BARBAROLOGY OR A NEW THEORY OF EXILE AND IDENTITY

A STUDY OF EXILE, WRITING, AND RESISTANCE IN TWO ALGERIAN NOVELS: *VASTE EST LA PRISON* BY ASSIA DJEBAR AND *UN PASSAGER DE L'OCCIDENT* BY NABILE FARÈS

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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Abstract

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Fazia Aitel

Advisor: Professor Vincent Crapanzano.

This dissertation is both a theoretical proposal about exile and identity and an engaged reading of novels by Assia Djebar and Nabile Farès. The gist of my argument is that Djebar and Farès bring together the specificities of the Algerian—and more generally the francophone—writer's experience, an experience especially shot through with conflicting responsibilities to oneself and to others due to historical and material factors. Thus both writers use and then grapple with the novel form to express personal issues vis-à-vis language and the world even as they tackle the sometimes-self- anointed role of representing a community or gender, a role that is often linked to or projected as a collective history.

This project gains its value and specificity as Barbarology. I call this project Barbarology as a theoretical play on "Barbarian" and "Berber," and for some immanent reasons. I maintain that the Berber cultural experience, which is one of resistance, resilience and exile, and grounded as it is in the history of the region and the linguistic experience—French, Arabic, Tamazight, Spanish, etc — is the basis for a theory of late modernity and literature which exceeds the bounds of, say, Gilroy's

"Black Atlantic" thesis. The Berber experience is one of both sedentary and nomadic existence, and it is a lived culture, which persists, despite many pressures. And, given the Berber presence in the African continent, Barbarology brings together the ancient trade routes and cultures of all of Africa (cf. the Touareg of Mali and Niger), and North Africa (including Egypt). Barbarology captures the ebbs and flows of Capitalism and challenges the essentialism and conservatism of other models of post colonialism. Finally, given the failure of the federal model of government (as in Algeria), Barbarology offers a dialectical notion of a new nation, which is rooted and theorized in the literary imagination of writers such as Farès (and then Tahar Djaout, Kateb Yacine, and many others).

For my mother, for my father
For the silent majorities....

Acknowledgements

This project is the result of many years of thought and engagement. Sometimes I could not write, but had to act, and sometimes I could write and this is now my action.

First I wish to thank my family in France for their love and support for all these years. I could not have made it through graduate school and the dissertation process without the intellectual and personal support of Professor Vincent Crapanzano, my adviser, while my dissertation committee, Professors André Aciman and William Coleman helped me when I most needed help. I also want to thank Professor Joshua Wilner who trusted me and offered me the opportunity to teach specialized and graduate courses in my favorite topics (North African literature, African literature and the literature of the Diaspora). His help, support and trust have been invaluable. I would also like to thank Professors John Brenkman and Edouard Glissant who read parts of my dissertation and offered many helpful suggestions and comments. I would also like to thank Professor Ammiel Alcalay whose course he co-taught with Professor Ali Jimale Ahmed on "non-Western" literature showed me that indeed literature could produce its own theory.

Many friends were there when I needed them most with phone calls and material support, and I want to thank Michel Schaefflin and Harriet Jackson for their dedication and help, I especially thank Andrew Long, who listened to me and read my work, though far away in Beirut, and believed in me and my project from the start. My inspiration for this project is multiple but I want to especially thank Nabile Farès for his friendship while he was in Paris, and for the course I took with him, which proved to be so influential many years later.

Other friends and important persons in my life made this project possible through discussions, debates, sometimes arguments and I want to acknowledge the importance of these long exchanges for the fruition of this project. I want to especially thank Alan, Michel, Jeff, and Andrew.

Others who helped in other ways include my Kabyle friends in ACAA (Amazigh Cultural Association in America) and the Berber community worldwide. Lastly I thank the Kabyle people, for their struggle, for their bravery, for their inspiration realized here in Barbarology.

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Introduction

"L'universel, c'est le local moins les murs," the Algerian/ Kabyle Nabile Farès once declared.[1] This inspiring statement reconciles two seemingly antithetical positions: that of remaining oneself (local or particular) and that of reaching out to the world (global or universal). Universality and particularity coexist in this definition, which acknowledges the importance of both positions and points to a way out of a paradox of identity. When culture, one aspect of identity, is held on to (through preservation, transmission, or re-discovery), it is often assumed to be the sign of exclusion of others, denoting thereby one's refusal to exchange, interact and mingle with the world at large. Farès's definition integrates the notion of difference without it being exclusive or a threat to others. The absence of walls, i.e. the openness of the notion of difference, allows exchanges to take place and changes to happen. On the other hand, the continued existence of difference precludes the full assimilation that some wrongly perceive as the final liberation of the being, i.e. the ultimate fusion into oneness.

Identity is a complex composite of distinctive elements, which are valued because they are believed to reflect one's inner self. Identity is constantly changing and transforming but the question is how, why, in which direction and at which pace these changes take place. It is this highly sensitive terrain that this study proposes to explore. Many critics have reflected on the issue of difference and its implication when confronted to the concept of universality (Glissant, Deleuze and Guattari, Todorov, Derrida). There exists a plethora of theories on identity, some of which will be discussed here in details.

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[1] Lecture at the University of Paris VIII, 1987

However, the issue seems to be posed along the same lines: eventually one has to give up universalism or the particular, i.e. the right to difference. Through Farès's declaration, one perceives the potential for an alternative where universalism and the particular are not exclusive.

My interest in this thorny issue of universal vs. the particular or the relative originates from a long-lasting preoccupation with identity and its meaning. Born in Algeria, raised and educated in France and exiled in the United States, I have always been sensitive to the difficulties that a multidimensional identity produces, especially when some of its elements enter in conflict with one another or even seem irreconcilable. What choices one makes; when and why one makes them; which aspect of one's identity is highlighted and which one is buried or forgotten are all fascinating questions which open onto a reflection on the signification of sameness and difference, and the concept of identity.

Belonging to a minority in Algeria (Kabyle) also drove me to ponder issues of minority rights and their intricate rapport with universal principles as well as postmodern theories, which on the one hand claim the end of totalities, promote the cult of ambiguity and the virtues of undecidability, and on the other hand facilitate dissonant histories and voices to be heard. Amid these elaborate debates how is one to address the simple fact that the right to speak and learn one's language is still not guaranteed not only for Berbers in Algeria and elsewhere in Africa, but also for many peoples around the world. In the postcolonial world, it is difficult to state the obvious; that in spite of the liberation movements and the independences, people are still struggling to be free. Surely, one's right to difference is only one aspect among many others in this new fight for democracy and freedom. But as far as identity is concerned, whether in the postcolonial world or in

the first world, the problem seems to boil down to a simple question: how much sameness is too much and how much difference is too different?

This work is the result of years of questioning, probing and sifting ideas on identity through personal experience and more importantly through novels. My daily life has been a laboratory to experiment with these questions, which, I maintain, have been realized in novels. My interest has naturally been in Francophone literature and more precisely North African francophone literature, that is, writers from a region of North Africa, which until the 1960's was colonized by France. Far from putting an end to this literature written in the language of the former colonizer, decolonization witnessed its survival if not resurgence, for against all odds, francophone literature flourished and now refers to a vast range of countries, communities and experiences.

In addition, through my reading and research, the history of the Berbers struck me as being a constant challenge for historians, linguists, and archeologists because of their perennial and diffused presence in a vast part of the African continent. Based on some characteristics of this history and on a reflection on the meaning of difference, I was inspired to elaborate a theory of identity, which I call Barbarology. This theory—Barbarology—is based on a dialectic mode of exchange and interaction whose strength resides in resistance and resilience.

Barbarology

Barbarology is a theory of identity and a way of reading grounded in the experience of the Berber peoples. I will return to this grounding shortly, and at length in the body of this project, but for now I feel it is crucial to explore the impetus for Barbarology outside the obvious.

Curiously and maybe aptly, my project is rooted in the south, in the south of the United States for I locate the genealogy of Barbarology in American literature and more precisely in the novels of William Faulkner. I have been drawn to this Southern American writer ever since I took a course on the detective novel at the University of Paris VIII where, strangely, for the first time I read Faulkner's *Sanctuary*. The violence of the text –the rape of a woman with a corncob, the mob lynching an innocent man—is constant, whether suggested, implicit, or delayed and so the whole novel is tainted by something frightening, invisible and seemingly omnipresent -violence. The refuge suggested by the title is nowhere to be found in Faulkner's world, a place he describes as evil, vicious, corrupt and degenerated, similar to his own, the inspiration for Yoknapatawpha. And in a way this fictitious Mississippi county is also a refuge of sorts where the author might escape the inexorable collapse of the South and provides a fictional anchor, a necessary fiction where he is the sole proprietor of the place.

American literature, especially Faulkner, has influenced major post-colonial writers such as Kateb Yacine and Édouard Glissant. Kateb Yacine, the most influential Algerian writer of our time, has been analyzed and his texts interpreted many times in tandem and in contrast with Faulkner's work. (Bernard Arésu, Eric Sellin, Édouard Glissant). Faulkner also inspired the famous Caribbean writer Édouard Glissant who even wrote a text titled *Faulkner, Mississippi*, where with sensitivity and great insight he revisits Faulkner's fiction whose "écriture en différé," anticipated Glissant's own theory of the Relation or "chaos-monde." Several reasons explain this fascination for Faulkner. Among them, the inherent tragedy the characters evolve in, Faulkner's literary originality and innovation with the narrative voice, and the exploration of Southern identity in the

context of encroaching modernity. All these elements are developed in a unique geographical location, the legendary and fictional Yoknapatawpha county, the territorial doppelganger to Faulkner's own South whose economy, traditions, beliefs and values have been shaped by the "invisible" Black presence.

The North American continent—regarded as a sanctuary for those fleeing intolerance in Europe— was a place to start anew, where everything was left behind except *The Bible*. Yet, in this new paradise how is one to account for those who already lived here, the Native Americans? The answer lies with the lie, which is fundamental to all narratives of discovery and conquest. And then later on what of the Africans on the "new" continent; the Blacks who came simultaneously with the white settlers first as indentured servants and then as slaves? These presences, these "others," even though disregarded or ignored will find their way in texts in the form of a double text, where they ghost the text or undermine its reason, lying underneath the surface, or in a more radical fashion, sit right at the center of the characters' lives, as is the case in Faulkner's novels. Faulkner's novels are an excellent illustration of the resilience and impact of these previously ignored or ghostly presences in a declining world. Indeed, Blacks and the Native Americans are present at the most intimate spaces of American culture, though many refuse to recognize their presence, to engage this reality. It is not by chance that the African American writer, Toni Morrison, felt compelled to write about Faulkner, and that her best novel, *Beloved*, concerns the "hautings" of American history. This interest finds its full embodiment in *Playing in the Dark*, which brings to the foreground the presence that was hidden for so long, a ghostly presence, which so dramatically permeates and haunts Faulkner's work.

Postcolonial literature entails similar elements and features. While the former colonized countries were never construed as refuges, after the respective independences these newly independent nations felt the need to articulate a national identity different from that of the colonial power. In the process of re-creating this identity, minority groups as well as aspects considered unfit for the country's identity were ignored, dismissed, or erased. These dismissed elements; these identities and peoples who did not fit the national paradigm were brushed aside like their American counterparts (Africans and Native Americans), though they have occasionally re-emerged in fiction, a new space of struggle and resistance. Still, Kateb Yacine is the only one to have addressed the issue of identity in all its complexities in a novel that has now become a classic, *Nedjma.*

So it is by following this thread and reflecting on it that Barbarology came into being. I was looking for a way through the mess of identity, a system, maybe, or a working proposition which would allow the emergence and expression of forgotten, or erased voices, a theory in this tentative sense, where presences that were dismissed or simply distorted for their inadequacy, difference or potential disruption are excavated, not as archaeology –I am not interested in disinterring bones—but as real people, those apparently buried alive yet still breathing. What better theory than one based on the simple recognition of difference? Yet as we know there is more at stake for this simple matter of recognition shakes the foundations of the modern nation state around the world.

The theoretical conundrum where liberal and some revolutionary governments all fail to tolerate difference and stamp it out, one way or another, is a problem I address through etymology, though not as a slick theoretical slight of hand, a deferral of ugly politics, but as a propaedeutic measure and a provocation.

The etymology of barbarian is derived from the Greek word *Barbaros* which simply designates a person whose language the ancient Greeks could not understand. The barbarian, then, is the person perceived as not belonging because his/her language is not comprehensible to the one who makes this statement. Logically, I should point out, the one who utters this statement is just as barbarian to the barbarian as the barbarian is to him, since the lack of understanding goes both ways. However is considered incomprehensible thus barbarian, only the recipient of the uttered statement, not the speaker. The initial linguistic difference eventually crystallized all differences and the term barbarian evolved to suggest the ultimate state of alienation from humankind, an absolute difference.

And so, Barbarology, this project, borrows its name from the term barbarian and the social dynamics of its etymology. Barbarology takes the original distance between the Greek and the non-Greek and turns this perception of distance and foreignness into a locus for reflection and debate. My idea was to import this notion of distance—social distance, between the Barbarian and his/her "interlocutor"—and explore it in literature where it plays out textually. Obviously, any literary analysis is based on some notion of distance, and distance is indispensable to reveal the language mechanisms and such literary techniques as hidden significations, paradoxes, and symbolism. To be sure, distance is always present in language since the latter is always removed from the writer's intent: indeed, distance is the very condition of language.

Perhaps the necessary distance which language entails finally means we are always Barbarians to the other. Thus modern literary concepts that are valuable to Barbarology are masquerade (Abdellah Hammoudi, Niti Sampat Patel), mimicry (Homi Bhabha),

polyphony, dialogism and carnival (Bakhtin), the concept of the rhizome (Glissant, Deleuze and Guattari), as well as Fanon's masks, Brecht's distance, and Du Bois's double-consciousness. All of these emerge from an innovative take on the distance between the appearances, the façade, --what one hears, reads, sees and understands and the more complex reality—the multiplicity of sounds, meanings and presences. These concepts help us explore the fissures, or this same distance, and so reveal a new layer of consciousness, a new depth in the signification, multiple presences, and the many faces behind a mask. But this distance that exists in discourse, on stage or within one's consciousness also exists between individuals as I suggested above. Barbarology takes this fissure/ distance and analyzes it in the very specific setting of individual interactions, or dialogue, for the most part the substance of the novel (more than any other literary form). It focuses on the actual contact between two individuals and tries to fully explore this moment, the failure of language as one faces the other, perhaps two Barbarians, face to face. Barbarology takes the hiatus of the encounter and makes it the locus of debates and reflection on identity and change.

More precisely, Barbarology, founded as it is on the initial encounter between the Greek and the non-Greek, extends this first personal encounter based in language to embrace all kinds of differences; linguistic but also racial, national, religious, cultural, sexual, and geographical. Moreover, Barbarology also embraces a variety of perspectives. In the past, only one approach (the gaze) was deemed meaningful and of interest; that of the European looking onto others. Now the gaze is multiple, multi-focused: non-Europeans gaze back at Europeans and at each other.

Indeed, the advent of theories, which break away from the traditional dichotomies of colonized/colonizer, traditional/ modern, black/white, etc., permit the exploration of relationships that are more ambiguous and therefore more complex (Bhabah, Derrida, Foucault, etc.). Barbarology greatly benefits from these theories and insights, which significantly improve our understanding of the complexity of history, of human psychology and of the basic human condition.

Barbarology's role is thus to localize and analyze encounters in order to expose assumptions about the other. It is the locus of the encounters of multilateral gazes of different nature. In the last instance, Barbarology points to domination, oppression, projection, misunderstanding, desire, and fear as these are revealed during the encounter and influence it. Simply put, Barbarology is a kind of flashlight that illuminates a space where confrontation takes place and where all the elements in presence are made visible, especially urges to oppress or deny the other, as well as different forms of fear and desire. Only by acknowledging these elements in their respective presence(s) could one understand the consequences for history –such as slavery (Du Bois's double-consciousness) and colonialism; for the sciences (evolution, regression, and inventions); culture (the occurrence of masquerades, masks and carnivals); literary criticism, (the concept of deconstruction, rhizomes, etc); and finally for the elaboration of identity (elements such as tension, preservation, resilience and resistance).

Yet Barbarology is not concerned with all of the above, a near impossible task, but only considers and examines the different repercussions the interaction with the other has on the formation of identity, or better stated, subject formation in the context of oppression. Identity is always a complex arrangement of –sometimes-contradictory—

constituents, which can be determined by a combination of variable factors: family, language, nation, gender, race, religion, politics, profession and intellectual pursuits. These elements constitute the base of identity, a base which nonetheless evolves and is transformed throughout interactions during the course of a lifetime. But genuine interactions between individuals are often difficult if not impossible to take place because of their subjection to the influence or control of power and coercive forces. It is therefore Barbarology's mission to highlight these structures of power and influences in order to reflect more satisfactorily on the way identities are constructed and how they evolve in time. And in my project I am specifically engaged with literary texts, novels, textual locations where we—writers and readers—can trace the evolution of these identities as the classic Bildungsroman, as Lukács would have it, the epic of the European bourgeoisies, is now used for the articulation of alternative identities. With Barbarology, I sought to formulate a theory that would help localize these forces and reveal invisible presences along with eradicated subjectivities. For instance, I deem silences and absences to be highly significant for they often are the means of the powerless to address denial, oppression, and violence.

Exile is the condition that most conspicuously triggers reflections on identity and transforms it. Not only does its experience impact on the identity of the exile, but also on the exile's relatives as well as others. The exile, because of her/his acute experience and perception of difference, is Barbarology's experimental subject *par excellence*. Barbarology's argument on exile is introduced through the experience of the Berber people who have a diverse and singular conception of the notion of foreignness vs. home, which makes the enrichment of both these notions possible. One of the singularities of

the Berbers is that they do not live in a defined geographical territory but are disseminated throughout a large part of Africa. Moreover some of them are sedentary, others are nomads, and recently some are exiles in the West as well. Their seemingly perennial, diffused and ubiquitous presence in Africa added to the fact that they never formed a nation of their own, serve as a basis for Barbarology to go beyond the common conception of exile as a condition exclusively associated with loss, alienation and increased self-awareness and to develop it into a broader notion.

Finally, Barbarology also advocates another way of relating to the other, where first a territory is conceived where identity is elaborated away from coercion and power. Genuine inner forces/power exist and deserve to be expressed but without ever having the capacity to reduce the other in her/his fundamental right to exist. This new exchange, however, does not preclude misconceptions, assumptions and biases about the other (that's what a Barbarian is, the other remains other, no matter how familiar he/she is) but the exchange will be framed differently. Unfettered by power, debates can take place; ideas and intelligence can be exchanged. In Barbarology I argue that when power/coercion is "turned off," a sense of liberation takes over and individuals communicate better while their respective identity, enriched by unfettered exchange, grows and changes for the better. In short it is a theory of existence and identity that I strive to articulate through Barbarology.

This theory of existence is based on the primary notion that difference exists but does not constitute a threat if –and only if—sources of coercion are brought to a halt or eradicated. Identities are consolidated around several spheres towards which one feels a sense of closeness. The position I advocate in Barbarology is that the more spheres one

feels close to, the better equipped the person is to exchange with and understand another. The accumulation of spheres generates multi-faceted identities, which are really nothing more than an unlimited potential to extend the notion of belonging. I believe that this notion has the potential to produce a true humanitarianism across the globe. It could be the harbinger of diversity without borders, without limits, a difference without threat.

This position is in complete opposition to today's context, everywhere, where one must reduce the sense of belonging to one unique sphere so that one's propinquity to others is also reduced and, more importantly, becomes very selective and exclusive. More radical even is the belief that a strong sense of belonging indicates a lack of freedom. Freedom is therefore deemed incompatible with a sense of belonging or with any human engagement. Thus, if one seeks total freedom, one needs to detach herself/himself from worldly intimacy (like ascetics and Taoists would have it). Yet, I argue that freedom can also be sought at the core of human relationships.

As a method, Barbarology first points to the elements that prevent a fair encounter from taking place. Scrupulous attention is given to the presence of power and coercion even when they do not seem to prevail. These forces can be identified in the narrative voice, the characters, the plot, etc. Once localized in the text, the *rapport de force*, which sometimes is the driving force of the whole narrative, can be analyzed. For its analyses, Barbarology cuts across disciplines because, like its numerous subjects and their points of view, the examination of texts requires a kaleidoscopic range of sources, visions and knowledge. Thus some disciplines appear to be indispensable to Barbarology, such as psychoanalysis, history, linguistics, philosophy, and anthropology. Interestingly enough,

most of the above have already extensively addressed the question of the Other and difference.

Throughout this work, the use of the term "power" is to be understood in its strong association with the notion of coercion, which it often entails. Indeed it is the capacity to silence or annihilate someone through one's alleged superiority (financial, physical, cultural, etc.) with which Barbarology is most concerned. Furthermore, more than a single issue of social justice, equality or ethics, Barbarology's focus on this kind of power is primarily based on the realization of its devastating effects on a potentially constructive interaction.

The presence of power/coercion, detectable in the most trivial situations, is so omnipresent that it is difficult to even imagine any interaction outside of it. While historically, power could sometimes be equated with progress, (for instance in capitalism), it was tied in with less glorious outcome such as the obliteration of languages and major civilizations; the displacements of peoples; wars; ethnocide; slavery; ecocide; and other massive destructions. Obviously, Capitalism developed from interactions, exchange as it is blandly known, based on force as many have argued, from Marx to Zizek. (for my purposes see also J. M. Blaut and Paul Gilroy).

Since the dual notion of power/coercion appears everywhere and is not exclusively attached to the literary text, Barbarology is relevant to other venues or contexts whenever unequal and exploitative relations, interactions and exchanges are concerned. To pick a familiar example, consider the effects of what is known as "globalization," which is often presented as a means for peoples of the world to (better) exchange, to know each other better, in a word, to bring us closer to one another emotionally and affectively. Clearly

the actuality, lived experience, is far from this apparently altruistic vision. Not only do people not exchange or know each other better, but the gap between them is reinforced and amplified by a lack of communication; a lack of knowledge of the other; prejudice, and principally mediated by the unequal and oppressive exercise of power. In addition, the advent of globalization causes people to be alienated, not only from others, but also from their very own lives, just as Marx pointed out in factory workers over 150 years ago. Indeed, vital decisions are made at a global scale without discussing or consulting with the principal receivers. These decisions end up turning into sanctions imposed on people who become more and more numerous not to have a say on decisions concerning their health, education, work, environment, in a word, on their very lives.

Returning to the theoretical aspect of this study, it is important to indicate Barbarology's use of and reliance on the history and particularity of the Berber people, which provides the theory with a clear illustration of its main characteristics. To begin with, the Berbers were the first to be called barbarous by those who could not understand their language. Interestingly enough, the Berbers have kept this "foreign" denomination to this day. Their long history of otherness, and their subsequent eclectic and complex identity provides Barbarology with the prototype of an identity that is plural and therefore cannot be founded on any sort of segregation or exclusion. Indeed the specificity of this people—or we should say peoples—indigenous to North Africa is that it is not delimited by a country; not restricted to a race, a culture, a religion, or even a language. As we will develop throughout this study, what bonds Berbers together is their general lack of involvement within the spheres of power; their ensuing oppression from structures of powers along with the entailed resistance to it, and finally their general rejection of

exclusion being themselves of different customs, cultures, religions, races, the multiple faces of Berberdom. Many historical factors, which are examined in this work, explain these specific conditions that are so useful to theories of identity.

Indeed, Berbers have dealt with the Other, usually foreign invaders, in different ways, alternating resistance, tension, resilience and acceptation. The examination of the Berbers through time is valuable not for its chronological aspect or specificity but rather for the ease with which the Berbers (in a historical process) can be made to symbolize different contemporaneous identities and therefore embody Barbarology's standpoint on identity. In the history of this people, Barbarology finds an illustration of the dynamic aspects of identity such as the need to resist the exterior, or to willingly open to integrate foreign elements, or to just remain in a state of tension. These tendencies, while existing in different subjects, can also coexist within one subject and are to be encouraged. Indeed, for Barbarology, retention and resistance are not necessarily negative stances indicating closure or the rejection of the other as some multicultural theories assume. Instead they reveal meaningful tensions that demand attention and scrutiny, especially when one recognizes that these behaviors that are sometimes labeled essentialist or anti-social form an integral part of the always-changing identity.

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The first chapter develops the theory of Barbarology, which finds its source in the confluence of two experiences: the exploration of the Berber vein and the insidious dismissal of ambiguous or underground conflicts always linked to otherness. As a

language, one is struck by the imperceptible presence of Berber. As Farès declared once,[2] it is neither an administrative language nor a sacred language but the language of the forbidden. It is indeed forbidden, and consequently it also becomes the language of desire. Berber is a language that has no presence, no territory, and therefore could not be effectively destroyed over the centuries. The lack of a defined territory explains the absence of national epic —we do not know where they are; instead, wandering poet singers such as the famous bard Si Mhend Ou Mhend transmitted some form of common culture. The oral aspect of the cultural form[3] and its dispersion produced a culture that did not culminate in a civilization per se. Indeed, in spite of its millennial existence, Berber culture never formed a civilization of its own. But isn't civilization itself a process of exclusion after all? Isn't civilization a term used by each culture to define its own notion of the civilized and draw the line between oneself and the other? Civilization could indeed be perceived as an ethnocentric notion whereby each society has the feeling to be at the origin of a civilization to protect its difference. It goes differently for Berbers who could not claim such a genealogy.

Indeed, Berbers never reacted as a group and never formed a nation of their own. In Kabylia for instance, they have always been virulently opposed to any political hegemony, which could thwart the principle of a government grounded in customs. But the rejection of any common authority does not entail an absence of cohesion. On the contrary, the history of the Berbers has been one of resistance to all kind of oppression.

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[2] Lecture at the University of Paris VIII, 1987

[3] Actually there has always existed a written form the *Tifinaɛ* but its used was either localized or restricted to a segment of the population (women)

Exilic experience, embodied here by the Kabyle community in France, is also an important means of resistance and existence. All these characteristics among many others have inspired me to elaborate a theory loosely based on the Berbers.

Barbarology hinges on a palimpsestic presence that is never in the foreground but that is omnipresent nevertheless. It denies any will to power, subject, accumulate, own or profit and works towards the localization and the divulgation of these forms of relation in the texts. It declines any limitation to its fieldwork since Barbarology is based on movement, "trans" (transcultural, transnational). In a word, it is a constant stimulating and dialectical mode of existence based on a universal ethics freed from power and based on freedom and transition.

The second chapter consists of a discussion on exile framed by the example of Kabyles from Algeria. Through historical, sociological and literary documentation, I take a closer look at the experience of exile for Kabyles and its impact on a society that has mainly evolved around it. Indeed, as far as one can remember, the life of Kabyles has always been punctuated by departures. They leave the place they refer to as "home" to find work somewhere else and as a consequence, the culture itself has developed with and through exile. In this chapter I argue that exile, as experienced by Kabyles, defies the common understanding of what exile entails by integrating its main classical features and going beyond it. Through exile, Kabyles have acquired the means to survive, to resist and be resilient, and last but not least to reflect on themselves and their culture. Thus the diaspora (a community of exiles) that emerged in France has been essential to the very survival of the Kabyles as a community, but has also been essential for its political maturation which led to a strong participation in the war of liberation and since then to

the creation of democratic movements. Their constant exclusion from (and rejection of) power turned them into what Farès called "the caesura of the national consciousness." This could be seen as a paradigm at the core of Kabyle identity: the coexistence of an unshakable solidarity and cohesion with permanent dissention, division, and alienation. This situation probably explains why Kabyles can gather to resist invasions, fight a common enemy, overthrow the colonizer, but are then unable to agree on a further construction (state, army) based on Kabyle identity.

The third chapter discusses francophone, "Beur," and Amazigh literature, which I argue are all the products of the confrontation with the other (mainly colonialism and exile). I take a closer look at these literatures at the origin of which one finds the early Berber exiles and the notion of the other.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the Berber exile song and its development in and out exile. Through this vital oral form, elaborated and kept alive partly through exile, a consistent political and cultural resistance emerged from it so that it became the voice of democracy and progress in Algeria.

The fifth chapter discusses the entanglement of autobiographical writing with the treatment of two marginalized presences (women and Berbers) in Algeria in Assia Djebar's *Vaste est la prison*. The act of writing entails an act of creation or re-creation very similar to the psychotherapeutic project. Writing enables the writer to articulate and expose her self in an attempt to circumscribe it, understand it, and finally, maybe, reconcile with it. It is therefore the meanders of a multifold reconciliation that the novel exposes: reconciliation with the Berber language, women, the community, and one self, which in turn suggests as many ruptures. This whole process takes place within language,

locus of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. The notion of constant "*glissement*" (slippage) of the signified under the signifier is particularly useful when considering the two tropes used in *Vaste est la prison*, women and Berbers. In this chapter, I take a closer look at the elaboration of these tropes.

The first concern with Djebar's undertaking is the fact that expressing subjectivity in writing is construed as a transgression further aggravated by its object: the too narcissistic project of introspection. Furthermore, this step necessitates a rupture with the world of women in order for the self to be singularized from the group and articulate itself. This chapter argues that the community of women is a backdrop against which Djebar's narrator attempts to write her self, like the negative of a photograph. The project is further complicated when the very community the author needs to detach from is needed to author-ize her; legitimize her, in her enterprise.

The Berber presence in Djebar's text could be first regarded as a re-appropriation of history, or better, an implementation of Said's suggestion to read history with a contrapuntal perspective.[4] While Said conceives this contrapuntal perspective within the frame of a colonial interaction (colonist vs. indigenous), Djebar's work could be interpreted, as it has been for other novels,[5] as formulating an alternative reading to the history presented not only by both the ex-colonizer (France) but also by the ex-colonized (Algeria) who have been both oblivious to major data and events although with different motivations. However, this contrapuntal perspective in Djebar's novel is intricately

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[4] Said suggests to "think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its own particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them coexisting and interacting with others." (Said Culture 32)

[5] For instance *L'amour, la fantasia*

connected to the autobiographical aspect and the driving force of the novel remains an attempt for the narrator to reconcile with her compatriots, her community, and the members of her gender who are all addressed in turn. The narrator, haunted by these presences, finally faces her ghosts.

Djebar's endeavor to revisit the history of the Berbers is consistent with the framework already described. It has two objectives. One is to finally address the haunting presence of the Berbers; the other is to use it as a literary trope. As a literary trope, this haunting presence beautifully expresses the narrator's obsessive sense of lack. However, as an element of contrapuntal strategy –to reveal the dismissed history of the Berbers and their current oppression—it is less successful since Djebar exhumes the Berber past to eventually relinquish it, thereby perpetuating the dismissal discourse of the State for which Berbers only exist in a very remote past and therefore are relegated to archeology and museums. Barbarology is at work in this novel, pointing at the intricate rapport between the narrator and her "ghosts."

The last chapter concerns Nabile Farès's novel *Un Passager de l'Occident*. Like *Vaste est la prison*, it is highly autobiographical. *Un Passager de l'Occident* grapples with the over-determination of being a Kabyle in Algeria and an Algerian in France. The narrator's introspection as well as his reflections on history, literature and Algeria's predicament plunge him into a maelstrom of interrogations that are expressed through a very idiosyncratic style of writing which combines poetry and fiction.

This chapter analyzes Farès deep awareness of the genre's pitfalls and limitations—evidenced by his difficulty with form and style—and the alternative he initiates through Berber poetics. Indeed, he struggles—through an anti-aesthetic composition—to find a

philosophical and humanistic alternative to the ideological commitment of literature, which has become a simulacrum. Thus, the novel is composed in a subterranean—or rhizomatic—fashion, a strategy elaborated in order to prevent ideological rhetoric and to shun preconceived reading. I argue that Barbarology is also at work in Farès's novel, which is a broad reflection on identity. Indeed, Farès argues that identity is always a work in progress, a process of "becoming" (an idea that's already present in his prediction of Algeria's future which he claims resides in dialectics). In addition, Farès's treatment of the novel (the genre) indicates his discernment vis-à-vis the novel's shortcomings, for which he finds techniques to circumvent them.

I conclude with the exploration of James Baldwin's *Another Country*, a novel discussed in Farès's novel. A sample of Barbarology at work in American fiction.

Chapter 1: Barbarology: A Definition

Historical background

The Berbers, the earliest known inhabitants of North Africa have been the subject of many debates regarding their origin, prompting interesting hypotheses as well as numerous legends. One such hypothesis is defended by Saint Augustine, Procope and Ibn Khaldun who claimed that the Berbers are descended from the Canaanites chased from Palestine by the Jews who conquered the country under Joshua. The Berbers were also believed to be descendents of Trojans from Thrace, Celts, Gauls, and even Indians from India. Legend has it that they actually were survivors of the city of Atlantis before it sank into the sea. In short, the Berbers could be from the Middle East, Canaan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Thrace, Asia, islands of the Aegean Sea, Northern Europe, the Iberian Peninsula, or Italy. As Gabriel Camps puts it, it is more difficult to look for countries where the Berbers are not from. However, from a historical point of view, it is now accepted that since High Antiquity, Berbers have always been in North Africa (Camps 11).

The historical reality of the millenary presence of the Berbers in North Africa should not invalidate the theories of their worldwide origin, which at least account for engaging legends and myths. The truth often lies in between: history, legends and myths are inevitably intertwined.

The term "Berber" comes from the Greek "Barbaroi" and later from the Arabic "*brabra*" which designates someone whose language cannot be understood. Such a degrading term is obviously not one a people would choose for itself. The Berbers were previously called *Numids*, *Maures*, *Getulians*, and *Lybians* according to various authors,

places and periods. The indigenous people call themselves Imazighen, which means free men. The root of this name is found in Herodotus who spoke of the *Maxyes*, a term, whose derived forms appear in other authors (*Macares, Maxues*, *Mazices*). Saint Hippolytus puts the *Mazices* at the same level as the *Mauri*, the *Gaetuli* and the *Afri* (Servier 10-11).

At the present time, there are Berbers in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, the Sahara, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso, without forgetting the important Diaspora in the West. Most are sedentary people but some are nomads for whom national frontiers do not matter and who therefore inhabit several countries or none. It is the case of the Tuareg who live between Niger, Algeria, Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso (Chaker Imazighen 9-10).

One important characteristic of the Berber people is both their spatial and historical ubiquity while being absent from strategic positions, centers of decision making, and spheres of power. This presence could be read as a subtle subterranean presence, similar to that of erased characters on a palimpsest. Indeed, a lot of effort has been put in the erasure of the Berber history, culture and language, so that even their mere existence has been questioned. At best, modern states relegate the Berbers and their millennium presence to museums and to a distant memory (essentially used for tourist-oriented publicity, with a special focus on Tuaregs and Moroccan Berbers). But in general, the common policy has been the cultivation of amnesia, a strategic enterprise whose purpose is to impact on the collective memory. However, millions of Berbers are still alive and this so oppressive policy has always been met either with fierce resistance or with haunting memories. And so today the Berbers of North Africa live out Marx' comment

that "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."[1]

Thus the Berbers, present in more than ten countries, when they are not fully transnational or a-national, generally distrust their respective state and show aversion to the nation state as a political structure, and this accounts for their non-participation in state affairs. Some Berbers, whose political conscience is more developed for historical and sociological reasons (political traditions, immigration, etc), overtly represent the "caesura of the national consciousness" as Nabile Farès puts it in *Un passager de l'Occident*. Resistance is therefore the keyword for the Berbers and this project, Barbarology. The origins of such resistance are multifold. One origin lies with various nations' political decisions to oppress recalcitrant minorities, sometimes very important ones, and the attempt to annihilate their cultural and linguistic heritage, and their societal structures. For instance, nations like Niger and Mali are responsible for trying to exterminate the Tuareghs, an operation that almost succeeded.

Berber speakers speak a multitude of different dialects, which are often not understandable by other Berber speakers. Thus, to generalize we can say that in Morocco there are Berbers who speak Tarifit (in the Rif), Tamazight (in the Atlas), Tachelhit (Chleuh area); in Algeria, Berbers speak Tachawit (in the Aures), Taqbaylit (in Kabylia), Tamzabit (in the Mzab), while the Touaregs speak Tamacheq. The well-known linguist André Basset numbered 3,000 to 5,000 Berber dialects (Servier 38). The variations and discrepancies between the dialects can be explained by history and geography. Though

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[1] See Marx, Karl. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.*

political and geographical isolation is a key factor in these divergent linguistic developments.

