal's novel ***Le Village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller*** (cf. chap 4).

Table 5.1: Table illustrating productive, mixed, and melancholic outcomes of postmemory.

As the chart illustrates, the fact that one character (or the author's narrator-double) empathizes with subjects in a different role category (whether the descendant of a perpetrator empathizes with the victims of his forefather's crimes, or whether the descendant of victims empathizes with the perpetrator, meaning his forefathers), thus constituting what I have coined transcategorical postmemory, does not guarantee a specific outcome. I have described three outcomes (productive, melancholic, and mixed) and provided a literary example for each of them. While this chapter has provided concrete illustrations of transcategorical postmemory in action, I believe that further applications of this concept will give rise to more intricate and complex mechanisms of productive, melancholic, and especially mixed transcategorical postmemory, both intradiegetically and extradiegetically.

Conclusion

> *La guerre, ce n'est jamais seulement ni exclusivement des destructions innombrables ; c'est aussi des gestes d'espoir, des actes de foi dans le retour de la paix, la volonté maintenue de sauver encore, ici ou là, ce qui peut l'être de la dignité humaine. Il n'est pas vrai, en conséquence, qu'aux heures les plus sombres de leur histoire, les hommes n'ont d'autre issue que de céder à la spirale terrible des consentements meurtriers, dans laquelle elles les entraînent. Il n'y a pas de fatalité de la violence et du meurtre.*
>
> Marc Crépon, *La Vocation de l'écriture, la littérature et la philosophie à l'épreuve de la violence* (131)

The memory of the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence in French political and cultural discourses remains fraught and needs addressing beyond the sole description of sociological damages or contentions. My first chapter established the basis for this dissertation by explaining the omnipresence of silence and trans-generational trauma in its multiple forms. In this first chapter, I recognized a right to silence for victims and their descendants but I also highlighted the role of silence as a trigger for the postgeneration to engage with familial and cultural memory. By trigger I mean that the lack of information passed on within the family setting to the younger generations gave them impetus to investigate the past for themselves in ways that they might not have if their parents or grandparents had communicated the memory of past events orally in a more direct way. Ways out of traumatic silence passed on from generation to generation lay at the heart of the present research, and lead to the discussion of memory transmission beyond the linear configuration of inheriting the postmemory of either victims or perpetrators. Like Marc Crépon, I assert that, "Il n'y a pas de fatalité de la violence et

du meurtre" (131), and that dialogs (which do not necessarily posit full agreement) across the victim/perpetrator divide are possible.

Productive research has been published in recent years focusing on intersecting cultural memories of past conflicts. Max Silverman's *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*, published in 2013, offers an analysis of the interconnection of Holocaust memory and the cultural memory of colonialism in French and Francophone fiction and film. Similarly, Debarati Sanyal's 2015 book *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance* provides a discussion of the Holocaust as a paradigm for violence in relation to colonialism. Sanyal's research on gray zones of complicity intersects with Michael Rothberg's research on trauma history and implicated subjects. Like both Sanyal and Rothberg's research, this project aims at destabilizing the victim-perpetrator divide while taking into consideration the intersection of different historical trauma (in the case of this project, the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence). The concept of transcategorical postmemory developed in the fourth and fifth chapter of this dissertation, however, aims at naming a specific rise in dialog or empathy across the victim-perpetrator categories and across generations (namely the generation of witnesses and the generation of postmemory). Like Sanyal, Rothberg, and Silverman, I believe that other mechanisms of memory transmission from the generation of the witness to the generation of postmemory can arise, however, I believe that naming the specific mechanism that is transcategorical postmemory is necessary in order to distinguish possible occurrences of postmemorial transmission and to develop our understanding of those gray zones of memory. The concept of transcategorical postmemory emerged from a reflection on the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence, however, just like Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory arose from a

reflection on the Holocaust but has since given rise to productive discussions of other historical contexts, I hope that transcategorical postmemory can prove useful beyond the specific context of this project.

In a specifically French context, however, the identification and naming of transcategorical postmemory seems particularly needed in the face of a rising discourse on an alleged war of civilizations. The theory of "the great replacement" proposed by Renaud Camus in 2013 in an online call for what he calls a "NON au changement de peuple et de civilisation (NCPC)," echoes the *Front National*'s critique of a growing immigrant population in France. While the belief that France faces a danger of population or cultural replacement is not new among right wing politicians or intellectuals (despite Renaud Camus's refusal to adopt this label, he did call for a vote in favor of Marine Le Pen for the 2012 presidential election), two of the most noted French-language fictions also echoed this theory of a population replaced by a new Muslim majority. In Michel Houellebecq's *Soumission,* a French literature professor witnesses the rise of Mohamed Ben Abbes, head of the left-wing Islamic party "La Fraternité musulmane," who wins the presidential election against the *Front National*. Concerned about his teaching position at a now privatized *Sorbonne nouvelle*, the too obviously named François imagines his possible conversion to Islam. French society is described as overhauled according to Islamic principles, excluding women and anyone who does not submit to a voluntary conversion. In *2084*, subtitled *la fin du monde*, Algerian author Boualem Sansal imagines a country he names Abistan – presumably a literary apocalyptic double of Sansal's Algerian homeland – in which, after a religious revolution, the dictatorship in place has censored all traces and mention of its pre-revolutionary past and culture. While Sansal's novel does not illustrate a replacement of a population by another *stricto sensu*, it does illustrate the replacement of an indigenous culture