Despite the fact that today's multiplicity of Berber dialects is a source of vibrancy for the language, it is actually a source of concern for those who want to establish educational programs in Berber. The practical complications and obstacles to develop and promote a language that is comprised of so many and sometimes so distant dialects are clear to all and has even led some to wonder whether diversity was not after all a handicap to the teaching and advancement of the language. Salem Chaker, another linguist, judiciously proposed that the definition of "the norm" should be altered to include variation. He writes:

> *La langue berbère est une, mais sa diversité linguistique et sociolinguistique impose que l'on intègre la variation dans la définition d'une "norme". Toute attitude uniformisante rigide et excessive serait immanquablement rejetée et ses promoteurs n'auraient aucun moyen de l'imposer.* (97)

Thus, like most linguists, Chaker rejects a "pan-Berber norm," that would be artificial and mythical. He argues for "unity in diversity." It is clear that the gap between on the one hand, the unity discussed and explored in theoretical linguistic studies, and on the other hand the multiplicity of spoken languages is profound, but the fact remains that they originate from a single language, and as Kamal Naït-Zerrad remarks, the deep unity that exists between all the Amazigh dialects is undeniable.[2]

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[2] [...] *rappelons quand même que l'on est fondé, bien sûr, à parler d'une langue amazighe, car la profonde unité des parlers amazighs est indéniable. Mais vouloir forger une langue avec la prétention de l'ériger comme langue de l'administration ou de l'Etat pose des problèmes* [...] (Kamal Naït-Zerrad 45)

The unity referred to by linguists indicates the existence of some kind of lost original language, comparable to the Ur-language base sought by so many ethno-nationalist movements. Yet this fundamental language is one that a few speakers approximate but no one speaks, a situation with Babel-ish overtones. The loss of an original language could be seen as a fall from a state of perfection where words might have been effective, and meant what they should mean. This idea brings to mind Paul Auster's novel, *City of Glass* where Stillman, an intelligent and disturbed character, glosses over the Bible and states that before the fall, "a thing and its name were interchangeable" until "names became detached from things; words devolved into a collection of arbitrary signs; language had been severed from God" (70). Stillman presents the fall of the Tower of Babel, as "an exact recapitulation of what happened in the Garden, only expanded, made general in its significance for all mankind" (70). Therefore, both falls are associated with the fall of language. And what comes after the fall of language if not the "true beginning of the world"? If the multiplicity of languages is any gauge to the entrance into the world, then the original Berber language marks the threshold of humanity and its dialects are the symbol of the world.

Barbarology

Barbarology is a theory developed from aspects of the Berber people's history and cultural values, from which I will elaborate and formulate a theory of exile and identity. Indeed, the Berber people offer a basis or rather a point of departure from which to inculcate a new dynamic in the discussions and treatment of exile as well as identity.

Berber life and history are remarkably suitable for the purpose of this project because of these same abundant hypotheses and suppositions about their origin while their

existence seems impervious to time. This aspect of the Berbers' history contains the idea of survival and preservation excluding essentialist claims based on a unique origin. Moreover, the range of people grouped under the term Berbers, a "negative" metonymy (their language is *not* understood), also reveals an original disjunction at the very core of the name (between the word and what it represents), an essential paradigm for Barbarology.

The term Berber, coined by the outsider and so depreciatory, is still being used today and coexists with the "inside" term "Imazighen" that has always existed. I myself use the term Berber because it crystallizes what Barbarology is about. Barbarology through the term Berber offers a perpetual reiteration of the encounter between the same and the different, between the "we," and the "other" referred to as *Barbaroi.* Barbarology brings to a halt this moment where two supposedly different beings collide. It is a moment of – wonderment, fascination and fear before the incomprehensible, the unknown, and the foreign, a moment that has been kept alive by Berbers for millennia. I argue that from this confrontation emerges a dialectical process of inquiry, whose mode is based on questioning oneself and the other, resulting in taking into consideration the other party's presence and existence. Thus, the term "Berber"("foreigner") can only be assigned during the confrontation, and if the "foreigner" himself/herself appropriates this term (which has been the case of the Berbers) it proves the partial integration of the outsider's judgment into the endless construction of one's character.

Again, the spatial and historical ubiquity of the Berbers and their absence from decision-making centers and centers of power is notable when we reflect on identity and exile. Their presence/absence testifies to the presence of a point of resistance, which is

not based on power, obligation, or contract. I argue that this resistance/resilience is linked to the condition of being a minority and is the ultimate link between all the Berbers. It is a deep bond that transcends language discrepancies, nations, religions, races, skin color, and even culture.

Barbarology, through the combination of different fields such as linguistics, ethnology, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology, provides a different and synthetic tool with which we might imagine and then articulate new venues and theories of identity and exile. I argue that Barbarology is an innovative theory for the development of dialectical reasoning, since it is based on resistance/resilience, and shuns from the power structures. Thus, it is an all-inclusive system—not cultural-essentialist—system from which alternative ideas about identity might emerge.

"***Frotter notre cervelle contre celle d'autrui***" (E, I, xxv, Montaigne)

Barbarology can also intervene and interfere in the intricate domain of human interactions to complicate and hopefully alter them for the better through the resuscitation of different codes of competitions and values diametrically opposed to those in circulation today. The values and codes I want to discuss here are based on the notion of "confrontation" which, in Bourdieu's study, is embodied in the challenge, the offense, or even the gift ("don").

In his *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*, Bourdieu looks at a complex system of competition based on honor amongst the Berbers of Kabylia. The very reproduction of the economic and political order is based on honor, a symbolic-capital that Kabyles strive to maintain or augment. Far from being linked to any compensation in the reproduction

of the economic or political order, as it was first believed, honor only generates itself.[3] Honor is based on a particular dialectic of "*défi*" (challenge) and "riposte." The challenge is central to honor because it allows it to exist. The worst treatment one could receive is to pass unnoticed ("*passer inaperçu*") because the challenge is considered to be "un sommet de la vie pour celui qui le reçoit," it proves to others and to oneself, one's existence as a man ("*tirugza*").

However, there are conditions and rules for the challenge—or the offense or the gift—to take place. It is necessary for the one who receives the challenge to show both respect and esteem for the one who challenges him, one who must also be worthy of initiating the challenge. The challenge must be reasonable in the sense that the one challenged should be given a chance to respond, this is necessary for the communication to continue (31). Thus, both initiator and receiver are caught in the mesh of exchange because whatever the receiver might do, will be a response to the provocation (37). Also the interaction is determined by the respect of the competitor and the rules.

This is relevant to Barbarology for several reasons. First the Kabyl's ethos based on honor compels people to be in constant interaction. The fact that the accomplished man has to relentlessly be on a state of alert ("en état d'alerte"), ready to respond to the slightest challenge, is a sign of energy, vigor as well as a constant awareness of oneself and others.

The other reason is the centrality of others in the ethos of honor. Indeed, the motor of the dialectic of honor is the "*nif*" which is everything that calls for the defense—at

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[3] [..] *les stratégies visant à la reproduction du capital symbolique que sont les conduites d'honneur révèlent la fonction qui leur est impartie dans la reproduction d'un ordre économique et politique dont l'ethos de l'honneur, principe générateur de ces stratégies, est lui-même le produit.* (Bourdieu 15)

whichever price—of a certain image of oneself, which is destined to others. The social moral, explains Bourdieu, forbids singularization, demands anonymity, and the use of the personal pronoun "nous" which reveals politeness because as the saying goes "il n'y a que le diable qui commence par lui-même." This vision, refurbished, could balance out and, why not, re-direct, the dead end of modern and postmodern fascination with the narcissistic reflection of the individual where the subject drowns itself.

Furthermore, like all confrontations, some confrontations might end in war. Bourdieu writes:

> *Selon un vieillard des Ath Mangellat (Grande Kabylie), dans les guerres de tribu, les grandes batailles étaient rares et n'avaient lieu qu'après un conseil tenu par les Anciens qui fixaient le jour de l'action et l'objectif imparti à chaque village. [...] De tous les villages alentour, on regardait et on donnait son opinion sur l'audace et l'habileté des combattants. Quand le parti le plus fort occupait des positions d'où il pouvait écraser l'adversaire ou bien lorsqu'il s'emparait d'un symbole manifeste de victoire, le combat s'arrêtait et chaque tribu rentrait chez soi.* (28-29)

The Kabyles' notion of warfare depicted here is based on the acknowledgement of the superiority of one tribe over the other, after which recognition everyone goes home, like the Hegel-Kojève notion of the fight for recognition. The victors gain an abstract advantage called glory. This concept of warfare is so foreign to the modern world that it prompted Bourdieu's curiosity and interest, similar to that of Montaigne, when describing the noble warfare of the Cannibals from Brazil in his essay "Of Cannibals." In a time of civil wars and political and religious conflicts in his country, Montaigne's portrayal of a

drastically different approach to warfare – based on valor and whose gain is also glory--could only be read as a questioning to the warfare he and his readers are familiar with, i.e. one based on conquest and appropriation, vanity and cupidity.

Farès declares the state of war to be an enigma that resists all the philosophies that have tried to come to terms with man.[4] I argue that the state of war, inherent as it appears to be to the human species, is only an elaborated form of the confrontation discussed earlier. However the pervasive commodification of human confrontations only contributes further to the prevalence of wars as Montaigne witnessed them and as we have been witnessing them since. The example of the Kabyls teaches us the forgotten arbitrariness and richness of the notion of competition and the motives for confrontations. This genealogy can be rekindled through Barbarology.

Finally, the metaphor of the palimpsest (where the Berbers' history and presence ooze from every letter and blank space of pages comprising North African and European history) illustrates the role of the Berbers in history. The same process, more intimate, is at work when looking at the role of the Berbers in history: they have penetrated and were penetrated by the thought of the peoples who have been in contact with them, weaving thereby the history of an important part of Africa.

One noteworthy example is the Berbers' use of the invaders' languages. Greek for instance coexisted with Berber dialects and Punic from a very early time. Considered a language of culture, Greek was spoken by the Carthaginians, by people living in towns, and by the African (Berber) kings (Syphax, Massinissa). The sons of Massinissa (Mostanabal and Micipsa) were educated in Greek while Juba, another Berber king,

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[4] "*toutes les philosophies qui ont tenté de dire l'homme se sont arrêtées à cette énigme: l'état de guerre.*" (Farès Passager 134)

chose Greek as the instrument of his oeuvre.[5] The same is true during the Roman Empire, where many of the literate natives from North Africa wrote in Latin. Literature from Africa was considered a province of Latin literature with its own particularities. Thus Apulee and Saint Augustine for instance used Latin in spite of their different pronunciation (Italians would tease Saint Augustine for his accent and he would correct them in return) or the realization that Latin is not their mother tongue (Apulée).[6] While Africa became the last major home of pagan literature in Latin, it also produced a number of major Christian writers (Tertullien, Cyprien, Augustine). Moreover, after the Arab invasion, historians, genealogists, theologians, travelers, grammarians, poets, etc. wrote their works directly in Arabic. Thus, Berbers provided scholars to Romans, Saints to Christians, dynasties to the Muslim empire (Almohavid, Almohad), saints to Islam without ever being interested in the creation of a Berber nation or kingdom where their own language and culture would be used. In an article discussing the presence of Berbers in Andalusia Nevill Barbour writes:

> [they] have apparently never desired to form a central government which used their own language for administrative and culture purposes. When they formed kingdoms, it was always by adopting the language and system of government of some other people. When conditions did not favour such assimilation, they remained tribal groupings without a central government. (170)

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[5] *Encyclopedia Universalis.* Entry: Maghrébines (littératures) 249.

[6] In the preface to *The Metamorphoses,* Apulée, who also wrote in Greek, asks his readers to forgive him any mistakes due to the fact that he is using a foreign language. See *Encyclopedia Universalis.* Entry: Maghrébines (littératures)

At the same time, all the conquerors' occupations were punctuated by numerous revolts (Phoenicians (Carthage), Romans, Christians, Goths, Arabs and Islam, Europeans and Turks.) The Berbers would always rebel against the established authority often by supporting or bringing schisms or other ideologies "stemming" directly from the very thought of the victors. It was the case with Donatism for Christianity or Kharidjism for Islam. Indeed, Berbers used religion to dissimulate political revolts (social demands or the rejection of authority or of those in power), which were therefore expressed in religious terms or under the guise of a religious ideal (Servier and Charles-André Julien).

Behind the obvious reason[7] for Donatism, a schism that divided the North African church from around 311 until the end of the sixth century, were important non-religious issues. Social conditions and regional feelings against Rome helped vitalize a movement, which fought among other things the coalition of Roman governors, bishops and landed proprietors. Indeed the rise and strength of Donatism is explained in part by the miserable social conditions of the people (their members mostly originated from the lower social classes) who resolved to destructive violence, fanaticism blended with socialist ideas (Ferm). Considered as ecclesiastical rebels, the Donatists attracted all the discontented and subversive elements in the population. Dispossessed peasants and escaped slaves tried to make common cause with them (Hastings). These rebels or social revolutionaries known as *Circumcelliones* ('hut-hunters') terrorized the landowners and the catholic population. They were considered along with the extremist Donatists a threat to civil authority and while the Donatists were persecuted and banned, the *Circumcellions*

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[7] Part of the clergy and congregations of Carthage refused the new elected archdeacon Caecilian as bishop of Carthage who was claimed to be unworthy.

remained active and "eventually contributed to the downfall of Roman Africa when the Vandals invaded from Spain in 429" (Eliade).

Kharedjism (Arab *Kharaja*, 'go out') is an early schism in Islam. It is the "third party," which rejects both the Sunnis and the Shiites. When its intellectual center moved from Basra (Iraq) to North Africa, the doctrine greatly impressed the Berber tribes in North Africa. From the beginning, writes Mircea Eliade, they insisted on the equality of all Muslims regardless of race or tribe, 'even if he be a black slave' and they found an important following among the non-Arab converts. Berbers used Kharedjism in order to break away from the despotic authority of the Umayyad governors, which they succeeded in weakening. After the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty by the Abbasid revolution (750) the revolts continued and the appellation *Khariji* came to mean 'rebel.'

It might seem perplexing that two of major schisms in Islam and Catholicism took place in North Africa. But these "two schisms of a revolutionary nature" could not have happened anywhere else because as Charles-André Julien explains "nowhere else did the feeling for asceticism and egalitarianism, both indissolubly linked with a hatred of the masters, reach such a degree of intensity." (Julien 19)

Thus the religious terrain was often an instrument to carry a form of resistance or social and political claims. Ibn Khaldun, as quoted by Charles-André Julien, noted the facility with which Berbers convert to a religion and then apostatize. They did so twelve times in 70 years (Julien 11). Besides schisms, Berbers also used inside or outside alliances to oust despots or resist invasions. It was the case with Kosaila who was supported by the Greeks in his resistance to the Arab invasions in the late 7th century. Another famous example is the Kahena (*the prophetess*, the Berber princess of the

Aurès). According to Ibn Khaldun, she practiced Judaism, as did her tribe and her fierce resistance was based on Jewish faith and Berber patriotism. She was able to gather the Berbers behind her to crush the Arab army between Aïn-Beïda and Tébessa.

These two seemingly opposite roles of the Berbers in history reveal an ongoing motion whose motor and fuel is resistance/resilience and confrontation. Because of these intricacies, scholars are often at loss as to how to define, present and interpret the role and the presence of the Berbers, sometimes even losing track of them, so fluid their presence. Many have prophesied the disappearance of the languages and its peoples in a slow and radical integration. Assimilation and integration has taken place but Berbers persist, generating much speculation about just what keeps them going. Some refer to the Berbers' rigorous austerity (which would also explain the cause of their notoriously rebellious mind), while some like Jean Servier invoke a certain conception of a moral and spiritual life, or "an idea" or a "thought"(Servier 40, 123-4). Jean Servier actually writes that it is "une pensée qui tire son identité profonde d'elle-même plutôt que de ses modes d'expression" (Servier 40; 121; 123-4) and he concludes with a note on the Berbers' self-destructive tendency, stressing that even they cannot extinguish this thought:

> *C'est sans doute cette pensée qui subsistera, sans qu'il nous appartienne de dire s'il s'agit d'un bien ou d'un mal, c'est cette pensée que les Berbères eux-mêmes ne pourront pas détruire.* (124)

The objective of this somewhat long overview of the essentials of Barbarology is to draw attention to the strength of what I call the diaphanous thread that brings together the Berbers under Barbarology. Indeed, as previously discussed, the Berbers do not form a single, definite group of people, instead the term embraces a diversity of people with

characteristics that are often exploited as impassable dividing lines between peoples and nations such as race, religion, language, nation and skin color. These aspects are contained in the Berbers' shrouded origin, their foreign-acquired name which coexists with their genuine name, their ubiquitous absence/presence, the loss of their linguistic commonality, their legendary resistance –while being absent from positions of power— and the multiple forms of spiritual and moral values guiding their conduct. All these elements reveal an undeniable endurance and above all an inspiring presence to the world.

Barbarology, a Desert Gale

After the fashion of the Berber people whose survival owes a lot to their reluctance to seek power, Barbarology is a system that thrives in interstices, relinquished and forgotten spaces, (hi)stories, memories and peoples that are brought to the surface to interact and coexist with dominant or more visible forces. The subsequent encounters generate links and connections that are never definite but always shifting, moving like sand in the desert. While some unity can be created through these associations, they can never be fixed. These links or encounters are at the core of Barbarology since they found the locus of the confrontation and subsequent resistance/resilience on which the theory is based. They become an outlet to discuss philosophical, political and sociological contradictions. And like a grain of sand which can actually stop a perfect mechanism like that of a watch, so does Barbarology disrupt and question systems, structures, discourses as well as natural and human phenomena. When the grain enters the machinery and stops it cold, the liberated energy—a silence or space of thought—is used to rethink the status quo.

Like a desert gale, Barbarology is a natural system or form, which appears at any time, anywhere without warning; its origin are unknown and its activation has no motive other than that of perpetuating thought processes, intelligence and acumen. It can never be construed as a tool to subdue or control because of its ephemeral presence and multiple forms. Thus, the apparition of the desert gale always indicates a climactic moment of questioning or obstruction.

Barbarology uses all means available to destabilize, whether the resurrection of (the memory) of the dead who have never ceased to haunt the living and therefore never really left them, or thoughts, forms of organization, principles that were discarded because they were deemed weak, or inadequate are now welcome.

Like the Berber people who have always endured invaders or colonizers, fighting them and learning from them, resisting and integrating numerous aspects of say Egyptian, Greek, Lybian, Punic and Roman cultures and civilizations, to name only a few, so does Barbarology synthesize, for its existence lies here, in its capacity to adapt and to be in motion.

The choice of the metaphor of the desert gale is significant in the sense that besides the total spontaneity of its manifestation, its improvised course of action and its unpredictable results, the desert gale, unlike other productive winds, carries sand, which like the grain of salt is not fertile. This makes the desert gale essentially incorruptible since its experience can never be reproduced and commodified.

The grain of salt, historically an exchange value, is also incorruptible. It symbolizes friendship (one shares salt like bread) and hospitality. We argue that the strength of

Barbarology comes from all these characteristics, which make freedom, resistance and non-rooted-ness its grounding force.

Barbarology is finally a mode of thinking, feeling and loving which crosses all restrictions, boundaries and limits, visible or not. Its forms and characteristics will survive and resist as long as they signal dissent or difference.

Towards a New Theory of Exile and Identity

Exile is a trope long associated with the human condition as such, with literary examples stretching from *Genesis* Adam and Eve onward. In modern times, and following Freud, exile is a desire to return to a home, one which we long for and, which is lost to all: the womb. Hence, the notion of exile in the absolute is familiar to all in both religious- cultural and secular-intellectual formulations.

Other forms of exiles, less idealized and less tied on mythopoetic faculties, have existed throughout history where people have left or were physically displaced from more or less fixed homes, spaces and territories. An exile, writes Michael Seidel, is someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another, and following Paul Tabori's definition, the exile conceives of his or her displacement as temporary even though it lasts a lifetime. The anxiety and distress produced by an absence –a lack—is soon ubiquitous and entails a feeling of alienation from one's surrounding and prompts the exile to circumspection at all times and to keep a critical eye on the society in which he or she lives.

One of Terry Eagleton's arguments in *Exiles and Émigrés Studies in Modern Literature* concerns the importance of foreign viewpoints particularly when a society questions itself in radical terms, as was the case in 20th Century England: Six out of the

seven most significant writers were exiles or expatriates (Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Yeats), which reveals, Eagleton argues, the cultural inability of British society to produce great literary art because English writing was caught within its partial and one-sided attachments, to "totalize" the significant movements of its own culture.

Paul Tabori who contends that exiles' presence is always greatly beneficial to the countries theat receive them shares this view. The idea is stretched to include "inner exiles" i.e. those who feel like foreigners in their own country (the *poètes maudits* are cited as classic examples). Tabori bends the definition of the classic exile in order to include other forms of exile. An exile, he writes, is someone who is compelled to leave his homeland whether for political, economic, or purely psychological reasons (Tabori 37). Tabori does not find essential the difference between those who were expelled by physical force and those who left of their own volition.

In his Edward Said asserts that modern Western culture is the product of exiles, émigrés, and refugees and so agrees with both Eagleton and Tabori on the exile's positive influence. In addition, he tackles some major lacunas in the discussion of the modern exile among specifically the dismissal of the "uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created." And so, Said calls for a more comprehensive view of the condition of exile that would include the acknowledgement of the exiles' demands, the pain of loss and the suffering they endure. Said makes an important step forward in historicizing the condition of exile, that is, a material situation and not just an abstracted—if not a bad faith retreat—state of mind, declaring exile to be "irremediably secular and unbearably historical" (Said 174). He thus challenges a traditional view that conceives exile as one's fate. Such a conception of fate is like the strike of fortune or a calamity that Plutarch

claims render so many foods bitter and pungent and irritate the taste, but he adds, by combining with them certain sweet and pleasant ingredients we get rid of the disagreeable savour (Simpson 237). This personal and internal condition portrayed like a disease by Plutarch and cultivated as such for so long, in Said's view and in modern times, becomes a political tragedy generated by human actions.

While stressing the human production of the modern exile and the necessity to take it into account when reflecting on exilic literature, Said distinguishes between expatriate intellectuals who are voluntary exiles and exiles who are forcefully displaced. This renewed consideration for the masses of people will undoubtedly contribute greatly to the re-mapping of exilic literature. However, while, on the one hand, Said extends the problematic of the condition of exile to modern politics, he apparently excludes from his strict definition of exile those for whom return is not forbidden ("anyone prevented from returning home" is an exile), thereby disqualifying not only expatriates and refugees but also immigrants, and other kinds of exiles from the denomination.

Furthermore, the classic characteristics that are usually associated with the exile remain the same. Indeed, Said construes the exile as a banished outsider who lives a miserable life but who carries a "touch of solitude and spirituality"(Said 181), a viewpoint that reinforces the traditional representation of the exile as an individual who is an outsider, isolated and miserable but intellectually/spiritually superior. Thus, Said encourages the extension of exilic studies to include exiles generated by modern politics but does not contest the very definition of the exile.

For Said, the exile keeps his/her distance from nationalism and cultivates subjectivity along with philosophical positions such as "not to be at home in one's home" formulated

by Adorno or to regard the entire world as a foreign land (Hugo of St. Victor). The condition of the exile, Said claims, is "nomadic, decentered, and contrapuntal" and the exile, an individual in perpetual dissatisfaction. These reflections on the condition of the modern exile could be greatly enriched or broadened with Barbarology, a theoretical position from which we can now challenge the ingrained notion about the exile as a lonely outsider, secluded in an ivory tower being more or less indifferent to any locus while remaining the beacon of discernment. The objective here is not to extirpate this die-hard portrayal of the exile but rather to challenge and transcend it in order to make it more flexible.

As a theory of existence based on movement and change, Barbarology makes available another perspective on the irrecoverable loss exiles are the emblem of. Based on the loss of the original and once unified language, Barbarology tackles the physical displacement and the subsequent relationship to the homeland and the foreign land in an innovative way.

In opposition to one's lost home, all places are now foreign or unfamiliar (especially in contradistinction to one's childhood home inseparable from lost youth). At the same time, places that are deemed foreign progressively acquire a sensation of familiarity, phenomenon that could enhance the ultimate position of the exile mentioned by Said. Thus complementary to the principles of "not to be at home in one's home" and "regard the entire world as a foreign land" are "to be at home anywhere" and "to regard the entire world as a homeland." In order to experience these alternative options, the exile needs to first come to grips with the terminal loss of home, only then can the exile become the conveyor of new potentials that could eventually engender significant changes whether in

the homeland the exile visits (traveling home is possible for many immigrants, expatriates, etc) or in the country(ies) he/she lives in.

Another way in which barbarology can be profitable is in regards to the pervasive notion that the exile—to be beneficial and worthy of his/her title—must be isolated or at least keep some distance from the world. Barbarology is based on the movement between resistance and resilience and the distance necessary for any sound reflection would surely benefit from occasional participation and/or involvement in the life of a given community (whether at home or elsewhere) in order to create networks of resistance charged with positive changes. The exile is actually the perfect vehicle for resistance and change because he/she is the living product of the encounter of at least two cultures, languages, morals, ethics, possibly religions and more. All exiles carry with them the grains of Barbarology whether they sow them or not. Indeed, exiles might have lost their home (and with it a personal and autochthonous rapport to home) and are offered an array of different possibilities in exchange, from which they, and the world can benefit.

Finally, I argue that the term exile suggests a geographical displacement as well as a psychological state, which instead of being the exclusive property of a limited number of individuals (artists, intellectuals, etc.) who would be referred to as such, is now shared by all ordinary human beings who leave their home to inhabit a foreign environment. The subcategories included in terms such as "immigrant," "refugee," "expatriate," and "émigrés," are important and useful insofar as they determine more precisely the specific circumstances under which the exile has left his/her homeland. Extending the definition of exile further, we would then argue that all foreigners are exiles and possess the same beneficial potential to the society they happen to live in if only through their mere

presence and uncanny-ness. Thus in Barbarology, exile encompasses diaspora when both notions have often been discussed either in opposition or as overlapping provinces such as Nico Israel's study on displacement which he locates in a tension between exile ("the modernist metaphor of exilic deracination") and diaspora, ("the post-modern /postcolonial metaphor of diaspora") so promising in terms of hybridity. (Israel 18)

Barbarology also builds on Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, and his theory thereof, which addresses race, ethnicity, culture and nation, all notions that are intrinsically part of modernity and for which he proposes his own paradigm: the ship in motion. Thus,

> I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol for this enterprise and as my starting point. The image of the ship—a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion—...Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artifacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs. (4)

Illustrated, or actually embodied by the ship, Gilroy's theory of identity is based on movements and exchanges between several continents and transcends both "the structures of the nation state" and "the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity." Through the concept of transcultural identity, (drawn from Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome, the "anti-genealogy") Gilroy turns the product of a traumatic and exclusively "black" African experience –that of slavery—into a challenging and all-inclusive model. Some might call this a totalizing theory. On the other hand, the Black Atlantic also enables black survival that is conditional to "forging a new means to build

alliances above and beyond petty issues like language, religion, skin color, and to a lesser extent gender."(28)

Gilroy's counter-discourse is essential in order to break away from a too rigid discourse on race and culture as well as the history, and strangulating notions of history from which they developed. To this end, the formulation of the Black Atlantic encompasses three continents (Europe, America and Africa) and the Caribbean within which all kind of transactions take place.

However because the Black Atlantic is grounded in slavery, it is inevitably circumscribed in time and space. Indeed, while imaginative, the theory is limited by its geographical and historical specificities. How could the theory hold outside of the context of the Atlantic slave trade? Does it apply, for instance, to North Africa, which experienced slavery but outside of the Atlantic slave trade? Moreover the strict and hierarchical organization on board of the slave ship is a microcosm of the racist, capitalist West: there are slaves, free individuals, and the crew, all under the ultimate authority of a captain. Its trajectory is always one-way: towards profit. While the slave ship brings an ingenious and inspired basis for a counter-discourse on history and its epistemology, its inexorable internal organization and objective preclude its association with positive exchange and communication. The power of Gilroy's insight might well be undermined by his metaphors.

Barbarology, on the other hand, provides a structure that avoids these shortcomings by substituting say the caravan to the ship. Reminiscent of many of the Black Atlantic attributes (movement, exchange) the symbol of the caravan goes beyond. The caravan, an unusual means of traveling, is not a vehicle or a mode of transportation but a group of

people traveling together. In the case of the Tuaregs, the caravan carries a society in the making and always on the road whose unique goal is to continue its journey. Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that the nomads in their entirety have been so inspirational to philosophers, artists, exilic and non-exilic writers, film makers, fashion designers, etc. Nomadic life has been garbed with all sorts of ideals as well as fantasies.

In literary circles, the nomadic motif has been exalted if not venerated in many recent and less recent theories on exile and identity. The freedom of movement associated with the nomadic life is projected onto modes of existence, rejecting thereby all rooted-ness while encouraging diversity through webs of networks. Barbarology, however declines such a manicheistic distinction because any rooted-ness is a frozen nomadic movement, which can recapture its momentum unpredictably. Moreover a well-directed exploitation of this frozen movement (rooted-ness) could be subversive and create new impulses. Barbarology's new outlook on exile is inclusive (home and foreign places, sedentary and nomadic, etc.) and allows current debates on race, culture and identity to take a new momentum.

Creolization, *métissage*, hybridity, and Barbarology

Barbarology's first declaration is the Berbers'impossible claim to a unique origin or race, similar to the loss of the unique language or even the loss of home for exiles. However it is not just another theory of *métissage* or hybridization because while avoiding the pitfalls of essentialism, it also avoids those of multiculturalism by deploying a unique take on identity. Indeed, Barbarology endorses what some scholars and theoricians reject as racist, essentialist, backward and shameful, that is, the idea of the

singularity, the unity and distinctiveness of one's culture (including religion, practices, language, etc).

In a useful and related collection of essays, *Identities*, culture and race are discussed as concepts being interlocked in the debate of universalism vs. essentialism. The claim for -- or the re-appropriation of-- a denied culture is discussed within this very framework. For Walter Benn Michaels, whose essay "Race into Culture: A Critical Genealogy of Cultural Identity" is in the collection, it is purely an essentialist quest. He associates cultural pluralism with a subtle form of racism and provocatively asks, "Why does it matter who we are?" For him, the cultural claim is ontological:

> The real question, however, is not *which* past should count as ours but why *any* past should count as ours. [...] Virtually all the events and actions that we study did not happen to us and were not done by us. In this sense, the history we study is never our own. [...] When, however, we claim it as ours, we commit ourselves to the ontology of "the Negro," to the identity of "we" and "they," and the primacy of race. [...] the accounts of cultural identity that do any cultural work require a racial component. [...] the modern concept of culture is not, in other words, a critique of racism; it is a form of racism.(59-60)

The essentialist accusation is a very serious one and jeopardizes the expression or claim to any difference especially for denied cultures, as it is the case in previously colonized countries or in current repressive regimes around the world where local cultures have been either oppressed or partially eradicated. Reclaiming one's culture under these circumstances is not an essentialist call but rather a humanist one, and so also a universalist position. In this case, it is a struggle for the acknowledgement of one's

difference, a difference that has been denied or why indeed, would anyone reclaim his/her identity if s/he can freely live it in the present time?

Walter Benn Michaels's statement also reveals blindness to the dominant culture of which he is a product of-- which is so pervasive and insidious that it goes unnoticed as a culture and is being mistaken for a humanist and universal thought system to which cultures must abide. Therefore relinquishing the claim to a culture that one does not live in in any active and meaningful sense is a moral and ethical imperative. Pushing this reasoning further, any subjectivity could be construed as a threat to the well being of the community at large.

What is at stake here is not the coexistence of different cultures but whether or not one is entitled to preserving a culture in the future or to resuscitate dying cultural traditions (cf. the controversies surrounding Native American culture in the United States).

For these embattled movements, there are other considerations. Obviously for the members of a community whose culture has been repressed or partially obliterated, they have integrated some forms of the dominant culture in place of their lost or repressed one. Indeed, their present identity is already the product of the domination they were subjugated to. So should people dismiss their current tangled selves and search for a buried one—which sometimes means further alienation—or should they feel satisfied to be part of the current alienation which seems to be shared by everyone, a situation known as the postmodern condition (or the death of the subject), or finally is a third way possible?

One of the main difficulties here is to probe oneself and determine one's needs and desires vis-à-vis repressed constituents of a past identity and the present situation. As

Eagleton remarks in a discussion on nationalism, the irony of such repression is that it renders the victims radically uncertain of what their needs really are. Eagleton rightly observes that the "very repressive conditions that make it necessary for the subject to express itself freely also tend to render it partially opaque to itself." (Eagleton *Nationalism* 29).

The second difficulty is to present the case for one's claim as innocuous and compatible with the contemporary world. Postmodern theories allow the expression of long-suppressed subjectivities but only to further negate them by arguing for the disappearance of a consensus on knowledge, history and reason, incompatible with the universals, which any identity theory requires.[8] Briefly stated, reflections on identity largely benefited from this vast epistemological re-examination, which also enable scholars to turn a blind eye on the political aspect of identity with alarming consequences.

One of these dangers is to attribute to hybridity the power to subvert categorical oppositions—while it is, as stated above, commonplace and pervasive—and to articulate the debate on identity between cultural hybridity vs. racism and xenophobia presenting them as conflicting political forces. Consequently, hybridization is therefore worshipped as an all encompassing and democratic form of identity to be fully embraced and which is conceived as the harbinger of some final form of liberation. Its self-righteous defenders often hastily dismiss any idea that runs contrary to it. In addition, the opposing party,

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[8] "Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name."(Lyotard 82). For a critique of the cult of ambiguity and indeterminacy in postmodernism see Terry Eagleton *Illusions of Postmodernism.*

composed of various groups, often very different from one another, are lumped together for their shared resistance to the monolithic and sacrosanct hybridization.

Extreme assumptions such as the affirmation of the existence of ontological differences—position easily dismissed because of its scientific invalidity—are made to represent even people who expect the fulfillment of their basic human rights, such as the right to speak one's language or to pray one's god. Thus, many cultural claims are still perceived as threats to the ideal of a multicultural world, a belief that does not resolve the issues at stake since we observe a permanence of this counterforce in all debates around culture and identity.

Eagleton identifies this danger by pointing to the risk of bypassing the specificity of one's identity in the name of freedom "even once one has recognized that such an identity is as much a construct of the oppressor as one's "authentic" sense of oneself"(30)

It clearly appears that these cultural claims need to be addressed beyond the binary paradigm of hybridity vs. xenophobia or particularism vs. universality. As Eagleton affirms, particularity should not be reduced to being either "suppressed in the totality of universal Reason" or "celebrated as a unique, irreducible state of being impenetrable to all alien Enlightenment rationality" (32).

As previously discussed, the Berbers' survival is due to an alternate mode of existence situated between resistance and resilience, a strategy that could be associated with the seemingly antithetical movements between the claim for difference and the acceptation of others. What is usually construed as threatening in the retention or reclaiming of one's culture is the affirmation of one's difference at the core of the claim, which is perceived as a statement of exclusion. More than exclusion however, this gesture aims at

underlining one's specificity that has been rejected or denied. Still, the perceived exclusion could become threatening if after the recovery or the acknowledgement of one's difference, the movement of resistance holds power and authority over others.

Resistance in Barbarology can never become a tool to exclude, oppress or tyrannize others because of its fundamental separation from centers of power and decision. Discussing the particular case of Israel, a state based on a religious specificity and exclusivity, the Boyarins in "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," formulate a position that is very close to Barbarology. These brothers, Jewish scholars and cultural critics, avoid the pitfall of essentialism by declaring that the primary function for a critical reconstruction of cultural (or racial, gender, sexual) identity is to construct it in ways that purge it of its elements of domination and oppression (Appiah 322).

One's claim for difference should always be separated from power, unless one is willing to take the risk to turn the right to difference into a segregation machine. More generally, the combination of a unique culture and power always has drastic effects on the resistance and existence of other cultures. Today most of the interactions between cultures are regulated by some kind of power (physical, military, financial or economical), a situation that pushes further and further away the confrontation Barbarology strives for, a confrontation embodied by interactions between people and cultures unmediated by power, a moment that remains for now a distant ideal. This idea obviously marks Barbarology with a certain ideological stand without which it would be easily assimilated to nomadology or Glissant's notion of "*errance*" (wandering).

Glissant's notion of identity is based on "la poétique de la Relation" (Poetics of the Relation) developed from the concept of the rhizome elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and

Felix Guattari who distinguished the rhizome (multiple roots) from the unique root ("la racine unique"). For Glissant, identity, like the rhizome, is always formed in a *rapport* with the Other which does not preclude the claim to one's identity that Glissant acknowledges as a necessity (he defines it as "*la recherche d'une liberté dans un entour* » 32). This being stated, Glissant rejects the idea that the rhizomatic thought could have a subversive function and the capacity to transform the world because of its very nature: "*on en reviendrait alors à la prétention d'idéologie que cette pensée est supposée contester.* » (24)

The way Glissant evades the contradiction of the necessity to acknowledge one's right to be different --and to only partake in another culture willingly--and the necessity for the rhizome to pursue its natural course is through the notion of opacity. To the transparency, which has been used to impose totalitarian views under the disguise of the universal, he opposes opacity:

> *L'errant récuse l'édit l'universel, généralisant, qui résumait le monde en une évidence transparente, lui prétendant un sens et une finalité présupposés. Il plonge aux opacités de la part du monde à quoi il accède. La généralisation est totalitaire: elle élit du monde un pan d'idées ou de constats qu'elle excepte et qu'elle tache d'imposer en faisant voyager des modèles. La pensée de l'errance conçoit la totalité, mais renonce volontiers à la prétention de la sommer ou de la posséder.* (32)

Opacity is Glissant's ingenious scheme to protect diversity ("le Divers"). To a western perspective the acceptance of one's difference is still conditional to understanding it,

which Glissant reminds us, is always a way to reduce the other to one's own standards. Opacity provides a way out of this dilemma by suppressing the necessity to understand:

> *Non pas seulement consentir au droit à la différence mais, plus avant, au droit à l'opacité, qui n'est pas l'enfermement dans une autarcie impénétrable, mais la subsistence dans une singularité non réductible.* [..] *Renoncer pour un temps peut-être, à cette vieille hantise de surprendre le fond des natures.* [..] *Le droit à l'opacité n'établirait pas l'autisme, il fonderait réellement la Relation, en libertés.* (203)

The claim for opacity successfully circumvents the contradiction between the free and wandering rhizome, and the necessity to acknowledge one's claim for difference while providing the indispensable freedom for the "Relation." However the notion of opacity could evoke for the executor the act of concealment and suppression, which, for those who are used to being attacked, rebuffed or denied because of their specificity is way too familiar and could even intimate a return to an oppressive past. Protecting one's difference through silence and closure could therefore also be a response to forceful infringement against which one is helpless. On the other hand, does accepting someone's opacity-- along with the respect that this gesture carries—not also entails surrender or capitulation in face of human comprehension?

Barbarology allows, thanks to the strange attribute of powerlessness, the expression of difference to be either displayed or retained—and all this while under no pressure or force and so done willingly. Again, once power is proscribed, interactions can freely take place and create a more satisfying world. Meanwhile, resistance (without taking power) allows this idea to remain a possibility. Without it, Barbarology would a passive witness

where at best it could follow and recount the transactions and encounters that take place in the world.

Only with such a stricture could people from all places and perspectives be heard. This unique condition as it if found in Barbarology is fundamental for it enables to ameliorate and extend our perception of difference and come closer to the truth. Indeed, many voices, experiences, events have been either forgotten, lost, silenced, or misrepresented because of oppression, denial, or plain ignorance.

These voices, which are not represented in the concert of world interactions and discussions, need to be finally articulated and heard. The bottom line here is that no one can speak for someone else, no matter how much sympathy or empathy one can offer or how much understanding and insightfulness one deploys.

This principle is essential especially given the rampant politics (and self-promotion) of representation where some have acquired renown simply because of their origin and/or gender. Being a third world individual, a woman, or the member of a certain minority does not inoculate one from misunderstanding, distortion or even misogyny and racism. Consequently, the danger lies in authorizing oneself or others to speak on behalf of a group of people, with the potential risk of reproducing and therefore perpetuating some major misrepresentations and mistakes.

Who indeed would advocate, support or just acknowledge an experience that one has no knowledge of? In a very logical way, that which does not exist for me does not exist. This is true for personal experiences but also for political, cultural, and religious issues. This is why Barbarology fully endorses Abdelkebir Khatibi's highly inspirational phrase: "*une pensée qui ne soit pas minoritaire, marginale, fragmentaire et inachevée, est*

toujours une pensée de l'ethnocide" (Maghreb pluriel 18). However, no matter how attentive one is to marginality and minority, eventually only the marginal and the minority can recount it.

Khatibi articulates sharp and penetrating insights on bilinguism, decolonisation, and autobiography. In *Maghreb pluriel*, he elaborates a new approach to the notion difference. He employs the phrase "pensée-autre" to emphasize and promote the diversity and the plurality in the Maghreb without dismissing the Western heritage, which needs to be acknowledged as well as criticized. He writes,

> [..] *la domination brutale et abrutissante, ne peut être résorbé par une naïve déclaration d'un droit à la différence, comme si ce "droit" n'était pas déjà inhérent à la loi de la vie, c'est-à-dire à la violence insoluble, c'est-à-dire à l'insurrection contre sa propre aliénation. Un droit à la différence, qui se contente de répéter sa revendication, sans se mettre en question et sans travailler sur les lieux actifs et réactifs de son insurrection, ce droit-là n'est pas une transgression. Il en est la parodie.* (11-12)

Khatibi argues for a new mode of existence based on self-questioning which transcends the claim for difference, a condition that is already a conflictual state. He therefore advocates for a "double critique,"one inherited from the western world and one's own legacy that Khatibi regards as being "theological, charismatic, and patriarchal" (12).

In an attempt at fleshing out this legacy, Khatibi declares the civilization of north Africa to be Arab, adding nonetheless that the unity of the Arab world is a notion of the past and that his interest lies in the persistence of its imaginary ("*Cette unité est donc, pour nous, du passé, à analyser dans son insistance imaginaire*"13). However, in *Penser*

le Maghreb, Khatibi endorses and promotes the founding text of the "Union du Maghreb Arabe" signed in Marrakech in February 1989. Khatibi presents its main principles as follows:

> *Sur quels principes ce texte est fondé? D'abord sur un principe d'unité crée par la religion, la langue et l'histoire, c'est-à-dire sur une communauté de destin.* (7)

It goes without saying that the language and the religion Khatibi refers to are Arabic and Islam. These elements are blatantly inconsistent with the position held by the writer in the precedent passage. The idea of creating a Maghreb based on an Arab unity testifies to the dismissal of 30 millions of Berbers (50% of which are in Morrocco) who are not Arabs and do not consider themselves as such. As for religion, while Islam is practiced all through North Africa, the argument that consists in creating a community of destinies based on Islam is not convincing given its exclusive potential.

In brief, one could illustrate the preposterousness of such a unity through the long and forceful fight Algerians waged against their own constitution based on the same principles, which have crippled the country since the independence.[9] On the same page, Khatibi concludes the segment by emphasizing the essential role of the intellectual, a mediator between the thought and ethics, and between the civil society and the State. ("*C'est là la tache de l'intellectuel, qui est celle d'une raison exigeante et claire, fondée sur le discernement*" 7). Finally, one is left to ponder the chasm between this reasoning and Khatibi's touching phrase that invites contemplation "a thought that is not a minority thought—marginal, fragmentary, and incomplete—is always a thought of ethnocide."

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[9] The Algerian constitution states: Article 2: Islam is the State's religion. Article 3: Arabic is the national and official language. After decades of struggle, in 1996 the constitution is finally partially modified to include the Amazigh component. The Article 3 however remains the same.

Because of the human condition of being formed and limited by personal experiences, because the conception of theories is not necessarily followed by their implementation, and because power still deprives many from speaking and being heard, it is necessary to resist through Barbarology. Because once again all the good will of the world is insufficient to generate adequate insights on issues that are not discussed and brought to light by the very people who experience them. Thanks to the nullification of power, these insights find expression and educate the world on its multiplicity, complexity and contradictions that lie in its bosom.

Chapter 2: Barbarology and Exile or, The Case of the Kabyle People

Introduction: The Eyes of Others, or the Mirror of Exile

Barbarology, as developed in the previous chapter, construes exile as a fundamental aspect of the convoluted and ever-shifting relationship between the one and the other, i.e. between *the barbarian* and his/her interlocutor. In this chapter, I investigate further Barbarology's fresh look on exile, which I illustrate through the specific case of the Berbers from Algeria known as the Kabyles. Their century-long history of exile, which continues today, requires an expansion of the classic definition of exile. Indeed, for Kabyles, exile is associated with uprooted-ness, pain, conflict and contradictions but also with creation, change and most importantly survival. Moreover, this chapter consolidates this new dimension of exile through an analysis of its impact, via the Kabyle immigration, on Algerian nationalism, the nascent conception of nation, the Kabyle song industry, and literature. It also discusses the consequences of exile, which are evident in a range of different fields such as politics and literature.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the notion of exile as explored in this chapter challenges earlier definitions of exile, which are elitist or essentially literary and textual. What allows this challenge is the particularity of the Kabyle experience of exile. They are thus referred to as exiles and sometimes as immigrants, continuing thereby the project of democratization of the concept of exile and extension of its significance, without diminishing its capacity to convey hope and distress, imagination and change as well as an individual sense of alienation and artistic inspiration. The specificity of the Kabyle community is simply contained in the constant movement between the host country and "home." And while some Kabyles do integrate into the respective society they live in,

many keep the dynamic alive between the two places due to a continuous wave of immigration that is still mainly economical.

As this chapter argues, they are exiles because in spite of forming a community in France or in Algeria and belonging, for the most part, to the poor working class, their century long experience with exile is an instance of their identity. Moreover, unlike other exilic experiences, which are usually expressed through writing, Kabyle exile is expressed through a medium that is accessible to all and whose very existence owes so much to exile: the song. Through this popular medium, Kabyles ponder and articulate their condition at home and in exile.

Exile is an integral part of Kabyle history and especially from the early twentieth century to the present. While Berbers in general, have adapted sometimes by choice and sometimes by force to the successive invasions and colonization, they, as a community, have also experienced exile, especially since the late 19th early 20th century. Exile here, could be read as the reverse movement of the colonial invasions whereby instead of confronting the people coming to them they, the invaded, are the people in motion. The confrontation is obviously different because of the historical, political, and economic factors of this particular confrontation, but it is nonetheless an interaction that has numerous effects on both the host country (France) and the country of origin (Algeria). Obviously only a few of these aspects are treated in this chapter, which is especially concerned with nationalism, the emerging idea of nationhood and its critique, and with the literary production as testified by Francophone and "Beur literature."

While it is tolerated to discuss the larger notion of the Berber song, which is indisputably Berber because of its Berber lyrics—even though with some reluctance[1]—discussing the role of the Kabyles in Algerian nationalism and in the literary production in French proves to be a much more difficult endeavor. Several reasons explain this state of affair. First and foremost, there is the constant assumed threat of division, which

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[1] In his preface to Mehenna Mahfoufi's study on Kabyle songs during the war of independence (2002), Mohammed Harbi, a famous and well-respected historian of the Algerian war, writes:

> "une fois l'assimilation à une culture dominante écartée, l'emprunt et le métissage ne devront pas être, décemment considérés par les Kabyles comme un reniement de leur passé berbère. [...] une étude thématique aurait été intéressante pour l'analyse de la conscience populaire algérienne. On y aurait vu derrière la variété des langues utilisées le même espoir, le même patriotisme et l'ambivalence des liens à la tradition et à la religion. (12)
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> Once the danger of the assimilation to a dominant culture eliminated, the Kabyles should not consider borrowing and the "*métissage*" as a renouncement of their Berber past. [...] A thematic study would have been interesting to the analysis of the Algerian popular consciousness. We would have discover behind the variety of languages used the same hope, the same patriotism, and the ambivalence to tradition and religion.

Given Harbi's repute and his integrity vis-à-vis his work, we can assume with confidence that he has no antipathy towards Kabyles, their tradition or culture. However, in the space given to a preface on a study of Kabyle songs, Harbi brings back to the surface the threat of division, which seems to go hand in hand with any research in the Berber domain. Thus, he warns that once the Berbers are not oppressed anymore, when they are not imposed a dominant culture any longer, they should accept borrowings, which suggests that they might not. Moreover, he actually suggests to the author Mahfoufi, whose specialty is ethnomusicology and who has been doing research in Berber music for 20 years that would he have included other languages—understand here Arabic—he would probably come to the same conclusions, dismissing thereby his whole endeavor. Obviously, Harbi is insensitive, to say the least, to the importance of this project whose objective is not to divide the nation or annoy the government, nor is it written against Arabs. Its specificity resides in the remarkable research and compilation of Kabyle lyrics and texts created and sung during the war. This project, in a different place and time, would be valued for its vital contribution to Algerian patrimony. There remains the question of the author who accepted to have his book prefaced in a way that dismisses his research.

Kabyles themselves have integrated to a more or less degree.[2] It originates from a long history of manipulation by the French first and by the successive Algerian governments later on.

But before discussing these aspects, it is also important to remark that the realization of one's difference only takes place when the one is confronted to another. Before this "confrontation," there is no awareness of one's difference and no need to claim it either, which is the case of the Kabyles until the end of the 19th Century. The presence of the French in Kabylia as well as the significant impact of exile on Kabyles in general, changed this state of things. In both situations, Kabyles became aware of their difference, not only vis-à-vis the French but also vis-à-vis their Arab-speaking compatriots, whom they came to interact with in exile as well as at home.

To the leitmotiv of division (the Algerian president reiterated the threat the Berber language poses to the unity of the nation as recently as March 2004) –which again is internalized by many Kabyles, especially in cities-- should be added the fact that many Kabyles possess an almost innate conception of their culture and language as belonging to a very intimate sphere, that of the sacrosanct mother, the family, and home and therefore should not be brought to the foreground or to the public realm. This last reason sometimes overlaps with the first one, and underlines not only a concern about being thought antipatriotic but also indicates a sense of reserve and humility that are important characteristics of the culture. Sometimes overlapping with this resistance to "go public," but mainly in opposition to it, the Berber movement of the 1980s emerged as a public

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[2] Often Kabyles use a preemptive strategy to avoid the accusation of division by silencing their difference or playing it down.

stage for political, cultural and identity claims. These claims find their ultimate expression in the call for autonomy, after the Black Spring (2001).

Thus, the project of this chapter—to retrace the significant role of exile in the precedence of the Kabyles and their vital role in major events (the war of liberation, the literary production in French)—stands in a seemingly uncomfortable even contradictory position. Indeed, this chapter takes a definite political stance by acknowledging Kabyles' difference and their right to cultural and political claims including that of auto-determination, yet at the same time, this chapter functions as an illustration of a theoretical idea, and thus also uses the Kabyle situation to reveal the potent substance for theoretical analysis it possesses. It intends to unearth the underground or palimpsestic presence of the Kabyles going back to the first exiles and show how this presence/ absence creates a constant dynamic with the cultural and identity claims.

Finally, I believe it is important to state what this project is not. Its objective is not to prove any Kabyle superiority or any closeness to the French, ideas, which undoubtedly come to mind for any non-Berber and some Berber Algerian as well, so great the suspicion of Kabyles. Because Kabyles scholars and intellectuals are also well aware of these ever-present allegations and distortions, they are wary of and avoid this domain of reflection altogether in order to avert any such accusation and the never-ending polemical debates that it inevitably entails. This is also the reason why these reflections could not have matured in France nor in Algeria but in a third "neutral" space.

Indeed, this suspicion goes back a long way and more precisely to the Kabyle Myth. To the French observers who went to Algeria before, during and after the conquest of

Kabylia (1870), Kabyles were different from the Arabs. In their majority, they lived in or around mountainous regions, were sedentary people, spoke a different language, looked different, and had different customs and political organization and most importantly, their practice of Islam was more moderate. During the 19th Century in France, many theories about race, languages, progress and civilization were elaborated, which were used to justify the French presence in North Africa based on the racial, intellectual and political superiority of the French and French civilization. Thus, Kabyles became the case study for which archeologists, ethnologists, linguists, philologists and many other engineers and scholars in the French intellectual scene tried to prove their new theories right. For instance, civilization was linked to industriousness and sedentary life and in consequence Kabyles were deemed more civilized or closer to civilization than the Arabs who lived in plains and were nomads. Thus was born the Kabyle myth, a manicheistic dichotomy where Kabyles were extolled and Arabs denigrated.

In a remarkably well-documented and thorough study, Patricia Lorcin retraces the ideological apparatus that was behind the observation and study of the indigenous population and examines the development and evolution of the myth in minute details. While her interest essentially resides in the French intellectual scene and its impact on the theories about Kabyles, she contributes to the demystification of an old belief by stating that the French colonial system, in spite of all their praises, never implemented policies in favor of the Kabyles ("It was a myth that never became policy in Algeria, for no pro-Kabyle colonial legislation was ever passed"(3)). However, there was a specific desire to assimilate the Kabyle population, which manifested itself by encouraging emigration, which coincided with the opening of the first schools in Kabylia (1873) (Aït Messaoud

76). And indeed, the only sphere where a French influence, not policy, can be noted in Kabylia is that of the education for by the end of the 19th Century, there existed a small intellectual elite with a western formation. This influence, however, was not a program but as Salem Chaker affirms, the result of a historical situation, adding that the only concrete Berber policy of the French in Kabylia was that of the repression and destruction linked to the numerous insurrections of the region (Kabylia, Aures, Rif) (Imazighen 65).

In her discussion on the legacy of the myth in post-independent Algeria, Patricia Lorcin acknowledges the use of the Myth for political and strategic reasons (usually to blame or raise suspicion about Kabyles), but does not mention the repression the Kabyles underwent and still undergo because of these differences so well publicized and exaggerated by the French over 150 years ago.

On a different note, there were real differences between Kabyles and Arabs—and still are—and contrary to the Kabyle Myth, Kabyles did not appear with the French nor were they the result of their (French) imagination. Unfortunately, noting differences is usually coupled with moral or value judgments, as it was the case during the French colonization. Moreover, it should also be reminded that Kabyles themselves did not participate in the creation of the Myth that bears their name. They were used as mere objects for a system that sought to reinforce the values on which it was founded. Thus, Kabyles were not the actual recipient of praises, which turned them into threats for their Arab compatriots, threats which in their turn came very handy to keep Kabyles in check.

Today, because of the effects of exile, the vast policy of arabicization in Algeria and the massive assimilation of Kabyle-speaking people in Algerian cities, it is more than ever difficult to refer to Kabyles as a homogeneous group, unless one refers to Kabylia.

However, a look at their general relationship to Arabs still yields interesting insights. Whether in Kabylia, elsewhere in Algeria or in the Diaspora, Kabyles often refer to themselves as "Arabs," which is understood as a general category to which they feel they belong. They often say "*Nkweni si Araben*" (we Arabs) in a self-reproaching way, to complain about their attitude, thereby including all Arabs. This is a phenomenon that goes beyond the feeling of solidarity when Arabs are targeted, for instance. It originates from a feeling of belonging, even though with some limits. Indeed, while discerning a sense of familiarity, Kabyles do acknowledge Arabs as others and would for instance name their male children "*Âarab*" to keep jealousy away. When they move to cities however, Kabyles feel isolated or even ashamed of their origins for they are often deemed backwards, rough and unsophisticated, mostly due to their rural origin and condition.

Now turning back to exile, —especially France where there is a large Kabyle community—one might remark that the latter country is both remote from and yet near Algeria, a paradox which has favored reflection about the Kabyle political, economical and social condition. And strangely, this paradox continues in the present to facilitate political maturation, but also the awareness, expression and development of Kabyle subjectivity. For Kabyles, exile functions like a safety valve, allowing a break from oppression and censure, and a space of growth, development and production. Exile is a source of energy and vitality that actually fertilizes the movement in Algeria, where changes and results occur. Maintaining the dynamic between exile and "home" is essential because they are dependent on each other in order for exile to continue to

receive and relay vital forces back to the "home country." Hence the need for travelers, exiles and newcomers, from both sides of the Mediterranean.

Finally, if one were to look into the genealogy of today's Kabyle identity, one would discover the large impact of exile in its very formation, and thus the importance of the Other (whether the Arab or the French) in its elaboration. Indeed, exile is conducive to questioning and comparing oneself to one's compatriots and to other peoples as well. Traveling to Algerian cities and to the other side of the Mediterranean make differences and similarities with others more acute and definitely mediates the Berbers' sense of themselves. Among other things, the denial of Berbers' existence (culture, language, and history) was blatantly exposed in exile. Traveling to another country had therefore a reflective effect on the exile. Before Algeria's independence, the Berber exile lived as a colonized man in his country and in France. After the independence, the Berber exile could measure the extent to which he was still perceived as a second-class citizen in France but also in Algeria. Crossing frontiers often reveals what one represents to others. The numerous transactions that need to be done to this effect (applying for a passport, going through customs) educate the exile as to where he/she stands in people's imaginary as well as in governments' policies. Exile teaches the traveler a lesson about the outside world and also how his/her own country perceives him/her. Exile is inseparable from the formation of consciousness, a radical and acute social consciousness.

The result of these contacts is that the Kabyle exile realizes that not only is he a foreigner in France (a fact difficult to ignore) but also that he does not fully belong to Algeria either. This alienation of sorts manifests itself mostly towards the exile's spoken language and his native region. Coming mainly from the mountains, the Kabyle is

perceived to be a backward uneducated mountain dweller, in a word barbaric. Furthermore often not speaking the only official and recognized national language of the country (Arabic) is a further proof of the exile's ineptitude, punished by subjecting the traveler to countless searches and humiliation.

I argue that the exile develops a "multiple consciousness." This idea is an elaboration of the concept of "double-consciousness" developed by Du Bois to describe the mental process of African-Americans in the United States. He described this state as a sense of "always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 8).

Kabyles, unlike African-Americans who "internalize" the white consciousness, possess several consciousnesses and look at the world through many different eyes (of others). This is not unrelated to their exilic experience –whether they actually experienced it or not—which they are partially the product of. Actually, exile crystallizes the Berbers "multiple consciousness" in an idiosyncratic way. The exile possesses many consciousnesses, which are as many worldviews (family in the Diaspora, family at "home," French, and Arab). For instance, unlike its colonial approach in the colony, the host country does not distinguish between Berber and Arab speaking immigrants, who are lumped together under the same Arab banner. This is not a new situation for Berbers who live the same at home but interestingly enough, when abroad, they embrace this amalgamation and internalize it. However it is important to remark that the term "*Arabe*" used by the host country, more than a language or culture, conveys rather a social and sociological reality, a reality in which Berbers participate. This multiple consciousness

entails the possibility of negotiation but also confrontation. It could be conceived as a "buffer zone" where reflection, deliberation and meaningful arguments take place.

Kabyles and Exile: A Brief Historical Overview

In this section, I will retrace the role of the Kabyles in Algerian history with reference to historic markers and their direct or indirect link to the experience of exile. This is challenging because of the necessary brevity of the survey and also because of the difficulty to distinguish the specific role of Kabyles from the rest of the Algerians. Again, this topic is either avoided or is the basis of polemic discussion for the highlighting the Kabyle experience in Algerian history is still viewed suspiciously and the Kabyle Myth, as we shall see is never very far. Nonetheless, this survey considers a few landmarks in their relationship to exile: the first émigrés, the development of nationalism, the 1949 crisis, the Algerian war, and the situation of the Kabyles since the independence.

Historically, exile has been an omnipresent aspect of the culture and the lives of the Berbers since the late 19th Century. Healthy men would either travel to close or faraway cities or to foreign lands and especially France, the former colonial power. The Berber speaking population comprised the first emigration from North Africa to France and Europe. These people came from Kabylia and later the Aurès for Algeria and the Souss followed by the Rif for Morocco (Chaker Imazighen 37). Like all the Berber speaking regions, Kabylia is a poor and densely populated region. Still, the brutal suppression of the 1871 insurrection, the confiscation of land, the colonial destruction of the traditional economy and the disappearance of indigenous craftsmen, pushed the Kabyles to look for outside means of subsistence (Bourdieu Le Déracinement). This emigration also increased at the beginning of the 20th Century (partially) due to France's dire need for

workers during the First World War. In 1914, there were already 10 000 Kabyles in France (out of 13 000 Algerians) and after 1918 the North African emigration remained mostly Kabyle.

Kabyle precedence in immigration should be a matter of historical accuracy but this simple historical fact becomes in itself threatening and even politically charged. For instance, Abdelmalek Sayad, esteemed Algerian sociologist from the CNRS, in a referential article entitled "*Les trois âges de l'émigration algérienne en France*"(1977) simply omits this information. Interestingly enough though, his article starts with the following passage, he ends with the usual conclusions:

> *Toute étude de l'émigration qui négligerait les conditions d'origine des émigrés, se condamnerait à ne donner du phénomène migratoire qu'une vue, à la fois, partielle et ethnocentrique, comme si son existence commençait au moment où il arrive en France* [...] (59)
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> Any study about emigration neglecting the conditions of origin of the émigrés will condemn itself to only reflect a partial and ethnocentric view of the migratory phenomenon, as if his existence started when he arrives in France

This directly contradicts the content of the article where Kabyles are simply absent. Their absence signals the dismissal of their condition of émigrés having a specific world of reference different from that of the French but also of that of their Algerian compatriots. Curiously enough, this silencing takes place at the same time as the author uses Slimane Azem's songs and Kabyle terminology all through the article; terminology which is directly linked to the Kabyle phenomenon of exile ("*Amjah*" [an exile], "*bou-niya*" [describes the authentic values of the peasant, such as a sense of naïveté], "*tamurt*"[the

country]). The same goes for the testimonies reproduced in the article, which are certainly from Kabyle exiles, but like the Kabyle terminology, are never acknowledged as being Kabyle.

In 1994, Abdelmalek Sayad publishes another article on the same topic entitled "*Aux origines de l'émigration kabyle ou montagnarde*" (At the origins of the Kabyle or rural emigration). His article attacks the "*idée reçue*" according to which Algerian immigration to France is an exclusively Kabyle phenomenon, argument which has not appeared in any research on this topic.[3] He argued that it is a stereotype that dismisses other components constitutive of the immigrant Algerian population, components that, however, he does not determine. He links this stereotype to the Kabyle Myth, which he then recalls by reminding the reader of a series of myths about Kabyles being more industrious and less fanatic. Later in the article however, he writes:

> [...] *l'émigration kabyle fut encouragée au point qu'elle devint une pièce maîtresse de la politique coloniale française en Algérie.* (11)
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> The Kabyle emigration was encouraged to the point that it became the main aspect of the French colonial policy in Algeria

Following the logic and arithmetic of this argument, that the French encouraged Kabyle immigration to this point,[4] there should be many more Kabyles in France than any other group. This example also suggests that any Kabyle claim, as futile or accurate as it may

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[3] Scholars never defended the exclusivity of Kabyle immigration to France, only its predominance.

[4] And that is not totally true either since Kabyles emigration was mainly the result of the destruction of traditional organization and acute poverty. The first wave of immigration took place after the suppression of the 1871 insurrection

be, is felt as either a threat to the unity of Algeria or as a claim of superiority. Obviously the statement that the French encouraged Kabyle immigration indirectly blames the Kabyles for having benefited from it. To demonize Kabyle's curiosity about their history and themselves, the Kabyle Myth is never obsolete. This simple example ultimately demonstrates the magnitude of the taboo and/or blindness associated with Kabyle history (and Berber studies in general) though it is a major component of Algerian and North African history.

In 1954, half of the Algerian immigration in France was from Kabylia. By the late 1980s, there were 500 000 Berber speaking immigrants in France mostly from Kabylia (the total Algerian immigration was around 1 ½ million). In Morocco, 50% of the emigrants to France are Berber speakers. Altogether the number of Berber speakers in France is estimated to be around 700 000 (Chaker Imazighen 38-9).

Until approximately 1970 emigration was "a collective affair." The exile represented his family or group and would work for a couple of years before returning home. In his place, another member of his family or group was sent to France to take the same job and live in the same room. This system of rotation made emigration temporary and helped the exile not to feel alienated (Khellil 12-18). Moreover, in France, the village assembly (*tajma<at*) was recreated to provide solidarity and cohesion to the groups of the same village. Exiles gathered according to their family, village, tribe, and region, and thus maintained the traditional structure of the village and the Berber language. The economic marginalization and over-exploitation no doubt also participated in this cultural and linguistic isolation. In spite of this isolation, however, the influence of exile will make

itself progressively felt. Indeed, Kabyle workers—who dominated the Algerian emigration to France until the 1940s—were soon introduced to political activity and trade unionism, which was at its apogee in the 1930s. The French communist party also influenced some of them (Direche 35). These influences did not create armies of militants but rendered the laborers sensitive to a discourse about freedom and social justice.

The Development of Nationalism:

Emigration was a decisive factor in the development of Algerian nationalism from 1920-1962 and, after the independence, in the affirmation of Berber politics and culture. The radical organizations of Algerian nationalism were all born in emigration, with a Berber predominance in the executive branch as well as among the militants. In 1924 in Paris, the Algerian émigrés who were mostly Kabyle created "*Le Congrès des ouvriers nord-africains de la région parisienne.*" In 1926 it becomes "*L'Etoile nord-africaine*" (ENA) which already demanded the independence of North Africa along with an emphasis on social progress. Five of the eight founders were Kabyles while the grand majority of the militants were Kabyle so that Roger Letourneau commented that it should just have been called l'Etoile algérienne or even l'Etoile Kabyle (Ouerdane 41). The Kabyle educated elite came from modest and rural origins and thus could easily relate to the working class immigration in France. Their sympathy for and understanding of the rural population and its problems (poverty, emigration) soon turned a part of this elite into radical nationalist militants, revolted by injustice, and rejecting the principle of French sovereignty (Chaker Imazighen 22).

In 1927, the Kabyles elected Messali Hajd, an arabophone, to the presidency of the party. For Ouerdane, this revealed a desire to create solidarity with Arab countries and to

create a Berber-Arab unity, mindful, in retrospect, of the failed Kabyle insurrections of 1864, 1865, 1871 and that of the Rif Republic where many Kabyles enrolled in Abdelkrim's army (Ouerdane 42).

The 1949 crisis:

In the 1930s, a political conflict between the Kabyle Amar Imache (nationalist revolutionary) and Messali-Hadj (of Arabo-Islamic inspiration) resulted in a sharp opposition between Kabyles and Arabs within the direction of the PPA (Party of the Algerian people). In 1948-9, the "Berberist crisis" or the "anti-Berber crisis" as Amar Ouerdane calls it, broke out when the majority of the direction criticized the general orientation of the party deemed too "Arab and Islamic." Interestingly enough, this crisis broke out in France among the leaders in immigration but did not touch the militants in Algeria, not even in Kabylia. The influence of French society on young intellectuals who were cut off from religious customs and familial traditions and evolved in a secular society was invoked (Stora 46).

As a consequence of this "crisis," Berbers were marginalized with the elimination of the core of the group, which was also the radical wing of the party. Indeed, the berberists, remarks Chaker, were the first Algerians to be radical nationalists and to demand independence at a time when the Arab-Muslim movement was still far from even agreeing to question the political sovereignty of France. The Kabyles, writes Ouerdane, tried twice (1926-1937 and 1945-1949) to direct the movement towards a socialist, democratic, and secular party before propelling it in an open anti-colonial fight. But with the Maghreb and Middle East's help in the permanent repression of the radical movement

(Marxist Berbers), the Arab-Islamic tendency took control of the national movement and imposed their orientation (Ouerdane 82).

Messali turned to a less radical position and moved closer to the Oulemas (whose association founded by Ben Badis presented itself as apolitical and whose purpose was to propagate fraternity based on Islam.) The historian Mohammed Harbi states that the 1949 crisis annihilates all hope to see a radical nationalism develop independently from the religious faith. The purge of the Berberist movement, he continues, resulted in the elimination of valuable cadres to facilitate the promotion of mediocre ones, all linked to the apparatus and whose ultimate fear was to be accused of being Marxist or materialist (Harbi 67).

The Algerian War:

All through the Algerian war (1954-1962), there was a muted divergence between Arabs and Berbers and Arab leaders thought it necessary to break the Kabyle hegemony on the FLN-ALN (National liberation front, national liberation army). These leaders were suspect because they were Kabyles (with a French education), which made their supremacy in the FLN intolerable and potentially dangerous for the "*arabité*" and "*Islamité*" of the declared national identity. These strategies and suspicions eventually led to the assassination of Abane Ramdane,[5] the marginalization of Krim Belkacem[6] and his later assassination, as well as keeping many others in the background.

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[5] The principal organizer and theorician of the first convention of the FLN. He believed in the precedence of the political over the military in the Algerian war. He was assassinated by leaders of the FLN in Morocco in 1957.

However, the history of Algerian nationalism clearly establishes that no matter their particular feelings and regional origin, linguistic and cultural questions were never brought up in order to avoid a split in the nationalist effort against colonialism. On the contrary, for the sake of patriotism, writes historian Ramdane Redjala, Berber-speaking militants among the underground forces and urban organizations even renounced their mother tongue (28).

Still, inconsistencies within the national movement influenced Kabyle public opinion, which took pride in the Kabyle leaders (the region had furnished an important number of great political and military leaders to the FLN-ALN such as Abane, Amirouche, Krim Belkacem, and Aït-Ahmed) and at the same time, sorely felt a political disenfranchisement, exclusion, and oppression as a non-Arab minority (Chaker Imazighen 23). It is therefore not surprising that just after the independence, Kabylia already showed its rebellious tendency when Ait Ahmed[7] and his partisans took the maquis. The national army (ALN) was sent to Kabylia and opened fire on soldiers from the 7th region (Kabylia). Benjamin Stora sees in this first resistance to the Algerian government the first "veiled case of civil war in independent Algeria" (46).

Independence and Beyond:

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[6] He was the principal Algerian negotiator of the Evian accords in March 1962. He was assassinated in Frankfurt in 1970, an assassination that was most likely perpetrated by the Algerian government. See Stora 46.

[7] He was one of the most brilliant members of the FLN. He was a member of the external delegation and was arrested in 1956 with the other three historical leaders. In 1962 after his liberation, he was elected to the Assembly but in opposition with Ben Bella he created an oppositional party, the FFS (Front of the Socialist Forces) that still exists today. He went into the maquis in Kabylia and was arrested in 1964. He finally escaped in 1966 and has been living in exile since then.

In 1962, the policy of arabicization was launched. In October the board of education discontinued the chair of Berber at the University of Algiers. Beginning in 1965-1966, Berber students in Kabylia, Algiers and Paris, began to gather in groups to work on Berber cultural and pedagogical projects. In 1967, the Berber Academy, whose discourse was sometimes virulently anti-Arab, was created in Paris, and in 1969 it became the "*Académie Agraw Imazighen*" which published a monthly bulletin entitled Imazighen. The bulletin's main focus was on the ancient history of North Africa and on the defense of the Amazigh language. Its activists were popular old political militants who had a strong following amongst the Kabyle immigration in the outskirt of Paris. Its bulletin was distributed throughout the Diaspora and in Kabylia, especially amongst students. But by 1980 the movement weakened and was almost insignificant even though its influence was important in Kabylia and in Morocco.

Parallel to this militant activity, whose discourse will mature and become more flexible with the development of a sensibility for other cultural minorities, an academic movement, embodied by the publications of Mouloud Mammeri in France (published by Maspéro), and the Groupe d'études Berbères of the university of Paris VIII, emerged. It started to function in 1973 with the adoption by the university of a program of courses to teach Berber language and civilization. This movement was more cultural, more academic and more moderate in its expression. It focused on scientific methods, on teaching the language, literature, and civilization as well as the publication of periodical and didactic tools (Chaker 25).

After the 1970s, another decisive factor came into play: repression. In 1973 Mammeri's Berber course at the university of Algiers, barely tolerated since 1965, was cancelled. Violent incidents took place; young people were arrested and condemned, often simply for being in contact with the Berber Academy. Little by little, a more political vision of cultural and linguistic problems developed in the Berber cultural movement. The movement drew the project of a different society: democratic, secular and pluralistic vis-à-vis linguistic and cultural differences. But it did not materialize into an organization or a political program; there was no "Berber" party in Algeria.

The Amazigh (Berber) Spring:

Since the 1970s the situation has been explosive and the interdiction of a conference by Mouloud Mammeri on ancient Kabyle poetry on March 10, 1980 sparked demonstrations and revolts throughout Kabylia for several weeks. For the first time since independence a social movement was able to affect a whole region and even challenged the power of the central government for several weeks. Benjamin Stora sees in this reaction the first violent signal of the people's discontentment with the unique party (FLN), which will collapse after the riots of October 1988 (47).

The Amazigh Spring was the culmination of the work by groups in Algiers and in the immigration since 1965 and revealed solidarity between the intellectual militants and the mass of the Kabyle population. However, the government repression was terrible and took several forms such as condemnations, arbitrary detentions, and interrogations. Students were expelled from schools, passports were confiscated, and some were fired from their jobs (Chaker Imazighen 31-33).

Support groups in the Diaspora kept the movement alive, preventing its eradication in Kabylia by the government's brutal repression. In France, spokespersons made the situation known internationally. Circumventing national self-censorship was a new phenomenon, which broke the silence about all the repression that took place in all of Algeria since the struggle for the national liberation. As Stora declared, while often suspected of threatening the national cohesion, it turns out that the Kabyles' struggle for plurality always announces radical democratic changes (47).

This brief overview of almost a century of Kabyle exile and Algerian history requires a final comment. The fact that Kabyles have often symbolized the best aspects of national resistance (the "Kabyle Commune" in 1871 and the Algerian war of independence) grounded in a reflection on democracy, plurality and the nation is due to sociological, historical and political fact. Once again, these developments could not have matured the way they did without the constant flow of exiles in both sides of the Mediterranean, injecting ideas, hopes and awareness in both countries. As stated in this segment, the decision to put an end to colonialism was first taken and sustained among exiles in France, their organization and work were vital to the process (military and diplomatic) that led to independence. After the independence, successive governments denied the very existence of a Berber culture and language and any opposition was severely suppressed. The Berber movement, with the help of emigration, organized to lift the lid off the secret oppression of a whole segment of the population. However, it has also progressively turned into a voice against the dictatorial regime, its repression, human rights violations, and corruption. Exile, we must note, furnished a space and venue for

this voice, facilitating the articulation of dissent and a constructive reformulation of politics and the nation.