replaced by a religious culture imposed on the inhabitants of Abistan. This novel echoes Sansal's previously expressed opinion, found in *Le Village de l'Allemand ou le journal des frères Schiller*, that radical political Islam becomes a cultural dictatorship based on the elimination of otherness (Jewish, Christian or Berber cultural, religious, and linguistic heritages for example) comparable to the Nazi regime's persecution of Jews, Roma, and other cultural minorities. I have spoken in my chapter on *Le Village de l'Allemand ou le journal des frères Schiller* about Sansal's outlook, which I find draws hastened parallels that disregard historical specificities. However, the author's opinion on the matter seems relevant to the current discussion. Both Houellebecq's *Soumission* and Sansal's *2084* denounce a future where one cannot escape the state-imposed prescription of identity.

Through my discussion of the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence I have advocated in this dissertation for more dynamic considerations of memory involving perpetrators, victims, and their descendant in literature focusing on the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence. Because these two wars involve religious and ethnic differences between the oppressor and the oppressed, there is a risk of essentializing the enmity between opposing sides, and hence of perpetuating this enmity across time. In the socio-political realm, the Isreaeli-Palestinian conflict has crystalized tensions between Jewish and Muslim communities in contemporary France. However - while the conflation of anti-Zionist, anti-Israeli, and anti-Semitic sentiments should not be discarded as an element of vocal antisemitism in contemporary France – ignoring the interaction of what the media has named "new antisemitism" with a historical, right-wing antisemitism only serves to scapegoat French Muslims as the sole source of a more deeply-rooted, and more complex problem. Literary representations of more nuanced interactions between communities that are often represented as

natural enemies can help us see beyond this oversimplifying divide, and offer a more diverse picture of contemporary literary production in France, beyond the spotlight placed on narratives of population replacement.

Recent literary publications avoiding the seemingly unbridgeable perpetrator-victim divide have emerged. *La nuit de Zelemta*, by René-Victor Pilhes (2016) highlights admiration and respect between enemies during the Algerian War of Independence much in the same way as *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi* by Catherine Lépront (2010). Joseph Andras's *De nos frères blessés*, *Goncourt du premier roman 2016*, narrates the story of Fernand Iveton, the only European sentensed to death by France for having placed a bomb in the French capital during his involvement with Algerian Independence fighters. While some works like Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge* had already included French and Algerians on the same side of the conflict, more works evoking victim-perpetrator dialogue on the postmemory level have emerged. *Le Dehors ou la migration des truites*, by Arno Bertina (2001) speaks of the inherited trauma of children of Franco-Maghrebi couples who were targeted by the French Police during the protest of October 17, 1961. Unlike Sebbar's novel *La Seine était rouge*, which features French children who are either descendants of French *porteurs de valise* who helped Algerian independence fighters, or of Algerian parents, Bertina features the postmemory of children who share a mixed heritage. Maïssa Bey's *Entendez-vous dans nos montagnes* (2008) and Catherine Lépront's *Le Beau visage de l'ennemi* (2010) both propose a dialogue between a young Algerian woman whose forefather died during the Algerian War of Independence and an aging French veteran. Hédi Kaddour's novel *Les Prépondérants* (which received both the *Grand Prix de l'Académie française* and *the Prix Jean-Freustié*, *ex-aequo* with Boualem Sansal for his novel *2084*) also offers nuanced representations of empathy between colonizer, colonized, and those with

socioeconomic power beyond the context of colonization (namely, Hollywood producers filming in the Maghreb), and includes ties to the First World War, and the rise of independence movements in the Maghreb.

This dissertation therefore, through the proposed concept of transcategorical postmemory, calls for new critical considerations of memory transmission across established categories of victim, perpetrator, and bystander and across historical conflicts. As demonstrated in this dissertation, such mechanisms are already present in literary and artistic representations of historical conflicts, in particular those addressing the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence, and allow us to refine our understanding of past and present dialogs that destabilize oppositional dyads such as memory/forgetting, victim/perpetrator, or French/postcolonial.

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