Exile or The Nation Revisited

As will be discussed, exile played a key role in several cultural developments such as the song industry and literature. In this section, I retrace the way in which the emergence of the Algerian nation was largely due to immigration and to the Kabyle community. The same is true for the post-independence interrogations about the legitimacy of the Algerian nation after its exclusion of Algerian minorities, such as the Kabyles. The movement towards nationhood, a foreign concept, was slow and difficult given that nothing resembling a nation existed before the arrival of the French. And once again, many Kabyles— because of their organization, their political experience in exile, and the initiation of a small intellectual elite— became the "bridge" between France and Algeria and were the motor of Algerian nationalism. Yet, as this segment develops, the struggle for the Algerian nation was far from any Kabyle notion of "belonging" which consisted essentially in a commitment to the tribe or the village. Instead their coming together to expel the invader perfectly fits their ancient approach to danger: they come together with other tribes, confederations, or other groups and once the danger is dissipated, the coalition is dissolved. The Algerian war was no exception, since after having largely participated in the fight for independence, the Kabyles were among the first detractors of the young nation, after they realized the duplicity within its very foundation.

As discussed at length in this chapter, exile was, for Kabyles as it is for most exiles especially peasants, first and foremost a painful severance from the soil. The term that designates the soil is the polysemic word *tamurt*. *Tamurt* not only designates the soil but

also the country, landed property and the compatriot (*yellis tmurt,* the daughter of the country, and *mmis tmurt*, the son of the country). These significances emphasize the proximity of Kabyles to the earth and their attachment to a region, Kabylia. Indeed, while the term *tamurt* refers to a country in general (for instance, *tamurt n Lalman*, Germany) when it is used by itself it only refers to Kabylia. To precisely refer to Algeria, the country, one needs to add the word "Algiers" (*El Dzayar*) to form the phrase "Algerian country"(*tamurt n Ldzayar*). Thus, for Kabyles the only country they are emotionally attached to is the Kabylia region.

The sentiment of belonging to a specific region and community goes back centuries. Historically, Berber regions (Kabylia, the Rif, etc) have reacted as autonomous entities as was evident during the 1871 revolt when the insurrection was activated by two Kabyle chefs (El Hadj Amokrane "El Mokrani" and Cheikh Aheddad, "El Haddad") who brought about the uprising of all of Kabylia thanks to the organization of the confederations.[8] Obviously the feeling of belonging was embedded in a traditional system of organization structured around tribal relationships, an identifiable ethic linked to a socio-political organization and to symbolic figures represented by confraternities and local saints. References to a larger Algerian or Maghrebian community were unknown. Moreover, it was only in the twentieth Century that the language and pre-Islamic Berber history became essential references to the Berber sense of belonging, due in a part to impact of works by French scholars in history, linguistic and ethnography (Chaker 18).

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[8] Several villages form a tribe and several tribes form a confederation, which only lasts the time of a conflict. See Ouerdane.

The Kabyle sense of belonging and its partial basis in their social and judicial organization was discussed and described in great details by the French on their arrival in Kabylia. In his book written for French magistrates in Kabylia, George Henri Bousquet explains how a group of "tiny republics" of hundreds of people thwart the implementation of French administrative organization. He writes:

> [...] *notre propre organisation administrative n'ayant fait que se plaquer, souvent artificiellement, sur ce qui existait, sans réussir à le faire disparaître.* (32)
>
> our own administrative organization was artificially tacked onto the existing one, without succeeding to make it disappear.

As far as the judicial organization is concerned, Bousquet distinguishes two types of legal system: the old indigenous one preexisting the conquest and French justice, the only legal and official one. In spite of the total illegitimacy of the first one, according to French law, it is the one prevailing in actuality.

> [...] *il n'est pratiquement pas une affaire (civile) qui soit portée directement devant nos juges; mais il faut insister encore sur ce point: "en Kabylie, presque tous les procès se terminent par transactions" (H.L.) et lorsque nos juges sont saisis d'une affaire, c'est seulement lorsque toute une série de tentatives, d'"arrangements" ont échoué: intervention de parents, de notables, de marabouts, intervention de la djemaa enfin; on ne peut même pas dire que la justice française soit considérée comme une instance supérieure, mais seulement comme une instance parallèle aux précédentes* [...] (37)
>
> there is almost no civil case that is presented to our judges ; but I insist on this point: "in Kabylia, almost all trials are treated through transactions" (H.L.) and

> when our judges are presented with a case, it is only when all other possibilities have failed: the intervention of parents, leading citizens, marabous, and finally the djemaa; we cannot even say that French justice is considered as a superior instance, but only as an instance that is equivalent to those that came before it.

Thus, the appeal to the French justice is extremely rare and always a last resort. Bousquet recounts the testimony of a lawyer who affirmed that during the two decades he was settled in a village, no one ever called on the French justice to settle an issue, while officially there were only French judges in Kabylia. This underlines the enduring influence of the "*tajma<at*" (the village assembly), to settle all disputes. Bourdieu, for his part, believes that this assembly is closer to a family reunion than to a tribunal. He writes:

> *Plutôt qu'un tribunal, au sens d'organisme spécialisé, chargé de prononcer des décisions conformément à un système de normes juridiques rationnelles et explicites, l'assemblée du clan ou du village est en fait un conseil d'arbitrage ou même un conseil de famille. L'opinion collective est la loi, le tribunal et l'agent d'exécution de la sanction.* (Bourdieu 58)
>
> Rather than a tribunal, in the sense of a specialized organism, entitled to make decisions according to a system of rational and explicit legal norms, the village or clan assembly is an arbitrator council or even a family reunion. The collective opinion is the law, the tribunal, and the agent executing the sanction.

Unlike the tribunal where the law is the product of an assigned body that is imposed on individuals from the top, the particularity of "*tajma<at*" is that it articulates a collective opinion. These remarks on the judicial organization of the Kabyles show the importance and the reliance on the small organization and the community ties. After all the very term

"Kabyle" comes from the Arabic "*Kabail*" (plural of Kabila), which means tribe. As for larger structures, such as confederations, they are created at the time of a given conflict and are then dissolved.

The structure of the tribes is quite significant and even going back to the French invasion of the country (1830); they allowed the strongest resistance against the invaders. For instance, the Kabyles were able to stop the French landing in Begayet (Bougie) in 1830, but this resistance is based on exclusive regional loyalty. Historian René Gallissot speaks of "regional patriotism":

> *Cette défense des tribus, en leur pays même, fait écho a toutes les anciennes révoltes qui refusaient l'envahisseur; l'on retrouve cette passion de l'indépendance régionale qui rejette l'intrusion étrangère; les réflexes sont d'autant plus vifs que l'ennemi fait peur par ses actions destructrices et qu'il semble annoncer le vol des terres.* (Gallissot 148)
>
> This defense of tribes, in their very country, echoes all the ancient revolts which refused the invader; one can recognize this passion of regional independence which rejects foreign intrusion; the reactions are even more violent since the enemy through his destructive actions terrifies the people and seems to announce the stealing of the land.

Indeed, this strong movement of defense, which could be perceived as a nascent national sentiment, merely reflects a defensive reaction that exists in all rural and mountainous regions, especially in the Mediterranean world (see Gallissot). Indeed the notion of Algeria as a nation did not exist before the French invasion. It is rather in the context of the resistance against the invaders that a glimpse of Algerian nationalism appeared with

the failed attempt by Abd el-Kader (1839-1847) to create a political unity based on an opposition to the invader under a religious banner.

The nation, the war and exile:

Nationalism amongst Kabyles developed out of previous failed insurrections, the tribal organization, and as discussed earlier in this chapter, the influence of immigration. These factors propelled them at the forefront of the war of liberation. For instance, the very unification of the FLN (the national liberation front) took place in Kabylia. Historian M. Harbi explains that in 1954-1956, the FLN was a scattered movement without unity. It is in 1956 that it unified around Kabylia, the stronger pole then, which controlled the region of Algiers and part of the South (Harbi 34). Indeed the Soummam Congress, the only one in the FLN's history, produced among other elements, a political platform, drafted by Amar Ouzegane and reflecting Abane Ramdane's ideas.

While restating themes from the proclamation of November 1st, 1954 (such as the demand for unconditional national independence), some new aspects appear in this political program, such as the recourse to a Marxist language (assimilating the process of national liberation to a popular revolution) and the stress on secularism revealed by the passages discussing the future of the European minority and the study of alliances in France. Obviously this new tone bore the stamp of the Kabyle leaders:

> *Sans doute faut-il voir là l'influence des Kabyles qui ont présidé à la rédaction du texte et le souci de couper court à l'accusation de fanatisme religieux complaisamment développée par le gouvernement français à l'encontre du FLN.* (Droz 119).

> One could detect here the influence of the Kabyles who presided to the draft of the text and their concern to put an end to the accusation of religious fanaticism developed by the French government against the FLN.

Taking into consideration the French criticism of the FLN, the presence of a European minority in Algeria, and the existence of and an alliance with a potential pro-independence front in France testify to the maturity of the project which advocates armed struggle while giving pre-eminence to political discernment.

Another innovative facet of the platform is the principle of "collegiality" which precludes the development of personal power (as experienced with Messali Hadj) and all kinds of excessive personalization within the FLN (Droz/Lever). This platform which also states the precedence of the domestic over the external struggle, is a historic benchmark in the revolution which did not go undisputed: Ben Bella, one of the leaders of the FLN who was abroad during the congress, decided to write a response to the minutes of the Congress, which, affirms historian Benjamin Stora, repeats word for word the themes of the leadership of the PPA-MTLD against "the Berberists" of 1949 (61-2). The response underlines the Congress's "non-representative" character (some regions did not attend) and attacks "the questioning, once again, of the Islamic character of our future political institutions," thereby demonstrating according to Stora "his rejection of the secularism of the state, and his refusal to make a place for the European minority."

Clearly, the ideals of solidarity, inclusion of minorities and secularism evoked in this platform emerged from politicized intellectuals who in turn aroused great suspicion. After the independence, the Algerian Constitution trampled their ideals.[9]

The Kabyle experience with nationalism was short-lived and disappointing. Kabyles endorsed the idea of nationalism when it had the potential to create a fairer society and to include the different components of the Algerian community into a new Algerian nation. But since independence, the distrust of the notion of nation-state and what it represents has never been stronger than in Kabylia. Little by little an acute awareness of the use of past nationalism by the party that represents it (FLN) for propaganda, developed and turned into a strong resistance to the regime.

Thus, Kabylia continued to be a center of challenge to the successive Algerian governments and their backward policies (for example, against women in the "Code de la famille" and against the freedom of the press). Kabylia actually became the stronghold for democracy, plurality and the freedom of expression. It is important to emphasize that it is only within this framework –that of the struggle for democracy and plurality-- that the dismissal of Kabyle language, culture and history is evoked. These aspects belong to the Algerian heritage and should be acknowledged and promoted. Thus the Kabyle region has always envisioned the plight of the Kabyle people as one among many other issues that are to be tackled and never as an exclusive Kabyle-oriented ethnocentric fight—as the government has tried to portray it to discredit the movement and its legitimacy. Carrying the torch of rebellion:

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[9] The Algerian constitution states in Article 2 that Islam is the state's religion and in Article 3 that Arabic is the national and official language.

A new movement has coalesced in the past three years after the bloody "Black Spring" that started in April 18, 2001.[10] The whole Kabylia region was in the streets, protesting against the Algerian regime, denouncing its lack of respect for basic human rights, the extortions and abuses the gendarmes were responsible for, and demanding democracy, freedom of speech, and social justice. The response of the government was dreadful.[11]

Still marches continued, gathering hundreds of thousands of people in Kabylia (Tizi-Ouzou) and culminating with the march of June 14th in Algiers drawing 2 million people. This event was also violently repressed. The mobilization continued for months on end. On May 22nd, the French newspaper *Le Monde* published an article titled "*La Kabylie dit la colère de l'Algérie*" (Kabylia expresses the Algerian anger):

> *La revendication pour l'officialisation de la langue Tamazight n'a pas disparu, mais elle s'insère dans le combat général pour les libertés et la démocratie. La Kabylie ne veut pas se particulariser, elle se veut plutôt l'avant-garde du combat pour la démocratie et les libertés.*[12]

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[10] That day 18 year old Massinissa was taken to the police station in Aït Douala (Kabylia) and was killed by policemen while in custody. This sparked peaceful demonstrations demanding justice, which were answered by violence. When the news reached other parts of Kabylia, more towns and villages took to the streets. Soon riots took place all over Kabylia.

[11] Real bullets and explosive bullets were used against the unarmed demonstrators, killing a hundred unarmed youths, mostly high school students and children, and thousands were injured and tortured, while a hundred went missing. There were reports of theft and violations of residence, and all kinds of humiliations perpetrated by the gendarmes.

[12] *Le Monde*. 22.05.01

> The claim for the Tamazight language to become official has not disappeared but it is included in a general struggle for freedoms and democracy. Kabylia does not want to be a specific issue; rather it wants to be at the forefront of the fight for democracy and other freedoms.

The movement instead of weakening and fading became stronger and more organized. The marches and riots were followed by more marches, strikes, hunger strikes, and the drafting of a platform of claims (*La plateforme d"El-kseur*). Finally, to the surprise of many observers, one could witness the resurgence of the traditional "*tajma<at*" (village committee). While the party-state, after the independence, never succeeded in imposing its cells in the region, these committees survived, taking charge of public projects given the blatant absence of the state in these domains (electrification, water adduction, road construction, etc). Their resurgence gave a boost to the movement and all over Kabylia, committees were constituted while neighborhood committees were created in cities. Refusing all ties to political parties to be totally autonomous and prevent any recuperation, they took the direction of the protest movement and were able to channel the anger of the youths. A coordination of these committees emerged for a more efficient organization. The movement, structured and pacific, is named "*Mouvement Citoyen*" (Citizen's Movement) conveying ideals of freedom and justice.

Even today the movement has not weakened and still demands justice for those assassinated and the satisfaction of the claims of the platform. In May 30, 2002, parliamentary elections were held in spite of the climate of tension and distrust and the call to boycott by Kabylia. These elections, which legitimize the government, were boycotted by 99% of the voters in Kabylia, but the national assembly was still elected,

depriving a whole segment of the population of representation. Heads of committees were imprisoned and some went on a hunger strike for weeks until January 2003. But the pacific movement continues.

Exiles played their role too. In January 2000, the first Berber TV (Berber Radio-TV) was created in Paris. Free and independent, it played an important role in broadcasting the events of Kabylia with substantial coverage and accuracy. The station became a pole of information, exchange and relief for the community on both sides of the Mediterranean. According to a sample survey made in Tizi-Ouzou (Kabylia) during the Black Spring events (*Izuran* 14) 85 % of the people interrogated declared to regularly follow the radio programs of BRTV, 60% consecrate an average of 2 to 4 hours daily. Moreover, major demonstrations also took place in several cities in France to support the burgeoning civil movement for democracy.

In conclusion, one could extrapolate from these historical events, an interesting phenomenon based on the coincidence of a strongly structured ethnic minority, historical and political circumstances allied to a boost from the exile community, all of which produced a paradigm of resistance in a particular region for the sake of a whole country. Exile and the encounter with the Other, paved the way to the process of decolonization, nationalism and finally uncovered the breach between the people and their nation after independence.

Historically exile was equated with rupture and pain, but with this review of the history of the Kabyles we see that exile is understood as a very different, if not strangely affirmative experience. First, many individuals coming from the same place even when they form a community in the country that hosts them can share the condition of exile.

Thus, the term exile is interchangeable with that of immigrant, a term whose function was to distinguish the individual from the masses and the dignified foreigner from those of modest condition and origin. The second point is that Kabyles illustrate through their history that exile can be a space of life, one that can be inhabited, a permanent "in-between" space. This space is not just identifiable as the foreign place vs. home but as the very in-between-ness existing between the notions of "home," which little by little loses its homeliness, and "abroad" which also loses its foreignness. This space has become a cultural, artistic, and political space. Indeed, the specificity of the Kabyles resides in the fact that they are, to a certain extent, actual products of exile, their identity, their culture, their survival are linked to exile, and so far, they have used their ubiquity to its utmost potentials in terms of resistance and resilience. Exile might finally be the "internal vice" that Mammeri once suggested must be preventing Kabyles from ever uniting to form a nation or a race.

Chapter 3: Berber Exile Writing: Francophone, "Beur," and Amazigh literature

> *C'est un autre qui parle a ma place, ce traducteur en moi vivant comme un double interieur toujours present, et qui me dicte des mots et des phrases d'emprunt*[13]... (Jean Amrouche)

Literary production by Berbers as Berber is difficult to identify for throughout history Berbers have always preferred to use other languages for literary expression. In North Africa, Berber writers, poets and historians wrote in Greek, Latin, and Arabic, i.e. the languages of the successive invaders. Since the beginning of the last century, it has been Berbers' turn to be in motion, not as colonizers but as immigrants to the colonizers metropole. However, exile did not change their tendency to use another language: abroad, Berbers, and more specifically Kabyles, use the language of the host country, namely French. Concerning literary production—writing traditional literature—exile once again proves to be a crucial factor of development and creation.

But we must consider again that Berber exile started long before the actual departure for France. With the French conquest, entire villages were destroyed and many families were displaced, their lives shattered forever. Later, the insurrection of 1871 threw many young men into exile (Bone, Skikda, Algiers and even Tunis). The famous poet Si Muhand U Mhend who lost everything after the insurrection became a bard and a wanderer. His poetry testifies to the conquest's impact on people's life and to exile, a condition that is almost ancillary to the conquest. Thus:

Hatiten akw di Leblida

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[13] Another is speaking in my place, this translator in me living like an inner double always present, dictates borrowed words and sentences...(Amrouche)

Tarrawt l-l&erba

Di zznaqi la ṭthewwisen

Our youth is all there, in Blida

The children of exile

Wandering aimlessly in the streets

And again in the following passage:

Nfi& d &er tmurt l-l&erba

M'a atrum a ttelba,

Laaqul isenteqqiden

I was an exile in a foreign country

Won't you cry for me devout men

You who comprehend all things (Si Mohand U Mhend)

But if we exclude the transcription of oral literature, like that of Si Mohand U Mhend, we will have to wait for the advent of francophone literature—and so Francophone novelists and poets—to better grasp the inner world or consciousness of a Kabyle writer. Francophone literature launched Berber writing, at least since the French presence in North Africa and the same could be said of Beur literature, which is in turn the direct cultural production of exiles who settled in France. And finally, the latest development is that of a literature written in the Kabyle language, Tamazight. The point of this chapter is to discuss the influence of exile in literature written by Berbers and its development. I argue that the different forms of literature that Berbers have written over the last century (Francophone, Beur and Amazigh) are all linked to exile in a more or less significant way. The very birth of francophone literature is linked to the French presence in North

Africa. Some predicted that because of its concurrent emergence with the nationalist movement, this literature was destined to dry up with independence; instead francophone literature thrives up to this day. Beur literature initially emerged as a vibrant testimony from a segment of the French population of mainly Algerian heritage and finally Amazigh literature is the result of decades of cultural activity and awareness, where immigration played a major role.

The Origin of Francophone literature: The Amrouche Family

> *Ils m'ont arraché au sol de mes pères*
> *La moitié des racines, avec moi emportées*
> *Pleurent depuis mon enfance*
> *Et les autres, seules jusqu'au Jugement*
> *Et l'autre moitié, silencieusement s'insinue*
> *Dans la Terre*
> *Et pleure aussi celles qui sont dévorées de lumière.*
> [They dug me out from the land of my fathers
> Half of my roots with me pulled out
> Weep since my childhood
> And the others, lonesome until Judgment day
> And the other half, silently creep
> Into the Earth
> And also weep for those that light devours.] (Jean El-Mouhoub Amrouche 1934)

Poetry has, true to form, preceded fiction and Jean-El Mouhoub Amrouche was the first Francophone poet. He published *Cendres* (1934), the first collection of poetry, followed by *Étoile secrète* (1937) and *Chants berbères de Kabylie* (1939). The titles of the fragments in the collection *Cendres* (ashes) reveal the complex world the poet inhabits. Consider these titles: "Brisures" (splits), "Feuilles tombées" (fallen leaves), "Ombres" (shades) and "Chants du pays perdu," (chants of the lost country), which reveal a world of pain and suffering, where the articulation of an internal split conveys the difficulty to exist. Appropriately one of the poems is entitled "Prière pour être

débarrassé de moi-même" (Prayer to be rid of myself). Indeed the life, the career and the particular social, religious and cultural background of Jean El-Mouhoub Amrouche[14] made him a complex intellectual tormented by the many new questions of the time, especially that of identity. As Tassadit Yacine declares in her study on Algerian intellectuals, Amrouche is a precursor, the first who paved the way to the introduction of an African or mixed (*métisse*) culture in the French expression during a period when the cultural scene did not admit Africans (205). Indeed, Amrouche is a particular voice and as he describes himself, a strange character, who is Christian and French through language but who spent his childhood in the Islamic world and received his values from a world that existed before Christianity and before Islam.[15] This particular position gives rise to moments of extreme despair, anguish, and nostalgia, feelings that find expression in poetry.

The Amrouche family is exceptional for at least two reasons. First, they left Kabylia for Tunisia very early in the century (1908), an experience that precipitated their encounter with a sense of exile that was deeply felt by all the members of the family

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[14] Born in 1906 in Kabylia to a poor Christian family, Amrouche was 10 when his family moved to Tunis. He then went to France (1925-1928) to attend the *Ecole normale supérieure de Saint-Cloud.* He became a poet, a critic, a journalist, and a politician of sorts. He animated the *Revue littéraire française de Tunisie* from 1930 to 1942, became the literary editor of the publishing house Charlot and editor of the review *L'Arche.* He worked at the ORTF (French radio-TV) and was a journalist at the radio suisse-normande. He conceived a new way to render literature more accessible by having long radio interviews with the well-known writers of the time such as Gide, Mauriac, Claudel, Ungaretti, and Giono. He also wrote articles for *Le Monde*, *L'Observateur* and *Le Figaro.* Finally, he was also one of De Gaulle's advisors and an active militant for the FLN. (Yacine)

[15] *Journal*, 1953. (Yacine 224)

though with different outcomes. For instance, to alleviate the distress of exile, the mother[16] sang Kabyle traditional songs to herself and her children and thus deeply influencing both Taos and Jean. Jean became a poet while Taos wrote novels and sang traditional songs in many cities in Europe and North Africa, providing them with a larger audience. Secondly, the family's contribution to Francophone literature and to the recognition and development of Berber culture (poetry, oral literature and songs) is immense.

As far as written poetry is concerned, it expresses the fundamental break between communitarian life and the more modern individual one, a condition often triggered by exile. Generally the writing process illustrates the movement from the social (a public space within the private) to the individual space (a private space within the public space.) Writing like reading is an individual activity, a sign of an irrevocable fissure in the social mode of life. In his introduction to *Chants berbères de Kabylie*, Jean Amrouche declares "*en donnant ces chants berbères au public j'ai le sentiment de livrer un trésor privé, de me dessaisir d'un bien de famille*" (by giving these Berbers songs to the public, I have the feeling that I am giving away a private treasure, a family possession) (Jean Amrouche 25). The reason why writing feels like surrendering a private treasure is twofold. The poems are closely connected to his mother, as Mammeri puts it, Jean Amrouche sucked

[16] In *My Life Story*, Fadhma Aïth Mensour Amrouche's 1946 autobiography, she writes: "In spite of the forty years I have spent in Tunisia, in spite of my basically French education, never have I been able to become a close friend of any French people, nor of Arabs. I remain for ever the eternal exile, the woman who has never felt at home anywhere." (159)

the verses with his mother's milk[17] and also the passage from the oral to the written form—never mind the inevitable inadequacy of translation—is felt to be a renunciation, a little death, a necessary private concession to the public domain in order to prevent the extinction of these poems that Amrouche thought was imminent.[18]

Exile for Amrouche becomes a natural condition that is similar to our severance from an original unity. We catch a glimpse of this condition when reminiscing about our lost unity with the mother and/or the earth. It is a condition that the poet is able to feel more intensely than others and thus renders in language (Jean Amrouche 36). He writes,

> [..] *La grande douleur de l'homme est d'être – et d'être séparé. Nous portons en nous avec la joie d'être vivants, de nous sentir animalement existants, l'amer regret du non-être. La mère qui nous a nourris de sa chair, la terre maternelle qui nous recevra, sont les corps qui nous rattachent au non-être ou si l'on veut à l'origine ineffable, au Tout dont nous nous sentons cruellement séparés. Ainsi l'exil et l'absence ne sont que les manifestations dans le temps d'un exil qui les transcende, d'un exil métaphysique. Par delà le pays natal, par delà la mère terrestre, il faut percevoir l'ombre faiblement rayonnante du Paradis perdu, et l'Unité originelle.* (Jean Amrouche 35-36)

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[17] Preface by Mouloud Mammeri to *Chants berbères de Kabylie.*

[18] *Il fallait transcrire et traduire d'urgence ces chants, non seulement parce que leur survie tient au souffle de ma mère, mais aussi parce que le pays dont il portent l'âme est frappé à mort.* [One had to urgently transcribe and translate these songs not only because their survival only hold to my mother's breath but also because the country of which they carry the soul is beaten to death] (Jean Amrouche 63).

> The great pain of mankind is to be—and to be separated. Within us, we carry both the joy to be alive and to feel that we exist in our animal nature, and the bitter regret of non-being. The mother who has nourished us with her flesh, the maternal earth which will receive us, are the bodies that link us to the non-being or to the ineffable origin, to the Whole that we feel cruelly separated from. Thus exile and absence are only the manifestations in the time of an exile that transcends them, a metaphysical exile. Beyond the native country, beyond the terrestrial mother, one perceives the delicate radiant shadow of the lost Paradise and the original Unity.

The pain described above is such that human experience of separation is only a "taste" of an original, more absolute and profound distress is of the same nature as the pain Amrouche carries within. His dual background created an internal split which he tried to reunite all his life. He was the embodiment of the division between Algeria and France, his body the territory on which the battle was being fought. The excruciating pain he felt could only find solace in death, which transcends all distinctions, all contradictions:[19]

> *Je suis le pont, l'arche qui fait communiquer deux mondes mais sur lequel on marche et que l'on piétine, que l'on foule. Je le resterai jusqu'à la fin des fins. C'est mon destin.* (cit. Yacine 205)
>
> I am the bridge, the arch between two worlds but on which one walks and steps and tramples down. I will remain that until the end. It is my destiny.

In spite of being Christian and a French citizen with a French education, in the eyes of many Amrouche remained a colonized, a native, who was taught by the colonizer

[19] His untimely death in April 1962, less than 3 months before the independence, might have been just that: an escape from this torment.

to write and think. Jean Amrouche realized the extent of this reality after a talk he gave during a conference in Paris in 1956, the content of which was reported by newspapers in Algiers.[20] As a consequence, he was fired from the ORTF, many of his literary friends let him down, and even his French in-laws decided, as Yacine puts it, to repudiate him.[21] But Jean Amrouche used the position he acquired thanks to his French "formation" and background to bring into the open, publicly, the perspective of the colonized, of which he had a deep understanding.

The Early Francophone Novel: Taos Amrouche and Mouloud Feraoun

A Berber woman wrote the first North African novel in French. Written in 1935 and published in 1947, *Jacinthe noire* is Taos Amrouche's first novel. The protagonist of the novel, the author's alter ego, is a young Tunisian woman named Reine who arrives in a boarding school in Paris. This narrative recounts Taos Amrouche's own devastating experience in a Parisian school for a year. The novel describes Reine's liveliness and uniqueness when she first arrives and the slow rejection she suffers from which culminates in her expulsion from the school for incompatibility. The novel opens with the following lines:

> *Je l'ai rencontrée au milieu d'autres, et tout d'abord mes yeux ne l'ont pas devinée. Puis, une manière de rire brutale, des gestes nerveux et exubérants l'ont*

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[20] It was a reunion of intellectuals against the continuation of the war in Algeria. (Yacine 217).

[21] In a letter to Jean, they write: "we consider that from now on, you are not part of our family anymore. Rest assured of our deepest contempt." (Yacine 217)

isolée parmi les autres. Alors j'ai vu ses yeux noirs, étranges, offerts et insondables. Il me fallait aller vers elle.(9)

A sense of foreignness and difference dominate this passage. Moreover, instead of using the first person pronoun "I" to recount Reine's story, Taos Amrouche, in a very interesting slippage, endows another boarder with the narrative voice. Thus, instead of being the narrator of her story, Reine is the object of Marie-Thérèse's narration and perspective. This displacement illustrates the importance of the other in the elaboration of oneself but more importantly underlines the desire to create a space where exchange can take place. The other is offered the narrative voice—even if it approves and almost worships its object—and in exchange Reine expects recognition and acknowledgement, which fails since the school expects her total submission. Reine finally expresses this communication breakdown, saying: *« Vous m'avez renvoyée sans me comprendre ni me connaître »* (269).

Jacinthe noire, a semi-autobiographical account, already introduces the intricacies of communication and the difficult path towards the expression of the self, embedded as it is in the recognition of the other. The communication fails and Reine returns to Tunis, but Taos Amrouche takes up the challenge again in other novels. Unlike the male novelists of her generation, Taos Amrouche's fictional work focuses exclusively on the extraordinary difficulty to attain a satisfactory communication with the other. Its constant failure entails a profound questioning of the self, which at times, turns into despair. In these moments, Taos Amrouche blames her "hybridity" and especially its Western component:

> *Ignorante, poussant au gré du souffle rude de nos montagnes, mon destin eut été celui d'une fille de notre tribu, issue d'une orgueilleuse famille: ni Racine ni Mozart ne m'eussent manqué.* (Solitude 227)

Jacinthe noire the first attempt to expose one's desire (and failure) to enter into communication with and be recognized by the other is closely followed by Mouloud Feraoun's similar attempt where he strives to present himself and his world to the other.

The desire to explicate and introduce one's culture or to present the perspective of the dominated after having had access to the dominant culture and perspective is an interesting exercise in the sense that it always presupposes that the speaker keeps his listeners or readers' cultural frame of reference in mind and that introducing one's society starts with looking at it from the very perspective that one wants to discard. This is the case of Mouloud Feraoun,[22] who is considered the first male francophone novelist. In *Le fils du pauvre,* (1950) a partly autobiographical novel, he describes the everyday life in Kabylia seen through the eyes of a young boy named Fouroulou, an anagram for the author's name. These are the first lines of the novel:

> *Le touriste qui ose pénétrer au coeur de la Kabylia admire par conviction ou par devoir des sites qu'il trouve merveilleux [...] cependant nous imaginons très bien l'impression insignifiante que laisse sur le visiteur le plus complaisant la vue de nos pauvres villages.* (12)

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[22] Mouloud Feraoun was born in 1913 in Kabylia in a very poor family. He received a fellowship to go to school and became a teacher and then a school principal in Kabylia and Algiers. He was assassinated in March 1962 by the O.A.S, a French terrorist underground organization in Algeria that was against the Algerian independence.

> The tourist who dares to enter in the heart of Kabylia, out of conviction or out of duty, admires sites that he finds marvelous [...] however we can very well imagine the insignificant impression that the view of our poor villages leaves on the most charitable visitor.

The text opens with the flawed perception of the tourist, which the narrator intends to rectify with an insider's testimony.[23] Thus, in the prologue, the narrator—who appears to have been inspired by Montaigne and Rousseau-- has set himself to write from within the culture. And so, adapting the famous line by Montaigne, Feraoun writes:

> *Loin de sa pensée de se comparer à des génies; il comptait seulement leur emprunter l'idée, "la sotte idée" de se peindre.* (Fils 10).
>
> Far from the thought of comparing himself to geniuses, he only wanted to borrow from them the idea, 'the foolish idea' of painting oneself.

The project of "painting oneself" with the intense introspection that Montaigne's phrase suggests seems to be fused with the tourist's twisted perception which is omnipresent during the narrator's exercise to present a fairer picture of his society. Thus, no matter how perceptive and acute the exercise, it is bound to be the result of the confrontation with the gaze of the other.

One might argue that while Feraoun was not an exile as such, he experienced it nonetheless, like the majority of the Kabyles, through his interaction with French or with

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[23] In *L'Anniversaire*, Feraoun explains the flourishing of Algerian literature written in French through the imperious need to testify in order to dissipate misunderstandings and withdraw from peaceful consciences the excuse of ignorance. (56)

the French colonial system, as well as through the stories exiles would bring back from France. How else could Feraoun write

> *« Hé, va dans ton pays raton!" Alors j'ai compris que j'avais un pays et qu'en dehors de ce pays je ne serai jamais qu'un étranger.* (Les chemins qui montent)
>
> "Go back to your country!" And then I understood that I had a country and that outside of it I will only be a foreigner.

Exile is also felt through the language that one uses without it being one's own. The language Feraoun uses to claim the humanity of his compatriots is the very language of the colonizer who denies them this simple truth.

Being a French educated Kabyle creates an inner tension that entails complex and very unsettling questions. Feraoun occupies a third space where one is neither one nor the other or is both at the same time, a situation similar to that of the exile. Feraoun claims this third, hybrid space as his and uses his position as an intellectual to make this claim heard. He also construes his position as the common position of Algerian intellectuals by declaring:

> *Nous sommes des intellectuels issus d'un monde à part et nous possédons la culture française. Notre paradoxe—ou notre drame, comme l'on dit communément—est fort compréhensible. Attachés par toutes les fibres de notre âme à une société figée, ignorante et misérable, en marge du siècle nouveau, nous avons la claire conscience de ce qui nous manque et le devoir de la réclamer.* [...] *En réalité, nous ne nous trouvons pas "entre deux chaises" mais bel et bien sur la notre.* [...]. (L'Anniversaire 18)

> We are intellectuals from a different world and we possess a French culture. Our paradox—or our drama, as we call it—is quite comprehensible. Tied by all the fibers of our soul to a society that is rigid, ignorant and miserable, on the margin of a new century, we have a clear conscience of what we lack and the duty to claim it. [...] In reality, we are not sitting « between two chairs » but we are sitting on our very own. [...]

Jean Amrouche, Taos Amrouche and Mouloud Feraoun were the first francophone writers[24] and the three were Kabyles and educated in French. Their intricate relationship to France and the French was the object of many of their writings but the internal split between their native background and their acquired culture never undermined their struggle at the side of the dominated.

The next two earliest Algerian writers in French are Mouloud Mammeri, another Kabyle and Mohammed Dib, the first Arabophone Algerian writer in French. They both published their first novel in 1952. Mouloud Mammeri[25] published *La Colline oubliée* (1952) *Le Sommeil du juste* (1955) and *L'Opium et le bâton* (1965), a trilogy that retraces the historical and social conditions from World War II to the Algerian war. These novels

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[24] They are the first francophone writers in North Africa. In the Middle East, the Lebanese playwright and poet Checri Ghanem published his first drama *Antar* in 1910 and the Egyptian novelist Out-el-Koutoub wrote her first novel *Harem* in 1937.

[25] Mouloud Mammeri was born in 1917 in Kabylia. Educated in Kabylia, Algiers and then Paris, he becomes an officer in the French Army during World War II, and then a professor in Algiers. He wrote for the Algerian cause and pursued by the French paratroopers, he found refuge in Morocco (1957-1962). After the war, he is vice-president of the Union of the Arab writers and president of the Union of the Algerian writers. From 1969 to 1981, he was the director of the C.R.A.P.E (center of anthropologic, prehistoric and ethnographic researches) in France.

reveal the contradictions of acculturation whereby the traditions and its value system are held dearly while ideas of freedom lured by the West have an irresistible power of attraction.

Soon, Francophone literature included other reflections and experiences but the experience of the first writers is symbolic of a confrontation between the one and the Other and most sorely of the conflict within. The first Kabyle writers, because of their socio-economical conditions and their acculturation, have been very articulate about this split and later Kabyle writers continued to explore this issue from different angles. We can cite Malek Ouary, Mourad Bourbourne, Tahar Djaout, Nabile Farès, and for Morocco, Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine and Driss Chraïbi. As for women we can cite Yamina Mechakra,[26] Assia Djebar, without forgetting the first francophone writer Taos Amrouche.[27]

It is undeniable that as far as francophone literature is concerned, Berbers have provided it with a voice that still resonates today. Yet, unless based on a particular literary strategy (Djebar), the Berber or Kabyle element is rarely, if ever, the focus of their novels. Even when Feraoun describes life in Kabyle villages, it is due to his intimate knowledge of it, which he wants to share with his readers in an attempt to provide them with an insider's perspective. Usually Kabyle novelists tackle political, social, and

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[26] It was to Yamina Mechakra that Kateb Yacine directed his famous comment: *"Dans notre pays, une femme qui écrit vaut son pesant de poudre!"* [In our country, a woman who writes is worth a barrel of gunpowder]. (see Kateb's preface to her first novel *La Grotte éclatée.*) The comment became popular and has since been applied, and sometimes inappropriately, to qualify women's writing.

[27] Her first novel *Jacinthe noire* (1947) was presented as the first volume of a collection entitled *Moissons de l'exil.* (Exile's Harvests).

literary issues of their time and are concerned with, articulating ideas and emotions that are personal, national, and sometimes collective in a broad sense, but never framed by an exclusive Berber concern.

The discreet almost invisible Kabyle presence combined with the omnipresence of the other in one's experience of oneself is an essential part of francophone literature, especially the early texts, written by Kabyles. However, this interesting aspect about Berber writings has been used to totally dismiss their voice and their specificity, thereby undermining some of the issues and complexities they articulate in their work. Lumped together with Arab writers becomes a way to deny any form of specificity, as it is the case in some anthologies.[28]

Beur literature

> *-Exact, Madame, vous ne pouviez pas mieux dire. Nous sommes comme le Canada Dry. Nous avons des noms d'Arabes, nous sommes aussi bronzés que des Arabes, mais nous ne sommes plus vraiment des Arabes!*[29]

As discussed earlier, Kabyle immigration was the earliest in all of North Africa. In a short guide to Beur literature, Alec G. Hargreaves presents a short biography of the most

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[28] For example, the anthology entitled *Littératures francophones du Monde Arabe* plays down the Berber origin of some authors, if it does not dismiss it altogether. In the introduction, there is not any mention of the existence of Berbers, even when referring to the 1871 insurrection. One of the main arguments discussed is that Francophone writers are caught between two languages (French and Arabic) without acknowledging the mere existence of another language in the whole region of North Africa.

[29] Exactly, Madam, you couldn't put it in a better way. We are like Canada Dry. We do have Arab names, we are as dark as Arabs, but we are not really Arabs any longer. (Tadjer 15)

well known Beur authors, more than half of whom are of Kabyle origin.[30] Also, in a footnote to a pioneer study devoted to this literature,[31] Hargreaves refers to a number of commentators who have suggested that the term may have been a contraction of "Berbères d'Europe" (Berbers of Europe), a hypothesis that was soon abandoned for lack of evidence. But Hargreaves concedes that Radio Beur created in 1981 (the first medium to use the term in the public sphere), was founded by Nacer Kettane, (the president of the radio station), a Berber like most of the other founding members.

The French dictionary *Petit Robert* dates the term *Beur* to 1980 and gives the following definition: "a young Maghrebian born in France to immigrant parents." The term Maghrebian suggests that all children of immigrants from the Maghreb (i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) are called *Beur*. Still, the term *Beur* more often than not is used for children of Algerian descent. The term, used in the 1970s by children of immigrants to refer to themselves, replaces through a set of deformations the word "*Arabe*," which has strong negative connotations.

Thus, Beur literature is the corpus written by descendants of immigrants born in France. In his study about this literature, Alec G. Hargreaves makes several essential points about the socio-economic and historical conditions of the emergence of this literature. Thus, published Beur writers are without exception of Algerian descent. He adds,

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[30] See Alec G. Hargreaves. *La Littérature Beur, Un guide bio-bibliographique.*

[31] Hargreaves, Alec. *Voices from the North African Immigrant Community in France.*

> The families of almost all these authors have their origins in rural areas, and the majority are from Kabylia, which has been the single most important region for Algerian emigration in general. (14)

Another interesting characteristic of Beur writers are the conditions under which they grew up which give an idiosyncratic cachet to their narratives. Their parents, illiterate for the most part, laboriously worked in difficult and dangerous low paid jobs to provide for their (usually) large families, living in some cases in shantytowns, (especially in the 50s and 60s as it was the case for the now famous writer Azouz Begag), or more generally in run down housing projects, outside big cities (the banlieue). This is a significant feature that will be the object of a later discussion on the capacity of this fiction for subversion and resistance.[32] Thus, for this population the contact with French society is pretty much inexistent if it were not for the learning space that school provides which eventually creates a gap between the literate children and their parents. School is also the place where Beur writers (and their characters) have experienced racism along with what Algeria means for teachers, staff, and social workers as well as for other children.

Under such conditions, the rate of school dropouts was inevitably high but some were able to cope, struggle, and write personal narratives, that is, their stories. Indeed, most Beur fiction is either autobiographical or semi-autobiographical. They strive to provide the outside world (French society) with an internal or personal and certainly more

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[32] I would argue that Nina Bouraoui's exclusion from Alec G. Hargreaves's guide to Beur writers is more legitimate because of her socio-economic background (daughter of a high official of the Bank of Algeria) than for her personal itinerary (born in France and lived in Algeria till age 14). The same holds true for Hargreaves' remark on Tahar Ben Jelloun's refusal to call his daughter "Beur" while he is an immigrant from Moroccan.

humane narrative that also engages media's stereotypes and misrepresentations. It is important to note that the emergence of this literature coinceded with the movement for civil rights which culminated in "La marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme" more known as "La marche des Beurs" which took place in 1983 across the length of France (to claim equality and fight racism). One might argue that Beur literature is both the product of political and social realities.[33] Thus, its capacity for subversion is highly praised. Because of the often-autobiographical nature of these narratives, they are portrayed as serving to empower the writers and the immigrant community by producing a counter-discourse to the one generated by voices of authority especially within the media.

This view should be moderated though. Often the only empowerment that takes place is that of the writer himself/herself and not the whole community, which remains scorned and vilified at the margins of the society. As discussed by Bourdieu in *La distinction*, one mistakes or confuses "popular culture" for the counter-culture that one hopes and prays for, a culture that is actually claimed and the symbol of a separate status (Gadant 1991). In an excellent article on this subject, Monique Gadant wonders if one should not instead denounce the ideological use of the concept of culture when it includes into the sphere of values—thereby also reducing their vigor—social conflicts and exploitation and the very real cultural poverty of those who are the most deprived.

In any case, if there is a counter-culture in the making in the *Beur* community, it might not be in its literature, which while denouncing some stereotypes also relies on them,

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[33] See Kara Bouzid's novel *La Marche* (1983) whose main subject was the march.

creating an environment that the reader's imagination recognizes or finds familiar.[34] The testimonial mode largely explains this contradiction whereby the text almost becomes a pamphlet of sorts to carry one's voice and to denounce injustices and misrepresentations, but proves not sufficient to go beyond the stage of declaration and condemnation. Publishing houses also play their role in encouraging testimonial narratives that are more popular and suit a certain French readership,[35] while downplaying other narratives, which might be more creative and literary, and, ironically, engaged.

However, Beurs as a community try to find a space in French society. The very term Beur seems to be a palliative to escape constraints from both sides of the Mediterranean. Nacer Ketane in an interview declares that the term *Beur* refers to "a geographical and cultural space, the Maghreb, and a social space, that of the suburb and the proletariat of France" (Hargreaves Voices 29-30). Thus, the term encompasses a proletarian community whose identity escapes traditional definitions based on national identification since they feel neither French nor Algerian. Michel Laronde develops this idea at length when discussing the claim of Beur writers to be "neither French nor Arab." He writes:

> *Être "entre", ce n'est pas rejoindre le vide du "rien": c'est délimiter un espace par ce qui l'entoure en s'en démarquant. Se glisser dans "l'entre-deux" culturel et politique (entre la France et l'Algérie), c'est réussir par double décrochage (ni*

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[34] The titles of the novels are eloquent: Djura, *le voile du silence*; Nina Bouraoui: *La voyeuse interdite*; Leila Sebbar, *Fatima ou les Algeriennes au square* and *Sheherazade*; Mehdi Charef, *Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed* and *Le Harki de Meriem*; Leila Houari, *Zeida de nulle part*; Azouz Begag, *Le Gone du Chaâba*; Mehdi Lallaoui, *Les Beurs de scene.*

[35] See the more recent publication of Samira Bellil, *Dans l'enfer des tournantes* (2002), a narrative of a victim of multiple rapes in a project housing.

l'un, ni l'autre) une opération de distanciation et découvrir la face cachée de l'identité en redonnant un sens plein à la différence qui devient alors pont entre deux identités; [..] La prise de conscience de la différence est la reconnaissance de l'écart où la société tient l'Etranger; le repli dans l'entre-deux est la prise en main de cet écart comme étrangeté irréductible que l'Etranger refuse de laisser absorber dans le nivellement de la société moderne. (148-149)

To be « *in between* », does not mean that one joins the category of the void, of « *nothing* »: it is to demarcate a space by what surrounds it while moving away from it. To slide in the cultural and political "*in-between*" (between France and Algeria), is to succeed by a double release (neither one nor the other) an operation of *dissociation* and discover the covert face of identity by giving back its full meaning to the term *difference*, which then becomes a bridge between two identities. [..] The awareness of the difference is the acknowledgement of the *margin* where society keeps the foreigner; the refuge in the in-between-ness is the control of this margin as irreducible *foreignness* that the Foreigner refuses the modern society to absorb.

While Beurs are often portrayed as a lost generation, easily manipulated, and with no sense of belonging to either country (France/Algeria), or as the consecrated formula goes "entre deux chaises" (sitting between two chairs),[36] Michel Laronde does not construe

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[36] Nacer Kettane, through Brahim's character responds the following "*on n'a pas le cul entre deux chaises et [..] il est assez gros pour s'asseoir sur les deux*" (we don't have our ass sitting between two chairs and [..] it is big enough to sit on both) in *Le Sourire de Brahim* (166).

this double exclusion (neither French nor Arab) as the manifestation of a lack but rather as part of a creative process. This demarcation is a necessary step to bring forth a new space (*un sens plein à la différence*), a space of "in-between-ness" which becomes a bridge (*pont*) between two identities.

Rather than the image of a bridge, which suggests a solid armature, and a rigid link between two grounded poles, I would rather use the image of the mole, which seems more appropriate to symbolize this community. The main characteristic of the mole, a small animal living underground, is to dig long subterranean galleries whose presence is only detectable when a mound of dirt appears on the surface of the earth. The Beur community could be associated with this dark thus nocturnal-like activity, especially for the younger generation. Applying the panoptical model of surveillance developed by Foucault in *Surveiller et punir* to the geography of immigration, Michel Laronde[37] discusses the multiple tactics the ones under constant surveillance (of neighbors, superintendents and police) developed to escape this omnipresent gaze. For instance, youths gather in basements, deserted, abandoned and labyrinth-like areas, hidden from public view.

Because this population was not seen, it was deemed non existent while, like the mole, it was there all along, or in the case of the immigrant community for close to a century. Its presence is finally acknowledged for obvious visual reasons: the immigrant population is concentrated in specific areas isolated from cities and urban centers—situation that is in itself symptomatic of questionable political and social measures—and also because the

[37] Especially chapter 3

youth claims its existence and its difference. However, Laronde argues that one integrates the exclusion to which (s)he is subjected and eventually claims this exclusion, a situation resulting in a reciprocal estrangement:

> *Pour résister à l'assaut, l'Immigré, maintenu dans une position d'exclusion, joue le jeu du système en revendiquant (légalement et psychiquement) le statut d'Etranger; il se déprend ainsi du système qui l'enferme, s'en désenclave par des pratiques souterraines qui à leur tour le renvoient face au mécanisme panoptique au sein duquel sa position de Surveillé se durcit dans la délinquance pour en faire un paria.* (94)
>
> To resist the assault, the Immigrant, maintained in a position of exclusion, plays the game of the system by (legally and psychologically) claiming the status of Foreigner; thus escaping the system which locks him up, through subterranean practices which push him back to the panoptical mechanism within which his position as someone being watched is fortified in delinquency to make a pariah of him.

They indeed integrate this exclusion and make it theirs by nourishing this middle space called *Beur*. To the deeply felt need to have a buffer zone between the inaccessible full-fledged French citizenship and the position of being descendants of Algerian immigrants, the youth responded by developing this interstice. Thus, to pursue the metaphor of the mole, the emergence of *beurs* with an urban marginal culture and a specific and marginal literature that bears its name testifies to the formation of a lump, or ...a mole's mound. However, the development of this interstice carries the real danger of marginalizing further a community that is ghettoized in run down housing projects that evoke in many

ways penitentiaries where freedom and privacy are reduced. These mounds/lumps expose in its blatant nakedness the exclusion this community suffers from. Finally, the term *Beur* testifies to the existence of a segment of the population that is not recognized and does not recognize itself in the ready-made available terminology (French or Algerian) and which often seems to make a virtue of necessity.

In conclusion, while the term Beur was both chosen by its members and also imposed onto a community to better discriminate it and control it, "Beur culture" attempts to extirpate some values out of a disadvantaged situation. While some aspects of this culture are vibrant and can be very productive (theater and music), Beur fiction is caught in the paradoxical role of claiming one's difference while seeking the approval of its readership which usually only approves of difference when it is inferior. In addition, the narrative is a mode of expression that is associated with "high culture," especially in a community where the book is not an element of everyday life consumption,[38] and thus in the end, Beur literature, like Francophone literature in general, often does not address its own community but rather the outside critic, the ones interested in their subjectivity, in their state of "in-between-ness."

However, in spite of these contradictions, Beur fiction, which accounts for more than thirty novels, still contains a potential for challenging the very concept of the French nation and "*francité*." Some inspiring ideas are already emerging in some novels where to counteract the rigid definition of statehood and citizenship, they use the resilient and

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[38] Some novels actually use a very colloquial and/or slang language.

volatile motif of movement, which can be physical and geographical,[39] genealogical,[40] or historical.[41] They assert a complex identity in perpetual change, allowing the development of networks of relationships and similar experiences around the world.[42]

Beur literature (like other forms of Beur culture) is finally a hybrid product of exile and its particular development in France. Many of the first novels were the product of authors of Kabyle origin, who felt the need to bridge the gap between their community and the outside world, as well as having their voice heard. In spite of many contradictions, the inception of this literature in excluded and poor venues could make it the embodiment of resistance against all forms of exclusion, as well as its doppelganger, compulsory and absolute assimilation. Its potential resides in the exploration or invention of this in-between identity, a transnational, multilingual, and open identity that, like francophone literature, carries in its very bosom an original confrontation with the other.

Amazigh literature

> *Tafunast yurwen inisi*
> *Ma teğğa t, d mmis ;*
> *Ma tmech it, d isennanen.*[43]

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[39] A good example is Akli Tadjer's *Les A.N.I. du "Tassili."* The novel is set on the ferry "Tassili" between France and Algeria.

[40] See Laronde's analysis of Leila Sebbar's *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique.*

[41] See Paul Silverstein's discussion on sons and daughters of Algerian immigrants who returned to the "first" Algerian war in search of explanations in order to narrate their postcolonial present. (Unpublished thesis)

[42] For instance, Hargreaves examines the importance of Ralph Ellison's novel *The Invisible Man* to the protagonist in *Georgette!*.

[43] A cow gave birth to a porcupine. If she abandons him, it's her son, if she licks him, it's all spines.

Like Francophone and Beur literature, Amazigh literature is, I argue, a new literary development indirectly linked to exile and/or to the confrontation with the Other. Amazigh literature designates a corpus of literary works, which use the original language of the Berber people called "Tamazight."

The Berber peoples throughout North Africa always had and still have a very rich oral tradition (tales, legends, poetry), which touched on all domains of the everyday life (love, religion, history, even the colonial conquest). In this literary tradition, poetry played a major role and the French colonial army realized its importance as early as 1857, when they would force local poets to compose poems in favor of the French domination and to its glory.[44] And interestingly enough, the transcription and publication of the first Kabyle poems was the work of General Hanoteau.[45] The fact that the first volume of Kabyle poetry[46] was published by a French general who, on the other hand brutally repressed its people, is another unsettling aspect of Kabyle's history and that of its literary development. One will have to wait twenty more years to see Ben Sedira's inclusion of a few poems and songs in his Kabyle language course, followed by the works of L. Rinn and Luciani, and finally the voluminous and probably richest publication of Kabyle poetry (1904) by Boulifa, a Kabyle professor (Nacib 11).

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[44] Mahfoufi. *Chants Kabyles de la guerre d'independance*. (128)

[45] Hanoteau was an engineer and arrived in Algeria as a captain in 1845. He participated with Bugeaud in the expedition against the Beni-Abbès in Kabylia in 1847, against the Beni-Aicha and Kabylia in 1854 and 1856. He was the general of the brigade in 1870 and took an active role in the repression of the insurrection of 1871. (Yacine 181-2)

[46] See Hanoteau (1867)

Before these first publications, there have been a few religious texts (lost today) written in Berber with Arabic characters (including the Koran of the Berghwata). Other texts were mainly adaptation of Arabic works. As discussed in chapter 1, Berbers preferred to write in other languages. Thus, the impulse to write in Berber and the interest in Berber matters came from the outside and more precisely from European scholars who produced a whole corpus of work on Berber history, language and ethnography. These works soon became available to the first local elites who received a western education. As a consequence, the vision they had of themselves was profoundly altered. Salem Chaker writes:

> *(le berbérophone) découvre brutalement que l'arabité et l'islamité du Maghreb sont des données historiques, relativement tardives, qu'il existe une histoire pré-islamique berbère de son pays, que sa langue peut être considérée comme la seule langue autochtone du Maghreb [...] qu'elle a, depuis la plus haute antiquité, son alphabet propre. [...] Avant la colonisation, l'intellectuel Kabyle se referait à des groupes tribaux, à des valeurs sociales, à des saints; après, il se réfère à la langue, à l'histoire ancienne et à la berbérité du Maghreb.* (18)
>
> (The Berber speaker) brutally discovers that Maghreb's "*arabité*" and "*Islamité*" are part of historical events that happened relatively late, that there exists a Berber pre-Islamic history of his country, that his language can be considered as the only indigenous language of the Maghreb [...] that it has, since the late antiquity, its own alphabet. [...] Before the colonization, the Kabyle intellectual used to refer to

tribal groups, to social values, to saints; after the colonization, he referred to the language, to ancient history and to the Berberness of the Maghreb.

The pioneers of Berber literature were all products of the French school and many were schoolteachers such as Saïd Boulifa. These first intellectuals were often critical of their European predecessors who were judgmental and contemptuous vis-à-vis their object of study. For instance, in Henri Basset's study on Berber literature, one can read:

> *Les Berbères, nous avons déjà eu l'occasion de le constater, ne possèdent pas une très grande imagination. (91)* [...] *Le héros berbère n'est pas un homme heureux, dans un monde civilisé et poli* [...] *c'est un brutal, bon ou mauvais au hasard des circonstances* [...] *Aventures romanesques mises à part, est-il si loin de quelques-uns des chefs berbères qui nous combattent aujourd'hui au Maroc, gens de rien parfois, que leur astuce et leur courage, autant que leur baraka ont mis au premier rang?* (Basset 97)
>
> The Berbers, we had the opportunity to see this before, do not possess a great imagination. [...] The Berber hero is not a happy man, in a civilized and polished world [...] he is a brutal man, good or bad depending on the circumstances. [...] Adventures aside, is this hero very far from some of these Berbers chiefs who are fighting us today in Morocco, people of nothing sometimes, but whose guile and courage, as well as their *baraka* propel to the foreground?

Moreover, it should be noted that *Le Fichier de documents berbères de Fort-National* (Larbaa Nat Iraten, Kabylia) produced several dozen of documents in Berber between 1947 and 1976 mostly tales, proverbs, legends and chronicles collected and translated by French authors. In this same paradoxical mode, the French missionary Father Jean Marie

Dallet was at the origin of the first reliable Kabyle dictionary, which has now become an invaluable reference for scholars. In its preface, Salem Chaker recounts a memorable encounter with Father Dallet:

> *Cet homme avec quelques collaborateurs, maintenant avec des moyens dérisoires, au milieu d'une population largement indifférente à l'époque, une tradition d'études et de publications dans le domaine berbère, en Algérie. Jean-Marie Dallet consacrait sa vie à une langue et une culture qui n'étaient pas les siennes, sans même pouvoir espérer en tirer jamais un quelconque bénéfice ou pouvoir. Il était au service de l'Autre, sans en attendre rien en contrepartie.* (XI)
>
> This man with some collaborators maintained with very little means, in the middle of a largely indifferent population at the time, a scholarly tradition and publications in Berber, in Algeria. Jean-Marie Dallet dedicated his life to a language and culture that were not his, without ever having hoped to gain any advantage or power from it. He was at the service of the Other, without expecting anything in return.

What surfaces from these few introductory lines is the deep admiration for a man who has dedicated his life to study, learn and write about a language and a culture, which were totally foreign to him. His dedication to this life-long project is especially moving because of the total absence of reward or incentive other than that of the interest in a language and culture that were not his (unlike most other missionary projects or colonial missions.) Father Dallet's attitude reveals striking similarities with Berber moral values such as humility, altruism and the importance one gives to the other, principles that Chaker revives through his approbation and respect.

This ancient tradition of written production in Tamazight that started with the French, which was examined, questioned and carried on by the Kabyles, came to a halt after the independence. Most post-1962 Berber publications were then produced in France. An ironic situation stems from this state of affairs: thousands of Algerians have learned to write and read their language thanks to books published in France (Chaker Imazighen 42-44). Moreover Berber language and civilization are taught in French universities (Paris VIII, Paris III, and Paris VII) and language courses are also offered in many cities around the country, resulting in another quirk of fate where many Berbers learn to read, write and sometimes even speak their language abroad while it cannot be done at home.

It is therefore not surprising that the distinguished linguist and Berber militant Salem Chaker was among the many personalities and organizations to create an association calling for the recognition and the promotion of Berber language among many other languages in France (such as Alsatian, Basque, spoken Arabic, Catalan, and Yiddish) and to consider it as a language of France.[47] If this aim were to be achieved, it would result in an even more ironic situation whereby Berber as a language would be recognized, taught and promoted by the French state in stark opposition to the countries of origin.

One could argue that the specific conditions under which Berber texts were first produced are just the transposition into a larger scale of a simple and individual interaction with another; an interaction advocated for its challenging and positive

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[47] The association "Pour que vivent nos langues" was created in Paris in May 2002. Its aim is to obtain the modification of the French constitution so that the linguistic plurality of the country can be acknowledged. It was encouraged by France's ratification of the *Charte européenne des langues régionales ou minoritaires* adopted in 1992 by the European Council which states the value of plurilinguism and interculturality and the necessity to protect and promote regional and minority languages in Europe.

outcome originating from an alliance with the other through a mutual recognition. At the core of this interaction is the basic philosophical and psychoanalytical concept of the recognition through the other. Thus, one understands that Berber writing in other languages and often about others (or their relationship to others), is a means to "recognize" them while "waiting" to be recognized in return (a process discussed in chapter 6). This recognition happened to take place through European scholars and, mostly French ones due to imperial schemes and the vagaries of history.

Since its birth, Berber literature has struggled to survive in spite of strong governmental opposition. Mouloud Mammeri (1918-1989) emerged as a major figure in the Berber production with the publication of several basic texts such as the collection of poems by Si Muhand (*Isefra*). But more recently there has been another trend composed of courageous pioneers (given the conditions of publications and the still fairly small readership) who produced a moderately substantial corpus of novels in the Berber language.

Though this genre is in its inception, its mere existence testifies to the felt-need to write and create in this language and develop it to its utmost potentials. *Faffa,* by Rachid Aliche[48] is probably the first novel of its kind. The term "Faffa" is a nickname for France used by exiles to refer to its mythical power as the country of wealth and opportunity, a myth that exiles joked about once they experience immigration. *Faffa* is the story of Aamar who immigrates to France and endures many hardships before deciding to go back

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[48] Rachid Aliche was born in 1953 in Kabylia. In 1978 he settled in Lyon, France. There, he wrote his first novel, *Asfel* (1981). *Faffa* is his second novel (1986).

to school. He becomes an engineer and drifts away from his community. He lives with Jacqueline, a French woman, but during a visit back home, he is married to a Kabyle woman, Ferroudja. Torn between the two women and the two countries, he jumps off the ferry into the Mediterranean, between France and Algeria. This novel treats common exilic themes such as departure, pain, hope, love, adaptation and difference. While these themes have been common in oral poetry and songs since the beginning of the century, their treatment in writing opens up another dimension in Kabyle culture, that of a totally new individual experience, that of the modern reader, the writer's partner, a new form of subjectivity:

> *A t id yerr umitru tameddit, s wekras b wenyir, s berru t tuyat, acettid, si tidi, ad inted &ef gwlim, tiaayunin ad azayent seg gw&ebbar, idarren ur t ttawin.* (12)
>
> The subway will take him back home tonight, with a frown on his face, with bent shoulders, his clothes clinging to his skin from sweat, his eyebrows heavy with dust, his legs unable to carry him.

The concise and precise description of Aamar's look on his way back from work is reminiscent of poetry's exactitude and meticulousness. In the original text, its musicality also reminds one of the harmony and melody of poetry.

Many other novels followed this one. Amar Mezdad, a physician, wrote two novels and a collection of short stories,[49] which address various subjects such as the Kabyle experience of World War II in Europe, the reflections of an old émigré who comes back home or the theme of tradition vs. modernity. Other novels tackle more contemporary

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[49] *Id d wass*; *Tagrest ur&u*; *Tu&alin*

issues such as Salem Zenia's novels.[50] In *I&il d wefru*, he directly refers to present-day political and social issues. The two protagonists, a poet and a feminist militant rebel against the Arab-Islamic regime and suffer the terrible consequences that their ideas and behavior entail in a corrupt and violent world. Not only do novels continue to be published,[51] but also collections of poetry,[52] children's tale[53] and drama.[54]

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[50] *Tafrara*; *I&il d wefru*

[51] Mezyan-U-Muh *Targit Umedyaz* and *Lhif Yuran.* Also, *Ddida*, Ulansi Yazid.

[52] Remdan At Mensur, *Ti&ri.*

[53] Akli Azwawi *Imetti n bab idurar* and Akli Kebaili. *Lkuraj n tyazit ou la brave poule.*

[54] Hammar Mokrane *Susem kemmini*

Chapter 4: Exile as a Space of Creativity or, Berber Exile songs

> *"I prefer to be an Algerian in a foreign country than a foreigner in my own country"* (Slimane Azem)

As Benedict Anderson notes in his influential book *Imagined Communities*, it is ironic that most nationalist and identity movements of today are founded and formulated in exile. Most of these movements—movements of oppressed peoples—are also founded by working class and/or middle class immigrants who benefit from relative freedom abroad. For the Kabyles of Algeria however, it is not only the identity aspect of the movement which has been formulated in exile but the very means to express and claim this identity—the song—was also developed in exile. As Moh Cherbi and Arezki Khouas noted, the Kabyle song is the child of the people's emigration. Thus exile is much more than a space in which to formulate identity, in the case of Kabyles, it is a space of survival, which can be retraced through the development of the Kabyle song. This section works towards two ends and explores the condition of exile in the formation and development of the Kabyle song and exile as the core of Kabyle identity, and then the role of the Kabyle song in Algeria and its contribution to the formulation of a Berber identity "at home."

Exile, inevitably, became one of the first themes of this artistic expression. Yet the Kabyle song also incorporated and worked through political and social concerns, as in the period of the war of liberation against France. Now, today, the Kabyle song expresses other issues and among them the thorny question of Berber identity. These developments take place in an incessant movement between the immigrant communities abroad and the home, Kabylia.

As Mouloud Mammeri dejectedly remarked, Berbers have always had considerable energy with which to oppose "the foreigner" but this energy was never enough to "melt down" differences and so form a harmonious whole (Mammeri 1). He suggests that Berbers must necessarily carry some internal destructive principle that prevents this synthesis, "*quelque vice interne.*" And indeed, Kabyles seem to have agreed to always disagree though never for a good purpose. They are always divided and do not, like other peoples, find unity in say, struggle for nation, religion or race. As a Kabyle saying goes, two kabyles meet and there are five opinions. Perhaps, however, the song is what comes closest to the kind of cement that brings all kabyles together. This might be close to a linguistic identification but songs and poetry convey something more. It is the apparent timelessness of the wisdom and solace that the songs carry to an audience, whether these songs concern exile, love, solitude, oppression or power. These songs are a unique source with which all Kabyles identify.

Of course, the fact that they are sung in Kabyle makes them all the more appealing and so gives the language a timeless quality, especially when in everyday usage is combined with other languages (e.g. Arabic, French, English). As Karima Dirèche-Slimani states in her study on Kabyle emigration, the announcement of a Kabyle concert in France remains the only way to mobilize and bring together several thousands of Kabyles and this, no matter where the concert takes place (196). Concerts of Kabyle music are the occasion for several generations (children, parents, and grandparents) to have a common point of reference, a landmark.

Slimane Azem (1918-1983): the Father of the Kabyle Song

Tamurt-iw a tin âazizzen

ǰirkem nebla lebri-iw

Mačči d nek ay g xtaren

Aka gura di lbxet-iw

Nek zedra& anda niden

Mad kem ini t zda& ul-iw

My beloved country

I did leave you but unwilling

I did not choose this

It was written

I might reside somewhere else

But you dwell in my heart

(Slimane Azem)

It is difficult to decide on a date and to single out one individual to represent the beginning of the (recorded) Kabyle song for many records were already on the European market at the beginning of the 20th century.[55] Slimane Azem, a most notable Kabyle singer in the 1940s-1950s enjoyed popularity in France with many other singers such as Zerrouki Allaoua, Arab Bouyezgarene, Farid Ali, Khadidja, Hnifa, Moh Said Ou Belaid, and the celebrated Cheikh El Hasnaoui, his elder.

That Slimane Azem was so prominent and a key representative of this new music was mainly determined by his immense commercial success and the impact this had on the immigration as well as on the Kabyle people in Algeria. Differing from other singers,

[55] Examples are Yamina and Houria, Si Moh and Si Said (1910), Si Said Benahmed (1911), Amar Chaqal (1929), and many others.

Slimane Azem was a poet and fabulist as well as a singer. His verses have become proverbial in Kabyle culture and to this day new generations sing his songs and new singers reinterpret them.

Slimane Azem was only 19 when he arrived in France in 1937 to work in Longwy in the steel-works. A prisoner in Germany for three years during the Second World War, he was liberated by American troops and returned to Paris to start his artistic career at the age of 27. Soon he became the voice of Kabyle exile. Indeed many of his 400 songs and sketches are about uprooted-ness, separation, solitude and racism and their corollary, alcoholism, such as his first recorded song called "A Muh a Muh" (1950s), which *consecrated* him a singer and a star. In 1970 he received the "disque d'or de la chanson orientale" from his editor Pathé Marconi in Paris. In spite of his songs being censored by the Algerian government and his terminal exile in France, he remains the indisputable reference when it comes to songs of exile.

What deeply affects Kabyle exiles everywhere is the sorrow and distress in Azem's voice. It is the pain of rupture that he conveys through simple phrases like "I reside somewhere else but you dwell in my heart," a line which has a certain emotional pull in the Kabyle language. And the country can only dwell in his heart because it is forever lost and Azem, like his listeners, knows this. It is the Expulsion and Fall and Azem exposes what all exiles already know: there is always a before and an after exile.

Leaving home was painful but working in France felt at times like a living hell for many Kabyle immigrants. For mountain dwellers used to wide space and light, to work in a plant or underground without seeing the light of day, and this was the case for the

majority of them, only added anguish to the pain of separation, as the famous poet/singer Ait Menguellet expresses so well in this famous verse:

Si lxudma luzzin s axxam, tafat ur ṭṭ n ṭṭwali

From the factory to home we never see the light of day.

But little by little the foreign place grows in the exile who, in spite of his sufferings and misery, discovers his attachment, as if bewitched:

Temz-iw t ruh d akurfi, deg mitro daxel uderbuz

El Pari tehkem felli, waqila tsâa lhruz

My youth was consumed within the obscurity of the hollow subway

Paris has a power over me, I think it has amulets

(Slimane Azem, *A Muh a Muh*,)

Another very popular verse is *Anf-as anf-as Place Pigalle tehkem fellas/* leave him to his fate Place Pigalle bewitched him (Bouyezgaren). Consider also the following song, which refers to the power of Paris on the Kabyle imaginary today,

Atan di Place Clichy

Yeṭṭu Bgayet d Tici

Anf-as is Lâarbi trankil

Ul-is atas fragil (Akli D. 1999)

Here he is in Place Clichy

He has forgotten all about Bgayet and Tichi

Leave Larbi alone

His heart is very fragile.

This song shows the persistence of exile in the lives of Kabyles a century after the first men left the country (1904) for Marseilles. Exile remains a fundamental issue in popular songs, and the spell of Paris, among other places, is as powerful as ever. Thus, exile creates confusion and ambiguity and blurs one's sense of home. Now, the exile feels at home nowhere and a foreigner everywhere. Again,

Mi d nusa neb&a anu&al,

Mi nu&al neb&a ad nas,

An ṭṭruhu n ṭṭu&al,

Am ifrax ifirellas (Slimane Azem)

When we arrive we want to go back

When we are back we want to return

We keep on coming and going

Similar to swallows

Slimane Azem became a key figure in relating with passion the differences between the traditional rural life in Kabylia and the urban and so-called modern life of the exile in France. He also grappled with the radical changes his society was going through, which were direct consequences of colonization and immigration. Azem often lamented new developments (such as women's exile) but in his songs and life he eventually embodies this difficult period of transition.

In a very informative study, Mehenna Mahfoufi (2002) discusses the practice of song and its role in traditional Kabyle society, as well as the radical change it underwent after the introduction of, one the one hand, the foreign musical instruments and on the other,

the concept of the soloist, previously only used for religious chants (like *adekker*) where a leader led the chant.

In Kabyle village life, there has always been a very rich tradition of vocal music in spite of the absence of original Kabyle musical instrument. There exist different categories of songs or chants for rituals such as birth and wedding (*asbu&wer)*, for love (*ahiha*), for lullabies (*azuzzen*), as well as for mystical and religious circumstances *(adekker).* Rachid Mokhtari argues that the bond between nature and culture dissolved in the shift from the vocal to the instrumental; the intimate to the public; and the chant of oral tradition to the song of the spectacle (Mokhtari 1991, 35). Mahfoufi notes that the first foreign musical instruments such as banjo, accordion, guitar, harmonica and derbouka were introduced by the first émigrés returning from France after the Second World War. At that time the use of musical instruments was considered a disgrace and was taboo and their practice was thus clandestine. Idir, another famous singer recalls that "in the Kabyle tradition, everything that was linked to drama or songs was frowned upon because it was considered like selling one's person, one's voice" (Cherbi and Khouas 30) Moreover, there were no mixed repertoires while traditional songs were almost exclusively the prerogative of women.

However, in the forties, new developments took place such as the creation of the Kabyle radio in 1938, which soon competed with traditional songs. Radios, writes Zahir Ihaddaden, "were installed in cafés and listening to the radio became a collective event" (Ihaddaden 249). Moreover, a new musical genre, that of authors, developed in cities, essentially Algiers, Bougie, and Paris. There, Kabyle singers associated themselves with Arab and Jewish musicians and their orchestras. But by the 20s Kabyle singers had

already launched a new genre of music, the "Châabi," and it was El Hadj Mohammed El Anka, who is credited with the creation of this genre. Châabi is derived from the *Arabo-Andalus* genre and is characterized by the introduction of new instruments (banjo, piano). Moreover, singers such as Si Said Benahmed, Fattouma Blidia or Yasmina arabized their titles and even sang their Kabyle songs (whose themes were mostly about love and religion) in Arabic. Indeed, according to Tassadit Yacine, songs sung in Kabyle or Chaoui could not find their place in major cities in Algeria (Constantine, Algiers, Tlemcen, etc) where Berber was viewed as a "vulgar" dialect sung by provincial singers (Yacine 1995, 38).

Women also move to cities to sing. The two most well known examples are Cherifa and Hnifa who were banished from their village and moved to Algiers. The shift from anonymous singing to performing in a public space had to be paid by the departure from village life and context. The dysfunction of the society was accentuated by men's emigration, and so turned the natural and rural feminine chants into a new space where exile became a major subject. Indeed, those left behind also experience exile in their own way. Those left behind sometimes imagine exile as an ogre that swallows the loved one to regurgitate him—when drained off life and vitality. Now sick and old, the exile returns home to die. France, the treacherous seductress, is only known through stories told by émigrés and names of places (Pigalle, Place Clichy, Montparnasse), which become both familiar and mysterious, a promise of permissiveness that lures others to depart.

Voices of women translate the pain of the separation—all families had at least one of their members in exile—but also frustration and rebellion against their status and reputation of enduring and patient women. Hnifa's voice renders this with the most

heartrending accents. The woman she sings about is deceived by her husband and is now the subject of ridicule and contempt. She calls on to other women, her "sisters," for compassion and seeks female solidarity against men's deceit and shameless French women, who have turned her life into agony:

Y setma haqa& ul-iw d amudin

Wi âazizen ctaqa& bwin tenṭṭ t Rumyin

Ul iw i ṭqudur yar&a bla times

Arhan iyi lehdur y s&zafen iles (Hnifa)

My sisters I suffer so, my heart is sick

French women seduced the one I longed for

My heart melts it is burning without fire

I hear painful words from sharp tongues

This solidarity expresses itself in the following verses, where women (a choral) try to warn a seemingly naïve wife about her husband's conduct. It turns out that her husband not only enjoys his exile in France and dates French women, but also had a son while his Kabyle wife works in the fields, takes care of the cattle, and withers while waiting for him:

Ma t brid ad am n gell

Aheq Sidi Hlal

Argaz-im di l'Pari i lehu d mu sarwal

Taqbaylit achal t sbar,

Yyaraṭṭ i lmal (Hanifa)

If you want, we can swear to you

And we do swear on Sidi Hlal

Your husband in Paris is dating women in pants

You, the patient kabyle woman,

He keeps busy with cattle

In exile, on the other hand, some Kabyle singers start to sing about the reality of their lives and especially about exile (Cheikh Nourredine, Cheikh El Hasnaoui) and recorded their songs in Paris (Pathé, Odéon). The theme of exile, already popular in the 40s, focused on nostalgia for *tamurt* (Kabyle country) often associated with the family left behind, loneliness, racism, and alcohol.[56] Historically, exile constituted the theme for several hundred Kabyle songs. One of the earliest examples is from 1904, a song illustrating the arrival of the uprooted emigrant in Marseilles. Since then, every singer has one or several songs treating the theme of exile. But Slimane Azem's songs were particular in the sense that his repertoire of songs was "familial," i.e. since they contained nothing indecent or shameful, they were listened to by the whole family at home. He was, in spite of his lament and nostalgia for the past, a bridge of sort between the old world and the new one.

Among female singers in France, Taos Amrouche's voice stands as unique. While reserving more personal observations and insights for her novels—she was also the first francophone woman novelist— Taos Amrouche gathered an impressive collection of chants that people used in a wide variety of situations. She collected and delightfully sang religious incantations, chants of sacred dances, chants of meditation, of war and work,

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[56] Beside Slimane Azem, one can cite Allaoua Zerrouki, Kamel Hamadi, Akli Yahiatene, Cherif Kheddam.

and lullabies. She sang for the first time in Paris in 1937, and gave recitals in Florence, Rabat and again in Paris in the early seventies with several performances at the Théatre de la Ville and received the "Grand Prix d'Ethnologie musicale" in 1966. But her wide recognition and her amazing performances in the Berber language proved to be a disservice when in July 1969 she was forbidden to sing in Algiers during the pan-African Festival. After she died in 1976, Leopold Sedar Senghor wrote a warm eulogy to her memory, stating that her death is a loss for all of Africa while acknowledging the importance of her work to "bring *Berberitude* into the civilization of the Universal."

In the 50s singers composed militant songs attacking the colonial power in Algeria. Here again, among others (such as Oukil Amar and Belaid), Slimane Azem emerges as the father of the political song. His song called "*Effa& ay ajrad tamurt-iw*" (Locusts, Leave my Country), became very popular and was later reinterpreted by Matoub Lounes with a different twist. The term "*ajrad*" though a singular noun designates a plural and refers to the notion of multitude, a swarm of locusts which stand for the colonizers:

Eff& ay ajrad tamurt-iw, d elxir tufid zik yemha

Ma d elqad i ik-yezzenzen, awi-d le<qad ma y sehha

Locusts leave my country; the wealth you found in the past is no more.

If a magistrate has sold it to you, show me the proof of your purchase

Oukil Amar is another major composer whose song "*A Yemma âazizen ur ɣru*" (My Beloved Mother, Do not Cry) has actually made his listeners shed many tears. It tells the story of a son who tells his mother, for whom, like all mothers, he is the apple of her eye,

that he is sacrificing his life to combat misery and the colonial yoke, so that future generations can enjoy freedom:

Ur s qar emmi yenter

Ur hellek deg ul-inem

I wsemid aqla& n sber

Wala a fransi bu lhem

Do not say, "My son is suffering"

Do not allow your heart to feel pain

We are in the cold and we will stand firm

Rather than endure the French yoke

So while the songs served as a medium to spread nationalism before the independence (1962), their use was not obsolete after the liberation. Soon after the independence in 1965, many singers started criticizing the new regime, like Slimane Azem but also Sadaoui Salah, Mohand-Said Oubelaid, Oukil Amar, Kamal Hamadi, Taleb Rabah and Cherif Kheddam.

The Renewal of the Kabyle Song

By the 1970s, other themes such as democracy, the quest for the recognition of Berber history, appeared and were the subject of several hundreds songs over 25 years (Mahfoufi 38). But soon some of the numerous modern Kabyle singers and bands, left for France (Idir, Djamel Allam, Ferhat[57], Nourredine). It is also in France that in 1978, Matoub

[57] Imprisoned for having created a human rights organization he was—in all—imprisoned 13 times in Algerian prisons.

Lounes, the singer who will embody the Berber resistance (assassinated in Algeria in 1998), made his first recordings, which launched his career in Algeria.

Songs by Idir, Imazighen Imula, Yugurten, Ait Menguellet, and Meksa found diligent audiences and "close-listening" incited heated debates and discussions over interpretation. Also, these informal debates developed a new awareness about the political and social situation but also the obliteration of the Berber culture and history. In an interview to *Izuran* (see works cited), one of the singers of the band Yugurten recalled what it was like to sing in the 1970s when the government of the time wanted to ignore the Berber origins of the Algerian population and imposed in its place a culture imported from the Middle East. The Military Security (Sécurité Militaire), he affirms, discouraged every attempt to refer to any other "non-official" culture. So while some journals went underground, the distribution and sharing of dramas and songs had to cope with heavy censorship.

During the late 1970s early 1980s Berber singers benefited from Kabyle owned recording companies, which opened in Paris (Azwaw, Imedyazen, Agraw, Numidie Musik.) The invention of the tape was, in Chaker's own words, truly revolutionary for Berber culture (Chaker Imazighen 42). Aït Menguellet (imprisoned in 1985 for supporting Ferhat in prison) packed the Olympia in Paris (1978) and the Kabyle song in general started to flourish (Idir, Sofiane, Menad, Brahim Izri, Malika Domrane, Agraw, Takfarinas, and many others.)

Emigration has been an invaluable space for the production of Kabyle songs. Indeed, the quasi-totality of Kabyle singers first recorded in France. This is explained by the existence in France of a large audience, of production studios and technical means that

are often lacking in Algeria. The result has been the strengthening of the Kabyle song industry and the affirmation of its autonomy vis-à-vis the dominant ideology in Algeria (Chaker Quel, 43). Moreover, in 1981 French legislation on foreign associations became more flexible and as a consequence many associations were created outside of the capital in cities such as Marseille, Lyon, Roubaix, Toulouse, Saint-Etienne, Nantes, and Bordeaux. And then free or inexpensive radios played an active role in diffusing and promoting song recording and the development of Berber activities in France (Chaker Quel 40-45).

One major figure of today's Kabyle song is Ferhat Mehenni who was labeled "*le maquisard de la chanson*" (the fighter/ resistant of the song) by Kateb Yacine. His career follows that of independent Algeria. While he started as a singer, Ferhat pursued both a political and an artistic career. This combination is not surprising when one realizes the immense role of the song in the awareness and the politicization of the Kabyle population. Indeed, the "*chanson engagée*" (the committed song) forms a major part of the Kabyle music industry.

Thus, Ferhat creates the "Ligue Algérienne des Droits de l'Homme" (Human Rights organization) in June 1985 but a month later was arrested and jailed where he endured abuse and torture. He was released in 1987 and in October 88, in a surge of hope for democracy, he put down his guitar and entered into politics. He soon became disillusioned and returned to music though Ferhat is now the spokesperson for the M.A.C (Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylia), which he also founded. The question of Kabyle autonomy opened a large debate and divides Kabyles, though Ferhat's poetic songs convincingly carry the fervor of the Kabyle people for recognition, democracy,

justice and peace. Consider the following verses from a song by Ferhat about the bloody "civil war" in the 1990s:

U&ala&-d si tmura n tazzla ydammen

U&ala&-d si tmara n lekdeb ineqqen

U&ala&-d si Ssehra n wulawen yemmuten

Zellun u ttnizzifen

I come back from a country of rivers of blood

I denounce those who justify lies that kill

Back from the desert that burns the heart

Those who slice throats without trembling

And these lines about Berber identity:

Zed&en isemawen I sen fkan

Barbar, Mor, Igtulen

Numid d Nords africains,

Ger wa<raben i ten metlen,

Xas d Imazi&en ansi kkem

I cettlen (I tmurt n Leqvayel. 2002)

They inhabit the names they were given

Berbers, Moors, or Getulians

Numidians and North Africans

They are assimilated to Arabs

Even though they have always been

And still are Imazighen

One cannot mention the idea of autonomy without recalling the major stir Matoub Lounes created when he audaciously used the music of the Algerian national anthem to call for a federal state in Algeria. It was in 1998, he was assassinated shortly afterwards:

Ma t&ilem ad d-elqen i tsaruṭṭ tes<âm nniya

Wi i<erden tacriht n t-sekkurt ur iqenna ara

Dwas an cerreg tamurt a nefrez tura

You are naïve to believe that they will give you the key

Once one tasted the flesh of a partridge, one is never satiated

The solution is in a federal state so that we can see the light

While Matoub is dead and Ferhat lives between France and Algeria, another generation of Kabyle bands and singers/composers are emerging from and thrive in France and also, progressively, in other countries of exile (Canada, The United States, Belgium, etc) where exiled Kabyle singers create new melodies, and mix other languages with Kabyle (French, Spanish, English, Arabic, etc), and integrate new influences such as rhythms and instruments from South America, Ukraine, Brittany, and new trends such as rock, rap, techno, and raï, fusing them with traditional folkloric rhythms (Brahim Saci, Iness Mezel, Hamou, Amira, Abranis, Djurdjura, Tayfa (Kabylo-Brittany), Abdelli, Akli D., Moh Alileche, Numidia, Tamaghza)

Thus, the song seems to be the natural medium for Berber culture whose tradition is mainly oral in spite of having one of the world's oldest alphabets. The spoken word, unlike the written one is alive, heard and shared. In songs, listeners find immutable truths, a well of wisdom, and enjoy the beauty of language. Today's singer, writes Ferhat, replaces the traditional *meddah* (minstrel) but his/her song has also become the only

medium of expression for a people whose language is either denied or banned. Unlike with other media (TV, cinema, to what even today Berbers have little or no access), the song benefits from an official structure, the radio, inherited from the colonial period. Indeed the only Berber radio that exists in Algeria (Chaîne II) predates the independence and since then has been the victim of several discriminatory measures. Nevertheless, the song has become the medium to communicate, exist and also claim one's existence. Indeed, as Tassadit Yacine declares, the song is a mode of expression and often an instrument for culturally dominated minorities (Aït. 329).

In another study on Cherif Kheddam, Tassadit Yacine argues that the discourse of love traditionally confined to women's practice, opened up to men thanks to the newly available media (radio, records) and to emigration, which by separating men from their milieu, opened them up to the world (36). Rachid Mokhtari, for his part, believes that singers living in exile, such as Slimane Azem and Cheikh El Hasnaoui, were rather in a defensive position when confronted with change (La chanson 155). He rejects the claim that foreignness is experienced as an access to modernity but rather as pain and disorientation. But probably immigration allowed a double discourse, on the one hand it allowed a renewed respect for one's traditional culture and on the other hand, immigration permitted opening towards modernity. In any case, both Yacine and Mokhtari agree on the benefit of emigration where Kabyles rediscover the importance of their traditional culture.

While Rachid Mokhtari claims that artistic creation in a situation of transplantation cannot denounce, liberate or revolutionize because it closes off a threatening world, I argue that while some singers were terminally exiled (Slimane Azem), the majority of

others lived between France and Algeria a kind of deracination and exile which allowed their creation to be just that: critical, liberating and revolutionary. Moreover, as the argument of this section goes, emigration not only allowed the Kabyle song to diversify (from themes of love and religion to politics, culture and identity), it most importantly allowed the expression of a whole people, which is still mainly conveyed through songs. Kabyle culture benefited from exile for the awareness of its members, its development, but also for its very existence as well. This is testified by the theme of exile, which has inspired many singers whether they experienced it or not (Mokhtari). Not only is exile a thematic but also part and parcel of Kabyle identity, going back to Si Muhend U Mhand, the famous itinerant bard from the late 1800s.

Finally, the Kabyle song is inextricably linked to emigration and therefore it was pertinent to follow its development in exile. While a constant motif in Berber song for close to a century, exile is also the space that allowed this song to improve and thrive but above also resist suffocation. This is even more significant when considering its social and political relevance especially since the Amazigh Spring (1980) and more recently the Black Spring (2001). Berber song could be said to replace the books that the people have been deliberately deprived of. It is not by accident that many songs were composed by talented poets such as Mohia,[58] Ben Mohammed,[59] Meziane Rachid,[60] Amar Mzded,[61]

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[58] Mohia has written several songs for Ferhat, Idir, etc.

[59] Ben Mohammed wrote songs for Takfarinas, Matoub, and also the lyrics of Idir's world renown *A vava i nuva*

[60] Meziane Rachid wrote the lyrics for *Ssendu,* another famous song sung by Idir.

[61] Amar Mzded wrote the lyrics for Tagrawla.

and Hassane Ziani,[62] or by singers who are first and foremost poets (Aït Menguellet,[63] Ali Akkache, etc.).

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[62] Hassane Ziani wrote lyrics for the band Ideflawen.

[63] Aït Menguellet wrote, for instance, *A mmi*, a powerfully rich and intense poem about Algerian politics, which greatly moved and influenced the audience; it is inspired by *The Prince* by Machiavelli.

Chapter 5: The Return of the Repressed in Assia Djebar's *Vaste est la prison*

> *Comme on disait avant "Algérie française", maintenant on dit "Algérie arabo-musulmane". Je me suis insurgé contre la première, je m'insurge de la même façon contre la deuxième. Je ne suis ni Arabe ni musulman. Je suis Algérien. Kateb Yacine (1)*

The Road to *Vaste est la prison*

Assia Djebar is probably one of the best-known Algerian, or, perhaps, "Arab" or "post-colonial" writer known worldwide. Her novels have been translated into numerous languages and her texts have been the basis for countless articles, dissertations and books. All over the United States, no course on francophone literature or postcolonial studies would be complete without a selection of her work, for which teaching methods have been elaborated.

The popularity of her work stems from the no less impressive career of Assia Djebar the woman, which started with her admission as the first Algerian woman to the *Ecole normale supérieure de Sèvres* in 1955. Two years later, at age 21, she published her first novel, *La soif* (1957), followed by *Les impatients* (1958), *Les enfants du nouveau monde* (1962), and *Les alouettes naïves* (1967). So far she is the author of several novels, one drama, several short stories and poems as well as two films. Indeed, Djebar is not only a writer, she also produced movies, was a history professor in Algiers, worked at the Algerian Cultural Center in Paris, and lives now in the United States where she is

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1 We used to say "French Algeria" now we say "Arabo-Islamic Algeria." Like I rebelled against the first phrase, I rebel against the second one. I am neither Arab nor Muslim. I am Algerian.)In *Croissance des jeunes nations*. #278, 1985).

currently a professor of francophone literature at New York University. These few biographical elements show the significance of Djebar's work and its acknowledgement by the western intelligentsia. Indeed, she is hailed as the interpreter of her "sisters," the cloistered and/or veiled women, whether in Algeria, Libya or any other Muslim or Arab country. She is also identified as a writer who excavates and re-appropriates the buried history of subjugated people. It is this very authorial, intellectual and political gesture, or position—the speaker for the oppressed, the exhumer of the buried truth—, which I will interrogate here, from the perspective of Barbarology. My contention is that though Djebar attempts to address and promote the Berber past and present of Algeria, she has in fact come to bury the Berbers and women with the technique and rhetoric of good intentions, so familiar in the American university today.

Though this chapter focuses essentially on *Vaste est la prison* to discuss this "covering" of women and Berbers, it is necessary to provide some context that is useful to demonstrate how she arrived at that endpoint. Djebar's first four novels share a common theme, that of the treatment of relationship between young couples, an innovative theme at the time. *La soif* considers Nadia who, despite her relationship and familiarity with Hassein prior to marriage, does not find happiness. Notably, Nadia is half-French and half-Algerian and spends her time sunbathing or driving her sports car. Jedla, a childhood friend, is also unhappy with Ali, her husband. A victim of her jealousy and lack of self-esteem, she has an abortion when pregnant by Ali and dies as a result while Nadia ends up relinquishing her thirst for freedom by accepting a marriage that restrains her. This first novel, published during the battle of Algiers, evolves outside of

this Algerian reality, and was instantly compared to Françoise Sagan's sentimental novel *Bonjour tristesse*. Scholars such as Danielle Marx-Scouras denounce the criticism that the novel stirred when it was published, arguing that it resulted from the fact that "she was writing as a woman and voicing her sexual difference" (172). She continues to say that the fight for national liberation entailed the suppression of the individual in the name of the common good. Indeed, Danielle Marx-Scouras' article discusses women writing about war. However the fact that *La soif* is not about war and does not mention war does not deter the author from including it in her selection. Instead she offers a deliberately anachronistic interpretation by explaining that Djebar's evacuation of war in *La soif* "takes a new meaning today. The absence of any reference to the revolution implicitly refutes the claims of Algerian militants that national liberation would inevitably result in the liberation of Algerian woman" (174). While Djebar was no seer, her novel—in spite of being written by a woman about women—was not a subversive or revolutionary narrative and was far from empowering women, given the way the two female characters fail to stand up for themselves. It seems finally that the lack of engagement with the war and its complex term is more important for some than its representation of the plight of Algerian women. Perhaps, in retrospect, this was a sign of her appeal for Western readers, her niche discovered.

Djebar's second novel *Les impatients*, also portrays the plight of a young couple though this time the story concerns a traditional bourgeois Algerian family. Dalila, the protagonist chooses her own husband and claims the right to see with before marriage. Frustrated by the rigidity of family values, she flees Algiers for Paris where Salim, the chosen one, awaits her. But Salim turns out to be extremely jealous and thwarts her

independence and in spite of Dalila's desire to find a compromise, their relationship is doomed as Salim is killed.

It is only in the third novel, *Les enfants du nouveau monde*, that war makes its appearance and meaningfully concerns the lives of women. The novel contains close to twenty characters, some of whom are so lightly sketched that they become clichés, like Suzanne a French woman who becomes a nationalist, Touma a prostitute who betrays her people and Cherifa, the veiled and cloistered woman described in contrast to Lila a modern, French educated woman. Still the relationship between Lila and her husband Ali is more carefully constructed and Lila is a character who notably resembles Djebar's later heroines. Consider the following passage:

> *Lila se souvient de son père qui lui portait son cartable et la conduisait, main dans la main, à l'école primaire* [....] *Elle s'entendait aussi dire une fois, bien haut, en affrontant, avec son sang-froid enfantin, le grand-père terrible: "Ma famille, c'est seulement mon père et ma mère, c'est tout!"* (146-7)
>
> Lila remembers her father who used to carry her schoolbag and walk her, hand in hand, to the primary school [...] She also heard herself once say, very loudly, with her childish boldness and challenging the terrible grandfather: "my family, it is only my father and my mother, that's all!"

Again, in this 1962 novel, Lila's particular situation and character contain in germ questions that will be addressed later in more substantial novels. Indeed, in her subsequent works written in an autobiographical vein, Djebar explores the complexity and difficulties associated with an "Arab" girl who receives a French education, who also has a strong relationship with a father who is outspoken in favor of his daughter, and then

their effect on the traditional world, which is kept at a distance. Indeed, like the little girl in the later *Fantasia* (A little Arab girl going to school for the first time, one autumn morning, walking hand in hand with her father (3)) or the narrator in *Vaste est là prison* (*Main dans la main du père, je traverse le centre du village. Je rentre avec l'instituteur arabe* (268) [My hand in my father's hand, I cross the village center. I go back home with the Arab teacher] (268)), Lila develops a strong relationship with her father, who spoils her and also insists that she continues her education and that she becomes a free woman. "Don't expect her to join your harems" ("*Ne comptez pas sur elle pour rejoindre vos harems!*" Les enfants, 148) Lila remembers him declaring to the Patriarch. Lila is portrayed as a quite selfish character. She does not have any patriotic feeling either and when her husband Ali leaves for the war, she feels totally lost.

In *Les enfants du nouveau monde*, because of the war, the role of women shifts from passive one to an active one, but women's discourse is not different from that of men. As Marie-Blanche Tahon states in her article "Romans de femmes algériennes," women live in accordance with their absent husbands. They are feminine voices but their discourse is that of the other, not that of the colonizer but that of the Algerian man (96).

In *Les alouettes naïves*, Djebar focuses on one couple Rachid and Nfissa and their relationship with the war as a background. Djebar pushes further her treatment of couples by describing physical relations, which indicates a shift even though these are presented from a traditional viewpoint. Marie-Blanche Tahon even argues that war, which is presented as a factor of change (in role and otherwise) for women, is not only used to conceal the necessary struggle women need to engage in for their liberation, but also presents their role as that of passive resistance (96-97). Indeed, there is no such thing as

an autonomous feminine discourse.

Barbarology Against the Liberal Grain: Approaching *Vaste est la prison*

The objective of this brief overview of Djebar's first four novels is to underline some early aspects of her writing that she will continue to develop later in spite of the decade of silence that followed *Les alouettes naives.* Indeed Djebar shows an early gift for writing, and an interest in and a concern for the individual's quest for satisfaction (with self), which is sometimes pursued within romantic relationships. These notions will mature and acquire depth but more importantly will co-exist with new preoccupations now grounded in Algerian history and the role of women within this history. This important shift takes place after a break of several years and is hinted at in the opening to Djebar's collection of short stories *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*, published in 1980:

> *Ne pas prétender « parler pour », ou pire « parler sur », à peine parler près de, et si possible tout contre : première des solidarités à assumer pour les quelques femmes arabes qui obtiennent ou acquièrent la liberté de mouvement, du corps et de l'esprit.* (*Femmes d'Alger* 8)
>
> Not to claim to "write for," or worse "to write on," but barely speaking next to, and if possible very close by: it is the one solidarity to take upon oneself for the few Arab women who obtain or acquire the freedom of movement, of the body and of the spirit.

This opening sounds like the promise of a new beginning and several new elements emerge in this one sentence. Djebar now seems to be aware that she belongs to a very small group of Arab women who succeeded in freeing themselves and so also declares the responsibility of this group towards other women, a responsibility she calls solidarity.

And importantly, given the earlier comment about liberal rhetoric, she apparently recognizes the pitfalls of writing for or about others. This chapter addresses the last two points as tackled in the novel *Vaste est la prison* where a large place is devoted to women, their role in history and in the life of the narrator. In addition, *Vaste est la prison* also comes to terms with an essential part of the author's past: the history of the Berbers and their constitutive function as an "absent" presence. Barbarology facilitates the examination of the treatment of both presences.

The idea of Barbarology as developed in the first chapter entails an initial moment of confrontation between two beings where the Barbarian is the ultimate Other. It is loosely based on the Berber peoples whose link throughout history and in the various countries they inhabit is to be found not in race, color, culture, or even language, but in their status as a minority, the importance of the Other, and their resistance and resilience in the face of confrontation. Barbarology, while a project concerning a society in the making or in motion, is also a tool to enable the expression of minority discourses, that is, for these voices to be heard by explicitly revealing sites of power or blind spots which often prevent the two parties to acknowledge each other's presence and existence. And, once again, sometimes these blind spots are occupied by well-intentioned intellectuals of late modernity.

So, Barbarology is at work when all the elements of confrontation are examined and sites of power exposed. Again, this chapter is concerned with one single novel, *Vaste est la prison,* and its use of two major tropes, women and the Berber people, which are examined in their rapport to the narrator. This is the site of confrontation which marks a gap between the text and the actual referent, a gap largely due to the interference of the

partially autobiographical form of the novel and the fact that the history of the Berbers and the presence and role of women are entangled in the project of writing oneself. The notion of solidarity with women, for example, the concern of speaking next to or close by but never for or about, as well as the supposed "re-appropriation" of history, are thus all invalidated by Barbarology. Instead, as it turns out, women and Berbers are textual ghosts, which haunt the narrator, in presence and absence.

Indeed, *Vaste est la prison* is first and foremost a meditation on autobiography and the process of writing. It is based on major events or significant moments in the narrator/author's life. Amongst them, we can cite the narrator's father taking her to the French school for the first time; her feeling of alienation from both her own culture and her peers; the confusing and different relationships she has with three languages (French, Arabic, Berber); her mother's departure to visit her son in a French prison; her divorce and departure for Paris; and her professional career as a university professor in history, a film maker and a novelist. These events are verifiable though as the author suggests, the autobiography soon turns into fiction.[2]

Yet, while reflections on cinematography and fictional characters that appear in the novel such as Zoraide from *Don Quixote* stand as clear illustrations of the dreamlike process at work in the autobiography because of their obvious fictional quality, other aspects of the novel, such as the metaphor of women or the Berber trope are decidedly

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2 "*Dans L'Amour la fantasia, je me suis tournée vers une écriture d'autobiographie après quarante ans, après Femmes d'Alger et après ma première expérience de cinéma - donc après tout un travail sur le regard. J'ai senti que la langue de l'autobiographie, quand elle n'est pas langue maternelle, fait que presque inévitablement, même sans le vouloir, l'autobiographie devient une fiction.*" Assia Djebar in Gauvin (23).

more complex.

Djebar's novel combines fiction, autobiography, and reflections on the movie she directed as well as Algerian history. This kaleidoscopic aspect of her novel testifies to the difficulty of treating the autobiographical enterprise without treating history and one's relationship to others. Thus the novel comes to grips with a subject (object of introspection) that is buried under the complexities of Algeria's determination and history, embodied by women and Berbers.

Specifically, then, this chapter discusses the presence of women and Berbers and their entanglement with the autobiographical project. I argue that the history of the Berbers and the history of women are backdrops thanks to which the self is reflected on and eventually constituted or not. The use of both tropes reminisces the torment of the return of the repressed. Moreover this chapter considers the "slippage," a technique used to speak "next to" and "close by" women, and to re-appropriate history, a technique which could disguise a new oppressive structure for both presences.

Genealogy of a Rupture: Autobiography or Writing Off Others to Write Oneself?

A woman who writes in an Arab culture is a scandal, Assia Djebar reminds us, thereby emphasizing the subversive quality of her work. Indeed, expressing subjectivity in writing is a transgression, further aggravated by its object: the too narcissistic project of the comprehension of the self. This step, as shown by Gadant, necessitates a rupture with the world of women in order for the self to be discriminated from the group and articulate itself.

The community of women is the background against which Djebar's narrator attempts to write her self, like the negative of a photograph. The community's identity is usually

construed as being embedded in the autobiographical work when dealing with autobiographies by women and minorities. Susan Stanford Friedman, cited by Nancy Miller, claims that the sense of having one's individual identity inextricably bound to a community's identity is an element essential to the formation and representation of an individual life story. The self is located not only in relation to a singular, chosen other, but also and simultaneously- to the collective experience of women as gendered subjects in a variety of social contexts (Miller 3-4). This endeavor, however, is fraught with intricate issues when the very community the author engages is needed to authorize her to write her self, that is, to provide her with legitimacy. Gadant construes the transmission of the national past as a role Djebar imposes upon herself to redeem her rupture with the world of women, but it is the nature of this very rupture that must be questioned.

Naming Isma, naming her Name

Clearly Djebar's work is inscribed in a quest for selfhood and this is in itself a very complex endeavor. In *Vaste est la prison* we encounter names and scrutiny of autobiography from the outset. The author, after all, "confesses" to having written a biographical novel but the narrator who uses the personal pronoun "I" is named Isma (name in Arabic) while the author herself signs the novel with a pseudonym (Djebar's birth name is Fatima-Zohra Imalayene.) The anonymity of the signature entails a definite cut, or cutting off, from her real life. Jean Starobinski, as quoted by Khatibi, remarks that a *nom de plume* is not only a rupture with social and familial origins but it is also a rupture with the others (40). He defines pseudonymy as an insubordination against society in order for the writer to access an ideal and solitary freedom. This ideal freedom is what Assia Djebar strives for in spite of everything and for her, the place where this freedom

operates is in language. The author re-creates her identity both divided and welded again in language. While continuing his reflection on his own autobiographical work, Khatibi insists that there is always an affinity between autobiography and a "clandestine" pseudonymy which is an exercise of justification, of legitimacy of a divided self and the act of founding it in writing (42).

These insights enlighten the reading of Djebar's novel whose complex signs need to be carefully deciphered. Autobiography is, to borrow Khatibi's metaphor, "a portable laboratory which explores a dreamlike world" (*un laboratoire portatif qui explore la vie onirique.)* It seems that the dreamlike world that Djebar explores closely resembles a nightmare. Indeed, the narcissistic traits that Isma, the protagonist, develops while desperately pursuing her image in a set of mirrors or oppositions, in a quest to discover and explore her "self." The origin of this quest is tracked down to a decisive scene when the narrator is about to turn fourteen.

The novel opens with Isma, the aptly "named" narrator. She is forty and is recovering from a failed love affair. From the start, Isma is concerned with issues that are quite unusual for women in Algerian society. Indeed, self-questioning and love seeking at age forty are not common in her milieu (or in the West for that matter). Her intense introspection projects her into the "modern" world. Our use of modern here lies in its contrast with tradition and not in its celebrated qualities.[3]

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3 Modern being a catchword, it is necessary to clarify its meaning. Though today the term has become synonymous with "improved," "satisfactory" or "efficient," Raymond Williams reminds us that it was not always the case. While conventionally contrasted with ancient, before the 20th century most of its uses and its implications were unfavorable.

Clearly, Isma is not a traditional woman. While traditionally women acquire social status and familial respect through their motherhood and ancestry, Isma enjoys them through individual accomplishments: she is educated, has a professional career, she is married (well) and has two children. Her middle-age crisis entails a period of questioning at the end of which she decides to divorce her husband. The divorce itself is a challenge to tradition: Isma even pronounces a formula, which is exclusively reserved for men who repudiate their wives in front of God. Isma appropriates the sacred formula to free herself from the burden of a now loveless marriage. She divorces her husband--not the other way around--and it confers a power over her own life that very few women have.

Thus, following a feminist reading, Isma becomes an example for modern women—or in modern liberal parlance, a role model. Though she is established in a socially and economically enviable environment, Isma still questions her life, her emotions and feelings, her femininity, her desire, simply put, all facets of a woman's life that are usually dismissed with a wave. The first part of the novel, then, is entirely concerned with the narrator's emotional state and her relationship with her new love object, the man known simply as l'Aimé, or the loved one, a name which brings together her desire and its frustration.

Isma's unique destiny starts when her Arab father, a French schoolteacher, takes her to school for the first time. Her conflicts with French culture and with the values of the society she is from, along with both her banal and glorious ancestry are minutely detailed in the third part of the novel. In this part, entitled "A Silent Desire," the author brings together fiction, scenes from her film and reflections on film making, along with her own biography. This union of fiction, filmmaking and biography suggests a link between

desire and foreignness. Sometimes these two notions are inseparable. For example, Isma feels alienated from French people but feels a strong desire for French books, the reading of which her mother envies most. Isma the filmmaker incisively describes the many shots of a scene where a paralyzed man on a chair looks at his wife who is lying in bed. Desire, like in the first part of the novel, furnishes a major insight in the narrator's inner conflicts and family issues.

Following Lacan, desire functions here like a language, an empty medium within which the subject talks, an absence that confers presence. Appropriately, the narrator's desires are never fulfilled and instead leave her in a state of endless frustration and dissatisfaction. This lack and language, for Lacan, comprise desire. Moreover, there, in language there is always something that goes beyond consciousness, something which exceeds and so is excessive and this is where the function of desire is situated. This helps us to locate within a major lack, the sexual desire for "l'Aimé"—the loved one who cannot be attained—or the excitement for the discovery of an alphabet in the second part of the novel, which are, as we will show, symptoms of this lack. The first part of the novel retraces her encounter with "l'Aimé," the slow maturation of her feelings, and finally the break up. Her vibrant passion exemplifies her attachment to desire as a presence, as an intermediary state.

The novel opens when Isma wakes up from what seems to be a long sleep, hibernation almost. Finally, she can live without "l'Aimé." Over the course of the narration, we learn that the liaison she is finally recovering from was never consummated. Actually, neither l'Aimé nor Isma attempted to articulate their desire, to express their emotions whether with words or otherwise. The passion that the narrator keeps on referring to only existed

in her mind. Some passages depict the narrator's dependence upon her feelings. But instead of describing the man she misses, these passages focus on her own desire. L'Aimé attains some meaning for her during a soirée, after a show in Algiers. The narrator affirms that she desires his gaze, "*s'éveilla en moi le désir de son regard*" [within me arose the desire for his gaze] (56) which is really the desire for someone else's desire, which if traced comes back to herself, as an auto-desire. Isma then meticulously describes the dance she performs:

> [..] *ce soir je ne pouvais m'arrêter, je bondissais, je préférais soudain évoluer avec lenteur* [..] *mes hanches ou mon torse appliqués à soustraire, de celui-ci, l'excès, à atténuer les entrelacs, à transmuer le caractère oriental en des figures sobres, fidèles certes mais ni lyrique ni surabondantes. Seuls mes bras devenaient lianes, dessinaient l'arabesque, seuls mes bras nus, ce soir, évoluaient, dans la pénombre, tantôt en serpents tantôt en calligraphie.* (63)

This sensual and captivating description reaches the limits of exaltation. Significantly, the dancer describes herself and compares her own movements to (Arabic) calligraphy. This self-description testifies to her acute self-awareness and also self-alienation. The necessary outside look is provided by all kinds of mirrors or people. The narrator pursues potential mirrors whether l'Aimé; her husband, or even her daughter who makes her laugh and therefore gives her an opportunity to listen to her own laugh.

The narrator's self-contemplation (when she laughs, dances and above all suffers) participates in a desire to become an object to herself. Through this process of objectivization, the objective is to finally own herself, her own body, her own story. The violent depiction of her passion is so narcissistic that it almost becomes a passion, not for

the man, but for passion itself. This reflexivity appears for example when the narrator recounts a sleepless night:

> *Je me rendormais, m'apitoyant sur moi-même, sur ma déambulation continuelle dans la ville, sur ma désespérance* [..] *je me croyais, peu à peu rendormie, devenir la fillette de moi-même.* (71)

The wish to give birth to oneself expresses the ultimate degree of this reflexive movement: to create oneself, to be the creator and the object of the creation. It is a perfect symbiosis, which declines any belonging to or any presence of the other, and by extension of all the obstacles (whether they be linguistic, cultural, religious, or historical) that have precluded since birth, the elaboration of the self.

One of these obstacles here is the Other who intrudes and upsets the process of subject formation. Actually, all the others characters in the novel are muffled, none is offered a substantial description, which would allow him/her to develop into a full character. They have no psychological depth, almost no existence. Hence, all the characters in the novel are nameless, even those who are closest to the protagonist. Instead they have functions in a kind of instrumental parody of a moral narrative: thus, l'Aimé (the loved one), the spouse, the girl, the boy. The husband whom the narrator felt as an alter ego at one point ("*si longtemps m'avait paru un autre moi-même*") is slightly sketched even during his violent reaction to Isma's confession of her sin. She declares:

> *Si j'avais eu une confidente* [..] *peut-être n'aurais-je raconté qu'une seule fois, pour le plaisir ou la tentation de m'entendre à haute voix dévider mon aventure intérieure, cette possession lente et à laquelle je m'étais abandonnée d'abord délicieusement puis douloureusement...* (82)

In this passage, the narrator reveals the reasons for her confession: she was looking for a way to "release" her story, a receptacle for her words. Isma who has been imagining herself in love, finally wants to see herself imagining loving. The imaginary lover becomes an instrument, a pretext to tell-write: a pretext to the text. The blows she receives from her furious husband are not imaginary though. The pain functions as an indicator of reality, of existence in opposition to daydreaming.

A year later Isma runs into l'Aimé in Paris and "rediscovers" his gaze, as if moved by an automatic function:

> [..] *moi regardée par lui et aussitôt après, allant me contempler pour me voir par ses yeux dans le miroir, tenter de surprendre le visage qu'il venait de voir, comment il le voyait, ce "moi" étranger et autre, devenant pour la première fois moi à cet instant même, précisément grâce à cette translation de la vision de l'autre. Lui, ni étranger ni en moi, mais si près, le plus près possible de moi, sans me frôler* [...] (116-117)

Once again, the narrator seeks herself in the reflection of the lover's gaze which still holds all its power despite her decision to leave everything behind and go to Paris to share her life with a poet, a relationship where she is the object of love ("*un poète qui m'aime*") rather than a subject in love. One could wonder why she didn't initiate anything with l'Aimé, given the fact that she was so enamored with him and given the courage and the strength she deployed later in leaving her family to settle in Paris. The reason probably has to do with the solitary pleasures and narcissism. Also, one person's narcissism, writes Freud (70), has a great attraction for those others who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are seeking after object-love. L'Aimé was expected to declare his violent

passion –whose actual existence is never evidenced by any of his declaration–in vain. The description of love sentiments and fantasies associated with it reveals the narrator's constant concern for her self and the difficulty she has to express it free of alienation.

Clearly the narcissistic aspect of the novel reveals a lack, wrapped in a desire for self-knowledge/introspection, which the autobiographical experiment reveals, cannot take place without challenging one's past demons. The demons the narrator needs to come to terms with are these figures, which keep on reappearing in the novel, namely women and Berbers. Both presences are addressed and described in a similar fashion, around points of rupture.

A seminal scene

In struggling to articulate a personal voice, the narrator goes against the grain. Merely saying "I", of exposing subjectivity is in itself an abomination since morality compels an erasure of the individual in the group (Gadant 270). "Only the devil says 'me'- only the devil starts with himself," reports Bourdieu in his ethnological study (Gadant). Obviously, the narrator is familiar with this traditional view, which holds selflessness as a major virtue and has probably absorbed it before rising against it. This element is crucial in our discussion of the gaze since this awareness necessary partakes in the formation of the self, linked to the gaze of the other. To gain possession of this gaze would mean the capacity for self-creation, i.e. to hold the key to one self. It comes as no surprise that Djebar makes an extensive use of the trope of the "eye" (assimilated to the "I") especially when describing scenes from her movie.

As mentioned earlier, Isma is well aware of the way people perceive her and evolves under a disapproving and/or envious gaze. In post-independence Algeria, Isma could

easily be assimilated as a western woman from the upper class, a modern bourgeoisie. She has a rich and influential husband, a fulfilling career, a chauffeur, a maid who takes care of home, and a daughter who plays piano. This social and cultural -based sense of difference is grounded in her childhood. Isma received a privileged French education fraught with questions and ambiguities, while living in an Algerian environment permeated by the maternal presence. Very early on, Isma felt alienated from both sides. The following scene, while relating an episode in Isma's youth (she is thirteen), is also a primal and marks the moment of rupture with the world of women:

> [...] *elle ne comprendra jamais car elle ne sera jamais de nos maisons, de nos prisons, elle sera épargnée de la claustration et, par là, de notre chaleur, de notre compagnie! Elle ne saura jamais que si le luth et la voix suraiguë de la pleureuse aveugle nous font lever et presque entrer en transes, c'est pour le deuil, le deuil masqué. "Elle danse, elle, pour nous, c'est vrai; devant nous, en effet, mais quoi, elle dit sa joie de vivre; comme c'est étrange, d'où vient-elle, d'où sort-elle, vraiment, elle, l'étrangère!"* (279)

These remarks reported by the narrator are also a re-enactment of a scene that has profoundly affected her. She is dancing out of sheer happiness, which surprises the group of women, whose dance has a function: to release tension, like a trance. Isma is obviously aware of the disapproving and maybe somewhat envious gaze of the women. And the dance she performs illustrates the tragic of her position because while dancing she remains self-conscious. She knows that the freedom she has acquired through her education has a price: loneliness. Isma knows that she sacrifices the warmth and the sense of security that the community provides, but she has no choice but to keep on dancing a

personal dance in which she can be creative: forming arabesques or calligraphy.

It is at this crucial moment that Isma is estranged from the other women who form an indefinite but compact group—to which she opposes her personality and specificity. By recalling this episode, Isma summons up an early sense of foreignness for women consider her a curious specimen and Isma knows that she will never understand them ("*elle ne comprendra jamais*") nor does she want to. The rejection is mutual and complete.

Thus, we can date Isma's awareness of her singularity from this dance episode. Dancing has an important function for the narrator at least in that it is a form of creative expression. And in the above scene, it recounts a moment of awareness where finally it is clear that she is different and perceived as different. Her future is even being shaped through her ability to go out (the discussion on marriage). Significantly, the narrator remembers exactly the timing of this episode ("*j'avais treize ans et quelques mois, pas encore quatorze*"), which further emphasizes her fourteenth birthday, which becomes a major turning point in her life:

> *Parce que je décidai de le marquer, seule, par une entreprise nouvelle: commencer mon journal--peut-être ai-je pensé: "Comme Alain Fournier, comme Jacques Rivière!" "Voici mon projet de vie* [...] *au moins jusqu'à trente ans."* [...] *"Je désire, écrivais-je, et je m'engage à obéir à la règle de vie qu'aujourd'hui, à quatorze ans, je me choisis."* (292-3)

At age fourteen, Isma decides to keep a diary. Her birthday marks the inauguration of the writing process, a meaningful point of departure, which follows very closely the rupture from the world of women. From this point on Isma has to invent her life unlike others

who live within tradition.

This moment also symbolizes the initiation to the state of solitude that comes with the act of writing; the diary delays that approaching moment.

Of course, it is true, as Gadant argues, that the origin of the split lies in the French education the author/narrator received which turned her away from the maternal language and her compatriots. The act of writing, especially a diary, which is very close to autobiography, exacerbates this gap since writing about oneself goes against community, tradition and honor. At a symbolic level, Gadant associates the author/narrator's education with the father who first took her to school, a gesture which was considered like treason given the political context. This aspect will also have to be dealt with when the author tries to "redeem" herself by reinvesting in history and her "sisters."

Cinematography

Djebar's film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1978) is largely reflected upon in *Vaste est la prison.* This section addresses these reflections along with an examination of the film itself. Djebar's film contains the same techniques and addresses the same fundamental questions as her late fictional work such as *L'amour, la fantasia* (1985) and especially *Vaste est la prison,* and as a consequence, it conveys the same interrogations about women's representation and re-appropriation of history as the novel. Indeed the film alternates biographical, historical and fictional events using a characteristic technique of slippage, which is elaborated in *Vaste est la prison.* This slippage, I argue, could carry a new form of domination.

Like *Vaste est la prison,* the focal point of the movie is the protagonist's quest for selfhood, which necessitates a return to the past. The visions from the past are like ghosts

that one has to face in order to keep on living. Facing them means for Leila, the protagonist, to go and talk to women, to the elderly from her tribe, to aunts and parents, in a word, to re-connect with the past, which suggests a prior rupture.

La Nouba is an original movie consisting of a combination of archival footages from the Algerian war, testimonies from women who endured or participated in the war, and fictional characters (Leila, Ali and their child) as well as re-enactments of historical episodes, such as women finding refuge in caves or warriors on horses ready for the 1871 insurrection against the colonizer. The looseness of the movie—much juxtaposition of scenes (mother and child playing, naked children, the roof of a house) or landscapes (the mountains, the sea)—suggests the fragmentation of life after the war and the difficulty to bring the parts back together. In addition to its looseness, the film contains almost no dialogue, whether between the women testifying in front of Leila silent or between the fictional characters (actually Ali does not utter a word during the whole film). The lack of communication—except between the mother and the child where verbal and non-verbal communication takes place (a bath scene, a play scene)—also suggests one's shattered existence and the subsequent difficulty to engage the other.

However, the objective of this multi-dimensional project is Leila, who comes to terms with her past and attempts to construct/ reconstruct her self. Indeed, after she returns from a long trip, she is tormented by visions from the past, by the war, and by questions about her own existence. She then feels the need to reconnect and re-acquaint herself with her family, her parents, and her tribe and thus starts driving to the mountains. There, she listens to elderly women, whose stories, like the war exist in their relationship to her, emphasizing her reflections and providing insights into Leila's frame of mind. Leila is

our point of reference, the motor of the action and thus could be associated to Isma, the narrator in *Vaste est la prison*, who is engaged in the same quest, and finally, through the biographical links, to the author herself.

Another important indication of the centrality of Leila is the narrative voice in the film. Leila narrates events, repeats stories that she heard from women, and voices her internal monologues. She thus gives sense to the images, the stories and eventually shapes the film itself. Djebar also uses an interesting technical device whereby the voices of women telling their stories are covered by or overlap with the narrator's voice, like when the sound of music covered by that of bombs exploding. This constant slippage between the subjects and their discourse or between the image and the soundtrack is an interesting paradigm, largely exploited in *Vaste est la prison.*

This slippage, postmodern and original in many ways, creates a new form of domination vis-à-vis those women for whom the film is ostensibly made (in the "name of"—a declaration after the title reads "Homage to the sacrifice of the Chenoua women"). Indeed, not only does the narrative voice cover or overlap with the voices of the women to provoke a kind of entangled discourse, the narrative voice actually dominates all the other voices, not only through its function (it is the narrative voice) but also more importantly at a symbolic level. The narrative voice uses classical Arabic, a language that the Algerian government has been trying to impose and enforce since the independence through a specific program called "arabicization" (and there are Islamic overtones here). Moreover, the vast majority of Algerians does not understand classical Arabic and instead

speak dialectal Arabic and/or Berber. The first scene in the movie where Leila (4) visits an old woman is quite revealing. Leila is sitting in front of the old woman who is sitting next to a third person, who cannot be seen. After being asked to tell the story of Saint Abdel Rahman El Shami, the old woman first turns to the third person on her left, as if for an explanation, and then turns around to Leila to tell her story. The third person might very well be the translator. The irony of the movie is that when it came out in 1978, it was—and still is for a majority of Algerians—basically inaccessible to Algerians and more specifically to these women for whom the film was supposedly made.5

However, critics often see in this technique of slippage, superimposition and multiplication of voices, evidence of Djebar's efficiency and so praise it. While the film is build on rupture and alienation (Leila is alienated from other women, from her family and tribe and Djebar, a francophone writer using Classical Arabic to speak 'very close to' women who understand neither), Anne Donadey views the film's superimposition as expressing close links between "the transmission of that history and the retelling of a personal story"(45) and describes Djebar's entire work as "a palimpsestic structure." And it does indeed possess this structure, which one has to unveil, layer by layer. Anne Donadey senses the complexity of such a structure and situates Djebar's project in a space

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4 During a roundtable discussion, Djebar mentioned that the actress playing the character Leila is Egyptian. Egyptian Arabic is the language that the Algerian government wants to emulate. The choice of an Egyptian woman was probably due to the fact that at the time, it was difficult to find Algerian women who could speak Classical Arabic.

5 Clarisse Zimra in "Writing Women: The Novels of Assia Djebar" writes: "[Djebar] had to present the project as a recovery of war archives—a project favorably interpreted by the state censors as male-oriented—in order to reach the majority of her illiterate female compatriots (unpublished interview)." (77)

between 'speaking for' and 'speaking very close to':

> [The multiplication of narrative voices reflect] her awareness of the difficulty of such a project in a postcolonial context in which letting the other speak also necessarily entails veiling her speech: the dialogue between women in Djebar's work inscribes itself precisely in the interstices between sisterhood and appropriation, in the shuttling between 'speaking for' and 'speaking very close to' (53).

But since the film does not display any such thing as 'speaking very close to,' only the 'speaking for' is left.

In contrast, one could cite the example of Kateb Yacine who since 1971 was directing plays in dialectal Arabic, and who declared to *Le Monde* in 1975:

> *Pendant des siècles, les envahisseurs ont voulu nous imposer l'idée que nous, Kabyles, Berbères, sommes une minorité : nous sommes une majorité tronçonnée. Prendre conscience de notre identité est urgent. Jouer en arabe dialectal, c'est apprivoiser l'ennemi.6*
>
> For centuries, the invaders wanted to impose on us the idea that we, Kabyles, Berbers, are a minority: we are a sliced majority. To be aware of our identity is urgent. To play in dialectal Arabic is to tame the enemy.

And in 1985, again in *Le Monde*, he lamented:

> *Depuis l'indépendance de l'Algérie, on veut à tout prix imposer l'arabe littéraire. [..] Un gouvernement qui dispose d'un outil aussi extraordinaire que la*

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6 *Le Monde.* Sept. 11. 1975

> *télé et qui ne se soucie pas de se faire comprendre, puisque les journaux sont dits en arabe littéraire que le peuple ne comprend pas, c'est étrange. Nous avons une bourgeoisie d'Etat, parasitaire, et qui impose au peuple une langue qu'elle même ne pratique pas.*7
>
> Since the independence of Algeria, everything is done to impose literary Arabic upon us. [...] It is strange to have a government that possesses a tool as extraordinary as TV and that is not concerned about being understood, since the news are given in literary Arabic which the people doesn't understand. We have a State bourgeoisie, parasitic, which imposes to the people a language that itself does not practice.

Indeed, the imposition of classical Arabic has been a major policy of the government and its organ of propaganda, Algerian TV (8) (which has never once broadcasted Kateb's plays (9)). This situation begs the question, could the producer of *La Nouba* understand her own film (10)?

Another more subterranean level of irony is that Mount Chenoua is a Berber region where a majority of the people also speak the Berber dialect called Tachenouit. This aspect, absent from the movie, appears in the novel. Indeed, when Cherifa, the favorite

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7 *Le Monde.* August 11-12. 1985

8 Algerian TV, which produced La Nouba is the exclusive property of the government and its party, the FLN.

9 *Croissance des jeunes nations.* # 278. December 1985.

10 Leila's voice-over was first written in French by Djebar, and then co-translated into Arabic, and then taken up again in French in the film's French version (Donadey 53).

sister of the narrator's mother dies, a cousin of the deceased came down from the mountains and improvises poetry in Berber, "the mountain language"(236).

Finally one wonders what Leila actually hears when facing these women, in spite of her inner allegation (" I love to listen... Oh, how I love to listen… I am not looking for anything but I am listening to the sound of broken memory"). The answer is probably herself. Indeed, her principal purpose is, like Isma her alter ego in *Vaste est la prison*, to better understand her self. Leila declares feeling "like a foreigner in my own country" which illustrates the alienation she grapples with through in part her visits to women, who only further emphasize it. Indeed, unlike the women she visits, Leila does not work, does not cook, and is mobile; she is actually the only mobile person in the film (her husband is stuck to a wheelchair, other women are at home and she is shown driving her car back and forth throughout the movie). She also wears the '*burnus*,' a cape exclusively worn by men and which represents masculinity. Leila is thus portrayed as being different and more "modern," a modernity that is deployed in a simplistic form through the acquisition of male's characteristics (mobility, man's garment) which is reminiscent of the power of the camera.

But the movie's outcome is a tour de force. Through exposing Leila's sense of alienation (which can be retraced to Djebar's), a legitimate and compelling topic (if one does not dismiss class), Djebar doubly partakes in the oppression of women. First she imposes upon their voices and their experience, a language, which, not only they do not understand, but that is also complicit, through its use by the government, of the occultation of their experience. Secondly, Djebar further participates in these women's oppression by not revealing the oppression their lives and past experiences –through their

culture and language—have been the object of.

However, Leila's personal history is often perceived as being intimately connected with the country's history and often representing it. Hafid Gafaiti, cited by Anne Donadey, describes Djebar's work as creating "*la synthèse du 'je' autobiographique et du 'je' historique*"[the synthesis between the autobiographical 'I' and the historical 'I'](58) and Donadey declares that Djebar's work on memory allows her to "bring stifled voices and asphyxiated memories back to life and into history (60). These interpretations do not take into consideration that it is the very specific background Leila/Isma (and Djebar) who are bourgeois, educated, urban —a background that is often overlooked—all of which endows them with a unique experience along with their quest for personal answers, and that prevents them (and the author) from engaging in a real dialogue with these "other" women. This is of course all the more tragic because of the familial and historical links Leila, Isma and Djebar have with these women. It is for these reasons that Leila or Isma's experience cannot be collapsed with Algerian history in spite of being part of it.

Finally in response to Reda Bensmaia's claim that "la nouba may be interpreted as preparation for (the labor of) essential mourning and for anamnesis, both indispensable if we are ever to be emancipated from the past"(11), I counter that while emancipation from the past is a legitimate aspiration that we all should strive for, it cannot take place when the past is peopled with untold stories, which La Nouba only participates in silencing further while claiming to liberate them.

The "palimpsestic structure" of Djebar's work, to borrow Anne Donadey's expression, could actually correspond to Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry where

indeterminacy and ambivalence replace Fanon's dualism (colonizer vs. colonized) or Said's notion of Orientalism, based on the dualism between power and powerlessness. Bhabha highlights the ambivalence of both discourses, which he combines to form the "colonial discourse." Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as,

> the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*, in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference." (The location 86)

While the colonial relations become more dynamic—as it is clear in Djebar's work—the notion of mimicry contains some drawbacks such as the evacuation of the subject. Robert Young in *White Mythologies* (1990) voices this concern when he states that mimicry as at once enabling power and producing a loss of agency, a kind of agency without a subject. He writes:

> mimicry implies a greater loss of control for the colonizer, of inevitable processes of counter-domination produced by a miming of the very operation of domination, with the result that the identity of colonizer and colonized becomes curiously elided. (148)

Donadey also voices the same concern in the introduction to her study on Djebar and Sebbar. She worries that mimicry is interpreted as an "absolute collapse of categories such as the colonizer and colonized and used to cover up the continuing existence of colonial situations and the need to keep on pursuing decolonization"(XXII). In addition to sharing Robert Young and Anne Donadey's worry on the effect of the loss of agency in

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11 cited by Donadey 57

Homi Bhabha's notion of ambivalence, this notion nonetheless creates the space to identify a complex hybrid situation. Indeed, while it is necessary to identify the subject of the discourse because of continuing situations of oppression and domination, these situations do not necessarily emanate from the (ex) colonizer's discourse anymore but from other categories, such as the one that stems from the colonized world but perpetuating a colonizer-like domination, under the guise of protective labels such as 'former colonized subject,' 'woman,' or 'minority.' The location of agency is crucial, but so is the location of domination.

Writing on filmmaking

Several years after *La Nouba*, Djebar reflected upon some of its scenes in *Vaste est la prison*. Like the film, these reflections highlight the complex rapport between the author and the world of women and some discussions on filmmaking clearly illustrate a discrepancy between them. For instance, the description of the first scene the narrator ever shot is wrongly construed and presented as a triumph for the filmmaker but also for all women.

The scene exposes Ali, a paralyzed man in a wheelchair and his frustrated desire for Leila, his wife lying in bed. The director basically castrates him and then holds a camera—an instrument of newly acquired power with a phallic connotation—to record the frustration generated by the symbolic castration. Most interesting is the superimposition of the frames, a kind of mise-en-abime. There are 3 frames: the man seen by the director, the director's self-awareness while filming, and finally the narrator who recollects the scene of herself filming. The link between these three levels is the eye or the "I" whose awareness is heightened at every level and culminates at the last level

where the narrator watches herself see herself see the scene she created. The "eye/I," bruised by the husband for its supposed perverse activity, searching for a reflection in l'Aimé's gaze, is now not only capable to see without fear, but is also the subject of the act of seeing, the one that gives others existence. This transformation could be read as a feminist accomplishment: thanks to the camera, the narrator appropriates the power men have had for so long over women. She has finally acquired this God-like eye, the one that sees and creates. This could be seen as a particularly prodigious success, a self-empowerment at the core of every feminist agenda. However, this accomplishment serves a resentful action against men rather than a feminine empowerment, which could benefit other women. The film director, conducting a team of male technicians, uses her camera to create a scene where a man, sexually frustrated, is being watched. She uses the lenses to "get even with men."

The same holds true when the narrator claims a strong solidarity with women's suffering. The following passage is proposed as a gesture of sympathy towards them:

> *Peuples des **cloîtrées** d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, une image-symbole est le véritable moteur de cette chasse aux images qui s'amorce. **Corps femelle voilé** entièrement d'un drap blanc, la **face masquée** entièrement, seul un **trou laisse libre pour l'oeil**. **Fantôme** que **l'interdit** rend encore plus sexué. Silhouette unique de femme, rassemblant dans les pans de son **linge-linceul** les quelque cinq cents millions de **ségréguées du monde islamique**, c'est elle soudain qui regarde la caméra. [...] Nous toutes, du monde des **femmes de l'ombre**, renversant la démarche: nous enfin qui regardons, nous qui commençons.* (174-5) [**my emphasis**]

This excerpt contains a heuristic quality that needs to be deciphered. It comes just after the beginning of the third part of the novel dedicated to the narrator's ancestry and women's memory. The narrator recalls how she grew up with this vision of women veiled, masked, buried and finding it acceptable and normal. She has now changed her mind: the image is despicable and needs to be "*chassée*," hunted away. Before going further, a semantic analysis of the description of this image is necessary. The following phrases "veiled female body," "masked face" "segregated," "Islam," "shade," "shroud," "hole," "ghost,"" forbidden" "cloistered," etc., summarize the "image-symbole" she grew accustomed to. The mere choice of these terms reveals an external and superficial perception of these women. As Chandra Mohanty argues, the assumption of women as an already constituted and coherent group (note here the "cloistered peoples" and " five hundred million of segregated in the Islamic world') with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally (199). These terms, far from illustrating any solidarity with women, could easily be found in some western tabloids denouncing women's treatment in Muslim patriarchal societies. Centuries of women's experience are described as a shapeless, voiceless and lifeless conglomerate of bodies. Indeed, a very Manichean view of women's lives emerges from this passage:

A		**B**
-life	vs.	death (shroud)
-light	vs.	darkness (shade, ghost)
-freedom	vs.	confinement (segregated, cloistered, hole, Islam)

- permissiveness vs. ban (forbidden, mask, veil)

This description testifies to the narrator's own experience of women's gatherings (such as the one she recounted earlier): an undistinguishable group of illiterate busybodies. As discussed previously, Isma from a very early age, felt alienated from women who reciprocated by not allowing her access to the warmth and security of the "group." Thus, the image that she seems to so despise now is the one she created in opposition to herself. The terms of column A are obtained by the negation of those in column B. They also are characteristics the narrator associates with herself in the novel: free, unveiled, alive and active. The desire to chase away this 'image-symbole' originates from the desire to stand as a beacon for modern women. She writes "*silhouette unique de femme, rassemblant dans les pans de son linge-linceul les quelque cinq cents millions de ségréguées du monde islamique, c'est elle soudain qui regarde...*" The narrator is the woman whose gaze will allow hundreds of millions of women to see–an action which includes that of seeing the world and oneself and so entails a cognitive factor—and who would therefore incite them to create a more enticing image of themselves. The camera's role is to bring the world to these hungry women ("*elle...dévore le monde*") as well as to provide them with image and sound so that they could create their own image. The camera's eye --the one through which these millions of women will be seeing-- and the director's gaze are of course one and the same. What the director/narrator offers these women is to see through her eyes, which will eventually function like a mirror for these women. But while expected to render a reflection of women, giving them a voice and a life they have been deprived of, the mirror –always faithful to the one who stares into it– provides a negative of the director's image.

It appears that ultimately, what the narrator wants to "hunt away" is her own construction: the repugnant "*image-symbole*" is the result of the narrator's long objectification of women, so familiar in foreigners or men's gaze, minus the desire for her. It refers to women as a singular monolithic subject, similar to the way they are considered by some western feminists, who, writes Chandra Mohanty, take as their primary point of reference feminist interests as they have been articulated in the United States and Western Europe (196). The issue here is not cloistered women. If one considers the premise embedded in the narrator's reasoning, one could argue that women surely do not recognize themselves in this premise of "image-symbole" and thus do not need to do away with it since it does not exist, which does not exclude the existence of real women's issues and real oppression. Therefore, neither women's cognition nor their degrading/degraded selves are at stake here, only Isma's sense of selfhood. The inclusive personal pronoun "we" which is supposed to refer to both these millions of women and Isma is of course a metaphor for the I-eye, enriched by millions of mirrors, an "I" somewhat grown out of proportion.

However the mission to see for others is often perceived as an altruistic gesture of solidarity because of the admission of the other in the autobiographical narrative. For example Jeanne-Marie Clerc writes:

> *L'écriture autobiographique s'inscrit dans un "déjà là" de la mémoire collective des femmes, où le sujet parlant ne repère son identité que dans sa communauté avec l'Autre et avec leur commun silence imposé [...] Loin du narcissisme passéiste de l'autobiographie habituelle, l'écriture ici a valeur de prise de parole combattante, au nom d'un passé identitaire commun.* (75)

> Autobiographical writing is inscribed in an "already there" of women's collective memory where the speaking subject can only found his/her identity in his/her community with the Other and with their common forced silence [...] Far from the old-fashioned narcissism of standard autobiography, writing here, acquires the value of a fighting speech, for the name of a common past and identity.

Jeanne-Marie Clerc cannot be further from the truth for autobiographical writing, whether it includes others or not, remains an exercise on one's own existence no matter one's origin, gender or the claims of the novelist. Furthermore, the fiction affiliation is omnipresent. De Man even declares their distinction "undecidable" (921). The recourse to collective memory or history, which will be discussed at length later, reads –and should be read—as a rhetorical device comprised within the difficult process of giving birth to oneself (co-naissance).

Re-appropriating or Evacuating History: The Berber Presence

The analysis of the discipline of History through the colonial critique allowed radical questions to be formulated and the discipline has since been in the limelight of post-colonial studies. Rewriting history has become an essential postcolonial project. Novelists, scholars, critics have taken upon themselves the difficult task of offering tribute to those whose experiences and perspectives have been dismissed. Responses to a confiscated history by the colonial enterprise have been to re-write history, which consists in bringing out into the open a dimension, a subjectivity, which has been ignored.

History, as a discourse, a burden, and silence dominates Djebar's novel, *Vaste*. Through painstaking researches, Assia Djebar undertakes to re-write History, the one that has been dismissed from the standard Algerian history. This strategy, similar to that used

for recovering buried women's voices using slippage and other divergences, is often perceived as a post-modern approach where individual experiences are incorporated into the well-institutionalized and established discipline of history. It strives at re-appropriating specific historical events in order to produce another account of history through bits and pieces of stories, archives, legends and fiction. It has been a long time, writes Clerc, since History has stopped being considered an infallible enterprise of comprehension. History has become an effort on memory to recuperate silences from the past, cuts and different knots (107).The object of the "re-appropriation" in *Vaste* is the Berber dimension through its alphabet. And indeed a section of the novel is devoted to the recovery of the alphabet, a section comprised of actual events, which are imaginatively re-enacted, and fictional parts. The choice of the Berber history is pertinent for this kind of endeavor since it has been systematically distorted, deliberately ignored, written off, or exoticized. By investigating Berber history, Djebar attempts to produce an alternative reading of history presented not only by the ex-colonizer (France) but also by the ex-colonized (Algeria) who both have been oblivious to major data, events and experiences, although with different motivations. However, the operation proves to be fraught with obstacles and fails. It nonetheless remains a literary achievement, a prowess that, as this section argues, should not be collapsed with historical re-appropriation. Indeed, while the literary endeavor is praiseworthy, it is misleading to interpret it as the sign of a successful "re-appropriation" when the novel only further exoticizes the "rescued" episode.

The second part of the novel called "*l'effacement sur la pierre*" (erasure on the rock) is the only section that is not directly linked to the narrator's persona. It retraces with

passion the rediscovery of the lost Berber alphabet, which is then evacuated. The quest is sustained by the avid desire of the numerous investigators to rediscover and decipher this alphabet. The author/narrator of course partakes in this desire, which momentarily embodies an ongoing lack. However, the discovery of the alphabet does not provide any satisfaction and the lack re-emerges under another form. It thus appears that the quest for the alphabet, while presented as an attempt to recover a historical episode, is actually the vessel of the narrator's lack, which explains its final expulsion. Indeed, the Berber dimension, as imagined by the author/narrator, matches perfectly well the narrator's state of mind throughout the novel. Berbers are imagined, and thus exist in the novel, as synonyms of ghosts, the past and absence. So the narrator/author's rapport to the Berbers is revealed through their utilization as a trope to convey the narrator's desire for self-knowledge and the torments she suffers from ghosts. The narrator, it turns out, treasures this desire which can take several forms, she relishes it and definitely prefers it to a fictitious satisfaction that say, the rediscovery of the Berber alphabet could provide. Hence, the fate of the alphabet, sent back to oblivion.

The Berber presence in the novel as a whole oscillates between a ghost-like apparition as in the title, and actual representations and personal insights on some major events in Berber history. One soon realizes that this presence pervades the whole novel and provides it with a framework.

The title, *Vaste est la prison* is an excerpt from the following Berber song:

Meqqwar lhebbs iyi n&an,

lbeq ikurdan

Ans ara-d ferregg felli (Amrouche 73)

Vast is the prison that chokes me

Fleas and bugs devour me

Where would my deliverance come from?

"Vaste est la prison" is the French translation of a traditional Berber song/poem, which was written down by Jean Amrouche who received it from his mother Fadhma. Taos Amrouche, Jean's sister, sang a variant of it, which she claims comes from the famous bard Si Mhend U Mhend. She called it "The Prisoner." During her last performance in Paris in 1975, Taos Amrouche presented these songs to her audience as having been orally transmitted for millennia. "If I please people with these songs," she said during that performance, "be it that it is not only for the tradition of my ancestors but for all the traditions of the world which are endangered. I am the witness of past generations but now I am also the witness of present and future generations."

The traditional Berber poets/bards were not individuals but represented people because they were part of the people: "*Ils restent dans le corps du peuple, partant ils plongent dans son âme*" [they stay within the body of the people, thus they dive in its soul] (Jean Amrouche). Taos Amrouche sang these traditional poems/songs to revive them and the recent fixation in the written form had the objective of salvaging them from oblivion.

The verse has becoming a title and therefore is another form of rescue for Djebar. While extracting the verse from the poem introduces a discontinuity, a break in the chain of the "*clairchantants,*" it more importantly shifts the interpretative analysis of the signifiers. Instead of being a part of a coherent world of signifieds, the verse becomes a signifier. Its function, its form has changed. It has acquired individuality; independence, it can stand on its own. The process has altered the content of the verse while adding

another dimension to it. Because of its new function, it appears like an empty Berber vessel or a blank page waiting to be written. One needs to read the novel to fill with substance the words composing the title.

Similar to the dissociation between the title and the verse, a profound discrepancy appears between the denotation/connotation of the word Berber –a language, a people, a culture—and the utilization the narrator makes of it. The novel in its entirety becomes an allegory where the Berber presence is confined to represent absence and the past. This is analogous to the narrator's own situation: she drifts between her freedom with words—to assign them new, personal meaning to create a new language—and the inescapable signification words are burdened with. The two words that compose the title, "vast" and "prison," now stand on their own and evoke confinement (prison) and freedom or free space (vast). However the free space is limited by and included in the confinement, the confinement of prison, the prison of language.

Thus it appears that the desire for the recovery of the Berber alphabet, like the desire for the man the narrator claims to love (l'Aimé), is a metaphor for an ongoing desire, stronger, more radical and never satisfied. They eventually situate the narrator's desire in the language itself.

The Berber alphabet

The section on Berber history could be divided into three parts:

A- the re-discovery of the alphabet

B- the re-enactment of the ceremony of the stele

C- Polybius, the Greek historian

This section brings together Djebar's skills as a historian as well as a novelist. She

provides us with a brilliant re-enactment of the discovery of the Berber alphabet through an exhaustive investigation on the lost alphabet (including reading of archives, epistolary documents, etc.), extending for a period of more than two centuries. Historical figures are depicted in a very realistic way thanks to petty details of daily life such as the children of Dougga bringing Thomas d'Arcos some bread, cheese and eggs while he is contemplating the inscriptions on the stone, or again when he begs his friend Peiresc to send him a pair of glasses because he cannot read anymore. Other devices are used to bring these historical figures closer to us, for example the use of the pronoun "we" (the reader and the narrator), free indirect speech, or the mere presentation of the characters' feelings and thoughts by the omniscient narrator.

"Ce brave Thomas d'Arcors" opens this second part of the novel. "Brave" immediately introduces this man as an innocuous and engaging fellow; we are far from a dry historical report. At the same time, precise dates, detailed historical events (the destruction of Circa, the Punic wars, the French invasion, etc.) and world-renowned historical figures (Flaubert, Camille Borgia, Napoleon, Shaw, Hamdane Khodja, Delacroix, Venture de Paradis, Polybius, Bey Ahmed) populate the text and remind the reader of its non-fictional aspect.

This part of the novel is called "The erasure on the rock." The erasure refers to the erasure of the Berber alphabet called Tifinagh whose discovery the narrator traces back to Thomas d'Arcos (1631). It is not until the1860s that the "secret" is finally revealed: the inscriptions on the stele discovered by Thomas d'Arcos were Berber signs, which had since been forgotten. The process of discovering the long lost alphabet is narrated as a detective story or a quest for the Grail. The suspense and curiosity are sustained through

the following phrases:

> [...] *alphabet* ***disparu*** *et une langue* ***perdue*** [...] *écritures* ***palpitantes*** *certes, mais du* ***passé*** [...] *Ecriture du soleil,* ***secret*** *fertile du* ***passé*** [...] *étapes de cette* ***résurrection*** *de l'écriture* ***perdue*** [...] *le savant parisien est confronté à l'****énigme*** *suivante* [...] *une écriture* ***secrète"(***144-6-7) [**my emphasis**].

The widespread use of terms such as "*disparue," " perdue," "passé," "secret," "resurrection," "énigme*," is more than a means to keep the curiosity or excitement going. These testify to an uncanny *rapport* to the past and its evocation, and reveal a particular take on how to read the past and especially the way to revive it. This terminology testifies to a vivid desire that is fuelled by the secrecy of the research. The excitement goes crescendo until the secret (alphabet) is revealed, which then provokes the object to fall into commonness, i.e. worthlessness, and then oblivion.

Assia Djebar in this section of the novel performs a kind of resuscitation by retracing step by step the discovery of Berber transcriptions on a stele from the 2nd Century BC. The few lines on that stele comprise a thread, which brings together events, places, and many personages who would not have been related otherwise. The process of discovery is tempered by the reader's superior knowledge compared to the searchers (archeologists or amateurs) who are portrayed as being passionate but sometimes dismissive or ignorant of their predecessors' work, which keeps them in the dark for years. Thanks to the narrator's intervention (*il parle des deux types de caractères, "punico e punico-ispano", dit-il* ***avec erreur****. (131) et si cette écriture tellement ancienne continuait,* ***se disaient-ils enfin****, à s'écrire?* (147) [**my emphasis**]), the reader knows that the signs are libyco-punic. The discovery resides in recognizing that the Libyc and Berber are one and the same writing

with a few variations and that this alphabet had never ceased to exist for millennia but its link to the spoken language had been forgotten. In the 1860s, while the language was still being spoken and the alphabet still being used by Tuaregs, the link between the oral and the written was finally reestablished.

Therefore, the "discovery" does not furnish any new element; rather it is an act of re-collection. Assia Djebar provides a well-documented narrative of the recollection but oddly enough calls this whole part of the novel "The erasure on the stone" which refers to the opposite act: forgetfulness. This reversal also appears just after the recapitulation of all the information gathered by Celestin Judas, in the closing paragraph of the section:

> *Tandis que le secret se dévoile, femmes et hommes, depuis l'oasis de Siwa en Egypte jusqu'à l'Atlantique, et même au-delà jusqu'aux îles Canaries, combien sont-ils encore –combien sommes-nous encore–toutes et tous à chanter, à pleurer, à hululer, mais aussi à aimer, installés plutôt dans l'impossibilité d'aimer–, oui, combien sommes-nous, bien qu'héritiers du bey Ahmed, des Touaregs du siècle dernier et des édiles bilingues de Dougga, à nous sentir exiles de leur première écriture?* (P.150)

This passage conveys a profound questioning about the whole project. While the narrator re-created the conditions under which the invisible link between a spoken language and its millennium writing system was uncovered, the whole endeavor ends in deep bitterness because she and others feel exiled from this writing. The inclusive sentence in "*combien sommes-nous encore*" comes after the more detached "*combien sont-ils*" which shows that the narrator lives a double alienation, from the "they" –that is the others—and from the writing. Her inclusion in the second proposition makes the

statement on the exile even stronger.

Neither contentment nor pleasure is associated with the narrator's achievement, only a feeling of alienation and exile along with bitterness. Does this suggest that forgetfulness, the loss of memory, might have provided a more satisfying pleasure? This reading could be sustained by the explicit connection between the titles of the two first parts of the novel through the substantive "erasure," "*Effacement dans le coeur*" and "*Effacement sur la pierre.*" To erase (effacer) is to make something less visible, to forget it, to conceal it from memory. The erasure of the heart, as previously discussed, refers to the narrator's sudden passion for a young man, which tormented her until one day it faded away, erased by its inadequacy. But the conclusion of "the impossibility of love" is stated in the second part of the novel, therefore linking the failure to love to the alienation from the writing.

The equation between love and the alphabet comes from the fact that the same feeling prompts them both: desire. The resolution of the desire for the alphabet is very disappointing. Far from being "satisfied," the narrator feels frustrated, a deep sense of lack, a sense of incompleteness. The sense of alienation is even more sorely felt because she thought some relief would come from history, and instead she feels betrayed: she realizes that she has been following a dream, that history doesn't provide her with a sense of belonging because she feels alienated, detached from it. It lured her like the passion for l'Aimé lured her. The idea of a "secret to be discovered" is exciting, and it is narrated with much enthusiasm, when the secret is finally revealed, it loses all its attraction.

The revelation of the secret is pushed to its very extremes; a section is dedicated to the re-enactment of the ceremony of the stele with the participation of historical figures like Massinissa, Jugurtha, Miscipsa, Scipion and Polybius. It is the ultimate discovery: the

reification of the secret. Nothing is left of the secret, which took several centuries to be revealed. Unlike the desire for l'Aimé, it is achieved but at the same time lamentably fails.

The failed love affair ends with an epiphany of sort. The narrator writes *" je me sens nouvelle. Je découvre en moi une surprenante, une brusque reviviscence... Réveillée, lavée, surgie comme d'une longue maladie.... Réveillée, me voici ressuscitée"*(21). She feels resurrected, she has finally become aware of her own body and presence to the world, life has acquired a wonderful taste ("*Comme il fera bon vivre désormais*" (23). The magic spell has faded away and for the best. The role of l'Aimé is very similar to the role of the Berber alphabet. Consider the last lines from the first part of the novel:

> *l'homme me devenait le plus proche parent, il s'installait dans la vacance originelle, celle que les femmes de la tribu avaient saccagée autour de moi, dès mon enfance et avant ma nubilité, tandis que s'esquissait le premier pas de ma vacillante liberté. Lui, mon plus proche, lui, l'Aimé.* (117)

The unnamed man was expected to fill a void, the void left by women in the primal scene discussed earlier. The void is concomitant to the realization of her freedom. The failure of the loved one is well received. The narrator comes out of the experience energized, maybe because it failed and she is back to her lack, a familiar one. The success of the recovery of the history of the Berber alphabet leaves her frustrated. The superimposition of the Berber alphabet onto her lack does not produce the expected result: she feels betrayed.

Polysemous History

In the few pages devoted to Polybius, Djebar displays a strong awareness of history's

blind spots and the irony and paradoxes it contains. She thus recalls Polybius, the Greek historian who wrote in Latin about the destruction of his city by the Romans and the irony behind the defeat of Jugurtha, famous Berber king and relentless enemy of Rome, written by Polybius, not in Berber but in Latin. Djebar explores different modes of reading, writing, and reflecting on history, which reminisce Bhabha's careful attention to ambiguities and interstices in the colonial discourse. But once again, one should keep in mind the strategy of the author all through the novel, which has been to convoke history (or women) that she feels alienated from, in order to continue her personal quest and the search for the language to talk about it. Thus, while her treatment of history is indeed polysemous, it cannot be dissociated from this primary objective. As a result, the episode on the Berber alphabet is not part of a collective re-appropriation of a past that has been forgotten or confiscated, but rather it is the narrator's personal effort to grapple with Algerian presences such as Berbers and women.

In this section on Polybius called "*L'écrivain déporté*" (the banished writer), Djebar links Vercingetorix—whose story was told by Cesar, his conquering adversary, and which necessarily bears an exclusive Roman perspective—to the chronicle of Jugurtha, written by Polybius in Latin, (suggesting the same deficiency.) Djebar underlines a very interesting and dismissed aspect about the destruction of Carthage, which is its language. There are elements, which are either untold or ignored such as the relationship between the people from Carthage and the Numidians conveyed by the Punic language which after the fall of Carthage was still spoken by Numidians for centuries. The survival of the language reveals a history between the two peoples that goes beyond the state of war. Djebar interrogates these untold or subtle aspects of history, these spaces that are left

blank between the acknowledged facts and events. The narrator calls these aspects "*les sursauts de résistance*."

Unlike Cesar though, Polybius is compelled to write the story of Rome and most likely disagrees with some of its decisions and actions. But he writes history without seeming to take sides, he tries to report what he sees, even when his own country is being destroyed by the Romans: "*il voit la lumière de la Grèce d'un coup pourrir, il accepte et il écrit.*" What he writes does not seem to convey his own perspective. But Djebar claims that Polybius likely dissension towards what he is reporting does appear in his work. Indeed, Polybius writing is "polygamous" as she would have it, a comment which could be read as possessing several legitimate readings. One of them is the writing of history with its unwritten "*sursauts de résistance*," another is the historian's own feeling and appreciation of the situation. The narrator insists: "*Or moi, l'humble narratrice, je dis*" which reminds us of her presence and especially her first hand experience as a historian. This unexpected intervention of the author/narrator brings to mind her own investigation and thereby guiding the reader towards a "polygamous," polysemous reading of her own writing.

Still, the very final word of this section is "*effacement*" (erasure), which puts an end to the whole episode on the alphabet, which returns to its absence. The fact that the alphabet exhumed from history has a new life today—Algerians and Moroccans have re-appropriated it and are struggling to use it in spite of all kinds of governmental opposition—could not concern the author less because the project of bringing this alphabet from the past is coupled with a personal desire. If it had been successful, the discovery would have provided a sense of relief from the lack. But the graft didn't work. The rejection, under the shape of estrangement, necessitates an evacuation, i.e. an

'effacement.' Hence, the explorers mishandling the secret and the information it contained—selling the stele to a British museum after having destroyed its surroundings, for example—is undoubtedly reprehensible but does not provoke effacement, and at worst defacement. The process of "effacement" is the result of the conflation between this reprehensible behavior and the frustration/alienation provoked by the inadequate discovery.

Finally the Berber alphabet resuscitated in a very realistic way is doomed to forgetfulness. The overall project does indeed strive towards appropriation but it is a personal appropriation (which suits a personal agenda) in opposition to a collective re-appropriation. This could finally shed some light on the epigraph to "*L'effacement sur la pierre*":

> "*J'avais peut-être enterré l'alphabet. Je ne sais pas au fond de quelle nuit. Son gravier crissait sous mes pas. Un alphabet que je n'employais ni pour penser ni pour écrire, mais pour passer des frontières...*" Ch. Dobzynski, *Prologue à Alphabase.* (119)

The alphabet is buried in the dark side of the author's mind, his unconscious? But its ghostly presence can be felt. Its only use is to cross frontiers which might be for the narrator, imaginary frontiers. Doesn't this epigraph summarize the status of the alphabet at the end of the chapter: a pervasive, cumbersome presence, which the narrator uses as an allegorical passage between the lack and its impossible fulfillment, which is desire?

An Intimate Severance or the Genealogy of a Loss

Djebar's rapport with the Berber language is complex and equivocal but definitely engages her whole being. This section argues that, just like for women, a split is at the

origin of the narrator's singular rapport to the Berber language and can be traced back to parturition.

The narrator associates the first occurrence of the presence of the Berber language in her life to a very traumatic experience, that of rejection. Indeed, her birth was unwished-for by her mother: the highly valued status of being a mother –entailing power and accrued respect– can only be acquired through the birth of a baby boy. But the Berber midwife welcomed her and predicted in her language the baby's nomadic future. This initial umbilical severance, the maternal rejection and the anticipated departure (that is another separation), create an existence rooted in rejection and lack. But the scene that contains the severance with the Berber language is tied to the baby brother her mother gives birth to, thirteen months later. The baby is beautiful and cherished and even– claimed the grandmother in front of the skeptical mother—speaks Berber. The baby dies six months later:

> *Mort et enterré le même jour, mon petit! La langue, avec lui, s'est étouffée, c'est sûr. Il est entré bouche ouverte dans la terre; les mains, doigts écartés, et les yeux [...] Ses yeux, je me réveille encore la nuit et je les regarde, je fixe leur bleu!* (245)

This reconstructed reaction of the mother contains involuntary incursion of the narrator's retrospective response to her reaction. The phrase "*La langue avec lui, s'est étouffée, c'est sûr*" cannot belong to the mother who was persuaded that the whole idea was ludicrous as she herself argues: the baby could not have uttered Berber sounds because they were not pronounced at home. Therefore, the phrase belongs to the narrator who presents a re-inscribed wishful thought towards the preferred baby. In burying the

language, the wishful thought is to bury the baby, the answer to her mother's prayers excluding her existence. The action of "*étouffer*," (to suffocate) signifies to deprive the subject of a vital need, air. It carries the idea of suppression, (*effacement*?) for both the baby and the language, and since the baby died of dehydration ("*il avait perdu toute son eau*,") the interpreted act of suffocation reveals a murder wish.

Still the narrator insists on the loss of language as the reason for this difficult recollection which otherwise would be useless, unproductive and somber ("*croûte stérile et noirâtre*"). The language could have been a crown for this baby ("*une couronne de fleurs d'oranger*" 246), she writes with regret, it could have thrived with the baby, but the baby died and the language was buried with him. But why couldn't the language survive the baby? The language, symbolized by the crown is associated with the unjust traditional rewarding of the first significant baby, the first son, excluding the first baby–the narrator– and usurping her own right. It represents another unfair custom the narrator wants to do away with. Hence, the disdain and rancor behind the expressed regrets for the loss of language: the now useless crown enhances the now useless resplendency of the first male child.

The death of the baby boy participates in the declared attempt to locate the loss of the language while it really locates a more profound loss which has to do with the narrator's very existence, unlike the two other episodes the narrator recalls to suggest other locations for the loss: her mother's departure from the mountain to the city at age two and a little later when at age six, her mother lost her beloved sister Cherifa and became mute. The first episode–the move to the city– is the most satisfactory origin of the real and gradual fading of the language.

The three possible origins of the rupture/loss are associated with afflictive experiences—deaths or departure– and with the narrator's mother. While Fatima, the grandmother, started the tradition of fugitives, the narrator proposes her mother to be at the origin of another tradition: the erasure of the Berber language, the powerful allegory of the primordial rupture:

> *Cette langue dont fillette elle a voulu se détourner, d'un coup s'est évaporée : en elle, autour d'elle. Et l'enfant mort est resté pour toujours, en sa mémoire-tombe, l'enfant endormi.* (246)

Significantly, the chapter ends with the baby boy who even dead remained alive in his mother's memory. The myth of the "sleeping child" (*l'enfant endormi*) refers to the belief widely accepted among women, that a baby stops its growth in its mother's womb because of some shock. The baby can "sleep" for weeks, months, even years before "waking" up and resume its development. The narrator's mother in her refusal to accept the death of her child turns him into a "sleeping child" thus waiting for his awakening, ergo dismissing the other baby. The term "*mémoire-tombe*" strongly ties memory to death, illustrated by the mother's fixation in a past, which invades the present. The mother's denial of the baby's death only emphasizes the disavowal of the existence of her daughter. This lack of recognition is the ineffable loss the narrator is striving to express.

The Berber language, because of its immemorial past; its pervasive and obstinate presence in the culture, the language, the history of Algeria; but above all because of its simultaneous absence (or eradication) from the narrator's life, seems to be the perfect vessel to re-present the indefinable loss the narrator was originally inflicted with. She first strives to go beyond this loss by belittling it while struggling to articulate her own self,

but it always reemerges in one form or another: it is within her, concomitant to her birth. Consequently, if the birth itself marks the loss, only the prenatal condition characterizes the ideal situation of a unified and perfect existence.

Re-integrating the Berber language in its function—an allegory of loss—and tracing it back to before the rupture, would display its harmonious coexistence with the other vital elements during the prenatal life. After the parturition, however, it is lost and can never be recovered. This is illustrated by deaths (the baby boy, Cherifa) and departures (the mother's, the grandmother's) with which the language is constantly associated. The language has become a metaphor for rupture. Hence, the narrator's ambiguous take on the recovery of the Berber alphabet and its disappointing results.

More generally, the Berber language is looked down upon, denied by city dwellers. It is associated with backward customs and rough life in the mountains. Forgetting it becomes a sign of sophistication and progress. City women during the mourning of Cherifa, are condescending towards a parent who had come from the mountain and was lamenting in Berber. They only want to understand the language of the city, writes the narrator (*ne voulaient comprendre que le dialecte de la ville* (237)), emphasizing the real will at work in order to forget the language, a movement similar to her mother's when she turned her back on the mountain and on the language (226), and which developed into a refusal, a denial. (*l'oubli, le refus, le reniement de la langue* (246)). This overall denigration, even if shared by the narrator, is to be separated from the function the language has in the novel, which again has little to do with the status of the language per se and even less with its potential rehabilitation.

However, there are instances where the separation between the literal meaning of a

word/concept and its borrowed figure to create a trope is difficult to execute. In the passage below, restless dead come back in Algeria and demand their stories to be written or voiced and the words of the "lost" language, like the dead, rise to claim their due, too. The narrator seems to answer their call with this lyrical flight:

> *Je ne crie pas, je suis le cri tendu dans un vol vibrant et aveugle; la procession blanche des aïeules-fantômes derrière moi devient armée qui me propulse, se lèvent les mots de la langue perdue qui vacille, tandis que les mâles au-devant gesticulent dans le champ des morts, ou de ses masques.* (339)

In this closing paragraph of the third chapter, the narrator construed as the embodiment of the scream, pushed forward by an army of women cannot be understood literally. How else to understand this "mis-en-scene" where the narrator is metamorphosed into a piercing sound ready to reach heaven or hell, but as a theatrical allegory? The narrator calls forth an assembly of dead people along with the "lost" language–again this is a personal loss: the language is otherwise alive all right–to undergo a catharsis. The language and the women have been the two major tropes expressing the narrator's pain and consequently, they are the guests—the very demons who possess her–conjured to her conscience to be purged once and for all. Indeed, they connote loss, separation and death. They are construed as being responsible for her excruciating feeling of loss, thus, by focusing all her energy towards the scream–similar to the act of regurgitation—by becoming the scream itself, the narrator expects her soul to be, as Aristotle put it, lightened and delighted.

This passage, I maintain, is representative of the issues mentioned at the outset regarding the historical and feminist scope of the novel. Indeed, ways of creating

meaning, tropes in general, should be distinguished from their literal meaning. The danger lays in conflating the alleged meaning of the text and the way the tropes operate within the text. In *Vaste est la prison*, the tropes are especially deceitful because of their proximity to their literal realm of reference. The author plays with this propinquity by both co-opting the ideological value of the literal meaning and keeping the figurative quality of the trope. Furthermore, a certain predisposition to an ideological reading could be found in the very form of the novel, (the cover of the book, its title, the division in movements, their titles, their semiotic function, etc,) along with the critic's inclination. This predisposition is towards a political, sociological, historical and post-colonial reading.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed the re-appropriation of the history of women and Berbers in Djebar's *Vaste est la prison*. The method of tracing back the need to "re-appropriate" these histories to a series of original ruptures derives from Barbarology, which is grounded in the moment of estrangement, the confrontation with the Barbarian. In Djebar's novel, there is no such radical and self critical encounter with the Other because the other was, apparently, once familiar. Instead, Otherness developed within; estrangement from others is an internal phenomenon constituted by a break from intimacy and familiarity. This chapter focused on the notion of becoming alienated from one's own background and people and the difficult attempts at redeeming this split within literature.

But attempt does not guarantee success and this chapter also reveals a site of power, where women and Berbers are further repressed by being summoned to participate in the narrator's mea culpa. Instead of asking these people (who again, have become foreign to

her) who they are, how she names them, how they name her—questions Spivak suggests to first world feminists writing about the third world—to avoid one's projection onto another, the narrator is blinded by the pursuit of the autobiographical project, which ironically cannot take place without the Other.

Thus the argument developed in this chapter is that there is indeed a re-appropriation that takes place but it is a personal one—which is ineffective since the narrator is still haunted by women and Berber ghosts—and not a collective one as so many critics have claimed. And while some critics like Anne Donadey state that "the fiction self-consciously positions itself as being both oppositional to, and complicit with, a variety of power structures, such as colonialism and patriarchy" (143), they have little inclination to identify these complicities. While there is no way to recover an authentic voice, as Spivak demonstrates in her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" there are perceptive ways of exploring one's interaction with the other beyond the prevalent exploitation of the other as a reflection of oneself, and this no matter how complex and intricate the conditions of encounter—or separation, in the case of Djebar—are.

Finally, our take on Djebar's treatment of Algerian women and Berbers does not stem from any "nativist position,' as Young puts it (168), which idealizes the lost origin and yearns for the full recovery of a lost or repressed culture, even though this position can be defended under the auspice of Barbarology. Instead, our objective was to pin down the motivation or causes of the dismissal of two main presences in Algeria.

Chapter 6: The Foundation of a Poetics of Difference in Nabile Farès's *Un Passager de l'Occident*

Exile, as I developed this keyword in the previous chapters is crucial to understanding Barbarology. Again, Barbarology, with its mutating forms, as a theory on the move, is not only engaged and active, revealing oppression from unexpected places and sites of power—which was the object of the study on Djebar—but Barbarology also generates alternatives with which we can productively think about identity and exile—an alternative based on questioning, resistance and resilience. Typically construed, exile is synonymous with difference, loss, and uprooted-ness, yet a closer look at exile in the previous chapters showed that this keyword now has the potential to separate and yet re-weld, to uproot and sow, to renounce and then to find. Finally, the condition of exile and the necessary encounter with the Other entails a rupture that has always already happened—the encounter with the Other is a way to revisit this rupture, to grasp this experience anew.

This chapter examines how *Un Passager de l'Occident* complicates and enriches the notion of displacement and turns it into a symptom of constant change and "shuffling"—not only is displacement in Nabile Farès' text spatial (exile, voyage), it is also an allegorical oscillation between cognitive spheres and worlds that are deemed different or opposite (signifier/signified, life/death). Thus displacement becomes a multi-layered and polysemous notion, which plays on ambiguity to avert the pitfalls of writing (ready-made interpretation and ideological reading) for a francophone author. This chapter argues that this technique of shuffling and ambiguity, while shunning the pitfalls of the act of writing also furnishes the impetus to elaborate an aesthetic of writing and a poetics of difference.

Indeed, as established earlier, francophone literature is the victim of its own birth. Its emergence—an emanation of historical, political and colonial circumstances—has long supplied a set of comfortable paradigms with which to interpret it. In addition to the fact that francophone literature naturally lends itself to ideological reading, one should keep in mind the preconceived notions the West has of the non-Western world in general and North Africa in particular, which deeply affects and delays a challenging reading of this literature, for, after all, the West provides most of the criticism on this literature, even today. At the same time, it is true that francophone literature necessarily has a particular history of reflection upon the Other. Indeed, one cannot ignore the role this literature played and still plays to a certain extent, in the expression of alienation and the multiple attempts to come to terms with it. As discussed in the previous chapters, francophone literature in its inception strived to reach out to the Other, i.e. to the French, and articulate a difference, an objective which later developed into the act of translating oneself into a foreign idiom while elaborating one's individual voice. This individual voice, of course, includes the Other, which is less Other, and the foreign idiom, which is less foreign. Still, francophone literature continues to be a medium or a home for the articulation of exile and alienation. Finally, given the rate of literacy in the writers' respective home countries, the aimed readership is clearly western, and western publishing houses are still necessary for literary success, even at home in North Africa.

These obvious constraints and conditions, and many others could be added here—such as the necessity for French, a language with an inherent colonial quality, to undergo a deep alteration so that it expresses the voice of the Other—, finally render the writing process extremely complex and fraught with troubling interrogations and doubt. Indeed, it

is to the writer's option to turn a blind eye on all these issues; exploit them and surf them; try to subvert them; embrace them; or consistently address them. The latter is the difficult path that Nabile Farès has chosen.

This chapter also argues that some aspects of Berber history, mythology, and legend as well as the specific quandary in which the Kabyle people are, are reflected upon and incorporated to found this poetics of difference. Farès unlike Djebar, objects to and is extremely wary of being cast as a representative of his people. Through his constant circumspection, Farès thwarts any possibility of falling into this role. Finally, because of these sustained and sometimes paralyzing efforts, I argue that Nabile Farès's writing embodies some of Barbarology's best features. Indeed, Barbarology reveals sites of power and creates a space for the expression of an always-shifting identity (including resistance) and for the notion of exile to expand beyond its accepted boundaries. And so, Farès identifies the site of power—which he avoids—while he innovatively addresses identity in his depiction of and reflection upon Kabyle identity. In contrast, Djebar in *Vaste est la prison* creatively uses the absence/presence characteristic of the Berber people—a fertile feature as Barbarology demonstrates—to express a personal lack and her struggle with writing while posing as the liberator of Berber voices, collapsing therefore the allegorical use she makes of the Berbers with an ideological one, an approach which only further silences the Berber people.

Thus, to return to Farès, exile and its partner issue identity are both explored in *Un Passager de l'Occident* and are both central to any productive reading of the novel. Under the aegis of Barbarology I will offer a close reading of this novel, a reading which I maintain distinguishes his voice, a Berber voice from that of Djebar and other Algerian

and/or Berber writers. This distinction, the importance of his voice, finally hinges on his productive skepticism toward writing, a skepticism grounded in Barbarology. In an almost typical "Berber" move, the narrator only reveals himself through the eyes of the other or through "cracks" in the text. Indeed, one only guesses him through mediating relationships such as his encounter with the American writer James Baldwin, his love affair with Conchita, or his remembrance of the tragic death of his cousin Ali-Saïd. Moreover, *Un Passager de l'Occident* also founds a place from which to write, a tortuous and in-between space between desire and death. Indeed, it is an atypical novel that reflects at different levels upon the process of writing for a Berber writer in exile. Many ambushes lie on the road, however, and yet all are successfully averted though so many more lurk everywhere. Still, Farès seems to always be on the *qui vive* to thwart ideological or reductive reading of literature, for he is devoted to writing, unconditionally. This alertness goes hand in hand with a reflection on the consequences of simplification or ready-made intent, which vary from naiveté to deceit. At the same time, Farès establishes an alternative, which consists in creating and espousing a poetics.

Perhaps Farès is the best novelist for the exposition of Barbarology, and perhaps this is evident from the first due to his biography. Nabile Farès, born in Collo in Kabylia, as a Berber writer has always been caught up in reflection on the complex question of Berber identity in Algeria, an engagement that he develops throughout his novels. He studied philosophy and nomadization during a stay in Mali in 1969 and showed an early interest and attachment towards oral literature, which he studied under the direction of Germaine Tillion. He has lived and taught in several places (Spain, Algeria and France) before settling in Grenoble (France), where he is currently teaching. Again, this chapter explores

the way Nabile Farès articulates this entanglement (exile, identity) with the process of writing in *Un Passager de l'Occident*. Farès' deep skepticism and wariness vis-à-vis the act of writing coupled with his utter dependence upon it as his means of expression—a situation that creates symmetry between desire and death—enable him to elaborate a new mode of writing liberated from common pitfalls, and what I call a Berber poetics, a critical methodology for Barbarology.

Nabile Farès is a prolific writer who does not limit himself to creative writing. He often intervenes in the realm of politics and also writes on literature and anthropology. His literary writing challenges genre, however, but differing from Djebar's mix of the novel and historiography, he blurs the boundaries between poetry, novels, and short stories, creating a new literary voice that also transcends boundaries of categories. Nabile Farès also challenges the assumed completeness of the book, pushing textual boundaries and borders by allowing characters, stories and events to develop over several pieces of work.

In his first novel, *Yahia, pas de chance*, some fundamental elements of Farès's subsequent novels are already in place. Language (as an issue) is introduced through translations which Yahia, the main character, executes. Also in an epigraph, Farès quotes Mao Tsé-Tong who denounces writers who write with the stereotypical style of the party and urges an end to such writing.[1] Moreover, the complexities of political engagement are illustrated by Yahia's commitment to the FLN (the National Liberation Front) and his

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[1] Donc, il est de toute nécessité de dénoncer ce style stéréotypé et d'en finir avec lui. (Thus, it is urgent to denounce this stereotypical style and to put an end to it) Mao Tse-Tong. *Ecrit sur l'art et la littérature*. (Yahia 153.)

wariness of the Organization; when he is asked to give up his room for the Organization he answers:

> "*Je n'en ai rien à foutre de l'Organisation. C'est quoi, l'Organisation, quand ça porte un si grand O? C'est plus important que l'organisation avec un petit o et des petites lèvres?*" (137)
>
> "I don't give a damn about the Organization. What is it, the Organization, when it takes such a capital O? Is it more important that the organization with a small o and little lips?"

While a militant in the FLN, Yahia realizes the dangers of such a rigid organization, which ignores "the song of the nightingale," that is an aesthetic sensibility and a sense of freedom.

Exile, and movement its ancillary is another element that is omnipresent in Farès's work and that emerges in *Yahia, pas de chance*. Indeed, Yahia is always on the road, somewhere between Akbou (Kabylia, Algeria), Versailles, and Paris, places, which give the chapters of the novel their titles. In *Yahia pas de chance*, several characters make their appearance: uncle Saddek, aunt Aloula, their dead son Ali-Saïd, Si Mokhtar, the combatant, and the narrator and his first romantic relationship with a French woman, Claudine. Finally there is the porcupine at the end of the novel, an animal, associated with protection, but which will acquire a more significant role in Farès's later novels. Here we see this animal in a specific respect, and so, before going back to Algeria and the war, Yahia writes a letter to Claudine where he states:

> *Je crie que je ne mourrai pas, parce que la mort ca n'existe pas. Je me cacherai dans toutes les forêts du monde et j'aurai une carapace de piquants, comme le*

hérisson de nos campagnes. (156)

I scream that I will not die, because death does not exist. I will hide in all the forests of the world and I will have a carapace of spines, like the porcupine in our countryside.

Writing on the Move

The title *Un Passager de l'Occident* suggests a non-westerner's perspective on the West, but more important it directly refers to the act of crossing frontiers and boundaries, made possible, following Barbarology, by exile and writing and crossing borders, seas and rivers is an omnipresent theme in Farès's writing. In *Le champs des oliviers*, the narrator Brandy Fax is on a train to Barcelona from Paris, writing his dissertation on the signification of the ogress,[2] a fictitious character in Berber folklore who embodies and entails a reflection on historical legend, myth and Algerian history, all on the move. In yet another novel, *Mémoire de l'Absent,* there is a movement between Paris and Algiers, but the most significant motion is the attempt to "go beyond the river."

From a thematic and formal point of view, the fundamental motif of Farès's novel is traveling. We find this theme on the book cover, (which underlines Farès's itinerant career and life in France, Spain and Algeria) and in the title. Thus, *Un passager de l'Occident* suggests movement and discovery/adventure and the titles of chapters refer to a geographical place while the novel itself is reminiscent of a logbook, (without the dated entries at the beginning of each chapter, though the logbook form suggests a literary ancestor, *Robinson Crusoe*). This strategy is Farès's playful transparency, which often

[2] This is the topic of Nabile Farès's dissertation supervised by Germaine Tillion.

carries its opposite, opacity. The travel motif is an allegory of work in progress—in progress from one place to the other--but unlike traditional allegories (where the story has a distinct primary and secondary meaning), Farès offers a composition where both the text and its palimpsest—the hidden/ buried event, emotion or comment—are intertwined in an explosion of signs, which blurs any straightforward reading. Indeed, a new semiotics is at work. Given the new twist of Farès travel trope, it is necessary to take into consideration all the manifestations of movement in order to fully grasp the polysemous nature of the sign and Farès's poetics.

The thought of people on the move in turn suggests refugees, or, better, exiles. Yet, the true exile, writes Edward Said, cannot return home in spirit or in fact. The achievements of any exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something forever left behind (Said 181). But as discussed in the chapter on exile, the traditional concept of exile is too restrictive and should instead encompass all individuals who have left their respective country regardless of their condition or function because the mere departure already entails experiencing the essence of the exilic condition, which then acquires different degrees of intensity. The narrator of *Un Passager de l'Occident*, however, partially fits the elitist notion of the exile as an educated individual who reflects on his condition and who left his peninsula without any intention of return while keeping a strong emotional attachment towards it. But on the other hand the narrator, is not banned from his country and his residence in France—the Parisian refuge to which he returns after visiting Spain—is totally voluntary. Thus exile was not imposed upon him.

In addition, all the characters in the novel have some link to exile. Farès/the narrator and Baldwin are writers in exile; Conchita, originally from Spain, is also an exile who

becomes the narrator's spiritual guide, while Ali-Saïd's exile is more allegorical, embedded as it is in his move from the village to the mountain to join fighters at the beginning of the Algerian war. These three characters all contribute to the narrator's grappling with predicaments linked to his being a writer, a "passenger," and a Berber. Farès dedicates the novel to both Baldwin and Conchita, while Ali-Saïd gives his name to the novel's second title: "ou, Ali-Saïd (le Chanceux)." These three characters share a sense of expatriation, all voluntarily exiled, and provide the narrator with a space where he can reflect on his own expatriation. But while the description of the passenger's emotions is meticulous, nothing is stated about the narrator's past. Therefore, the reader has to reconstitute it from the pieces and hints the narrator makes available to him/her. The narrator creates a feeling of strangeness or defamiliarization within a realm of familiarity, which is also reminiscent of Freud's notion of the uncanny (*unheimlichkeit*). Extrapolated further we could even say that this uncanny-ness is related to Lukacs's contention in *The Theory of the Novel* that the modern condition is uncanny, or one of "transcendental homelessness" (Lukacs 61). Given the exile and "travel" theme of the novel, this seems by no means farfetched.

Hence, the reading resembles an investigation where shards of information about the narrator are collected to create meaning. Ironically these jagged pieces, which, allow us to recreate the narrator's very personal world, refer to the narrator's current environment, that is to say to exile—a Parisian bar or café, Spanish beaches, a Spanish dancer, a Black American novelist—instead of disclosing his childhood and personal emotions linked to his past or his original country as it is traditionally done in narratives with an autobiographical overtone. Absence is the non-space where memory, the past and its

wounds are confined. These absent or hidden events could be brought to light, through a game of deduction based on shadows. But in the few instances where these absences emerge, they are not fully incorporated to the text instead they function as parentheses to the narrative, (like the bracketed text on Ali-Saïd), like an excrescence that cannot be assimilated. The passage on Ali-Saïd functions like a text imported from history; it is surrounded by quotation marks, like frontiers, to make sure it will not spill over the rest of the narrative. Clearly, the passage seems foreign to the text, and the quotation marks reinforce this idea. Thus, crucial events, such as the cousin Ali-Saïd's death, are treated as inserted notes, which contrasts with the symbolic magnitude usually associated with an eponymous character: Ali-Saïd's name is the subtitle of the novel. This confirms my paradoxical hypothesis emerges that of the presence of a lack/absence on the surface-text, which is revealed through an examination of the world underneath the seemingly hectic and active world of the passenger.

Indeed, there is a wide discrepancy between the present time, the movements the passenger executes and the rhizomatic world underneath the surface. While the passenger's movements take place on a surface level (geographical places), the text not only hides a subterraneous level but also many more layers, which occasionally escape their straitjacket, like slips of the tongue or other manifestations of our unconscious. Thus, in order to recompose the narrator's character or gain some insights into his past, one must deduce it from his extensively narrated interactions with Baldwin and Conchita, and from bits and pieces of the life and death of his cousin Ali-Saïd. Thus, through absence, shuffling and other literary techniques, Farès utilizes exile/travel as an ingenious

motif to create a language to write about the act of writing, the past, history, and himself in an innovative way.

Writing Difference: A Barbarian Disclosure or Revealing oneself through the Other

Un Passager de l'Occident, like in other novels, Farès grapples with the many difficulties a francophone writer must face. The act of writing is carefully dissected and leads the narrator to question the extent to which his condition (Algerian and Kabyle, exile in France) shape his thinking and writing and even permeates his everyday reality. This introspection takes on a political-philosophical cast and leads him to ponder existential issues such as his freedom as a writer and the meaning of his own writing as a Berber writer. Indeed, like so many Berber writers before him, Farès writes in a language that is not Berber and the introspective process in *Un Passager de l'Occident* unfolds through the Other too, that is other characters, foreign places and through the narrator's travels, whether they are imaginary or real.

The novel is divided into chapters and each chapter refers to a geographical place (New York, Paris, Orense, Cangas, La Romance, café) with the exception of the two last chapters, where geographical places or references to history is undetectable, as if purged from the text. Chapter eight, "Paris, la Fleur," precedes this purge. The narrator, after an imaginary trip to the United States—prompted by the coming encounter with James Baldwin—and an actual trip to Spain, returns to Paris, where his wandering started. Significantly, this chapter is the first one where authorship is ambiguous for it is written by an unidentified supposed-friend. Far from suggesting that Paris is to be conceived as the ultimate refuge, the return to the city and the title "Paris, la Fleur," rather points to the place where the author has come full circle and finally needs to come to terms with his

writing. The chapter evokes a crucial moment in the writer's process of creation, the realization and perhaps the admission that writing is possible but entails some sacrifices. The unidentified friend and anonymous writer might even be the writer's own consciousness exposing the distress provoked by the writing activity as well as the ray of hope it also provides. The two last chapters express this change, which by the end of the novel seems to be fully embraced by the narrator.

Simply put, *Un passager de l'Occident* retraces the narrator's literary quest. He refers to himself as "a passenger," thereby emphasizing his anonymity by both the use of the indefinite article and the ephemeral and transitory state associated with the traveler. The term "Occident" further accentuates this idea and generates an unequal *rapport de force* between the nameless passenger whose role is to continue his course, and the solidly defined West. The passenger is as transient as the west is fixed, allowing the reversal of a system—to explore and elaborate one's individuality by fixing the Other—which proved so efficient for the articulation of the western mind and philosophy. Therefore, the novel is an examination of the passenger's own psyche through monologues but above all through various interactions with people. The introspective process is therefore enhanced by the acknowledged necessity to interact with the west, a world that is both familiar and foreign.

Thus, it is not surprising that the novel opens with a telephone conversation between the narrator and Guy, the editor at *Jeune Afrique* who asks him to interview James Baldwin. The conversation, which seemingly focuses on the coming interview with the American writer, instead exposes the narrator for it reveals too much more about him than about the American writer. Unlike Guy, his interlocutor, the narrator displays a

certain familiarity and appreciation of Baldwin's work and instantly remembers a sentence, stamped into his mind, "*il faut que les États-Unis se persuadent qu'ils sont une nation métisse ou, alors, c'est le feu*" [The United States have to accept the fact that they are a *métisse* nation or the fire next time] which echoes the question he raised when first informed of an interview with an American writer, namely whether the writer is white or black thereby showing an understanding of the entanglements of race in the American discourse.[3]

This historical awareness, then, reveals a fundamental aspect of the relationship of the passenger (the narrator) to the West. The passenger here, unlike his orientalist predecessors who made the reverse voyage (West to East or to the "Orient") and who were mostly condescending and prejudiced in their approach to the Other, knows all too well the world he is crossing for this same world has partially produced him. Thus the voyage is also an internal voyage for the narrator undertakes it in order to come to grips with his own contradictions.

Notably, the passenger is never named throughout the novel. However, as a freelance journalist for *Jeune Afrique,* he uses the pseudonym Brandy Fax[4] (an English sounding

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[3] On a contextual note, the introduction of James Baldwin, and then the terms of his role in the novel, specifically with reference to Richard Wright and protest literature, cannot be separated from American history of the late 1950s to the early 1970s. One can cite the HUAC hearings of the 1950s and McCarthyism, the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which was marked by tremendous achievement and then the assassination of key figures, namely Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King. And, of course, the Vietnam War and the attendant protest movement, which will be forever linked to America in the 1960s.

[4] Nabile Farès actually sheds some light on the choice of this pseudonym. He saw the word "Fax" on a subway ad for schools named "Fax" and then added Brandy. But the letter "X" he realized has the value of a canceling stroke. He states, "it is therefore linked

name that evokes a writer's stereotypical characteristics: alcohol and paper) to interview James Baldwin. This pseudonym stands as the only signifier, yet it is a phony one. The distance established through this hoax, allows the narrator to keep his identification at bay:

> *Oh, what is your name?*
>
> *-Je m'appelle Brandy. Brandy Fax." Et j'épelai toutes les lettres de mon joli nom, une par une, comme vous auriez effeuillé les pétales d'une sainte alliance.*
>
> *"O.K. Vous êtes journaliste?*
>
> *-Non. Pas du tout. J'écris toute la journée chez moi.*
>
> *-O.K. Vous me direz ce que vous faites.*
>
> *-Sûr. A demain." Je raccrochai, et pensai à mon joli nom.* (17-8).
>
> Oh, what is your name?
>
> -My name is Brandy. Brandy Fax." and I spelled all the letters of my beautiful name, one by one, as if plucking off the petals of a saint alliance.
>
> "O.K. Are you a journalist?
>
> -No. Not at all. I write at home all day.
>
> -O.K. You will tell me what you do.
>
> -All right. See you tomorrow." I hung up, and thought about my beautiful name.

By choosing his name, the narrator assumes the responsibility of his own naming (an ultimate freedom related to his fantasy to "choose" to be born) while freeing himself from all references, except maybe the reference to America. Indeed in *Le Champ des oliviers*,

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to the name that is buried within each one of us, to the erased identity." (Nourredine Saadi in *La littérature maghrébine*.)

Brandy Fax on his way back from Morocco is arrested at the frontier: his identification card was too old. He is finally released with the promise that he will get a new one but the event troubled him and he writes:

> *Depuis. Moi. Brandy Fax. Je cours devant les fiches d'identité trop claires.* [...] *Oui . Moi. Brandy Fax. Je hais l'Amérique. J'ai perdu mon ancien nom. Oui. Le mien. Celui que l'on donne chez nous (?) Chez nous? Mqides. Oui. Celui qui ne dort et n'a pas sommeil.* (24)
>
> From then on. Me. Brandy Fax. I run before the identity cards, which are too clear. [...] Yes. Me. Brandy Fax. I hate America. I lost my old name. Yes. Mine. The one that is given at home (?) At home (?) Mqides. Yes. The one who does not sleep and is not sleepy.

The American sounding name that he chose turns out to be indirectly linked to the loss of his original name, which is that of a fictitious character too. Mqides is a comical figure in many folk tales who plays tricks on people. But the name Brandy Fax also connects the narrator to his future interlocutor (James Baldwin), a connection which functions in the same way as when he denies to be a journalist to volunteer the information on his writing activity thereby creating with James Baldwin the "*sainte alliance*" he refers to in the passage cited above.

Interestingly, the protagonist seems to deliberately obliterate all references to his life —where he is from, his culture and language—and instead only offers fragments of it. For instance, the narrator offers Baldwin a copy of his first book and when reading the title Baldwin does not pronounce the name Yahia in *Yahia pas de chance,* an act, which might be read as a desire for cultural effacement on the narrator's part. On the other hand,

this effaced, hidden world surfaces at the most unexpected times and places in the narration. Brandy Fax, in a move that after Barbarology we might call typical "Berber," prefers to present the attributes he shares with characters from other novels than to boast of his own personal achievements. For instance, his bohemian lifestyle reminds one of the beat generation at its heights a decade earlier, while his sullen loneliness fits the stereotype of the lonesome hip artist of the late sixties. Indeed, the narrator leads a frugal life in a tiny studio in Paris; his world is reduced to old friendships, nocturnal visits to an old fashioned bar, writing, and heavy drinking.

However, Brandy Fax, though a writer, does not live by his pen. Besides writing occasional articles, he makes a living transcribing folktales, a paradox as the Berber writer turns his culture, an oral culture, into a form so valued in the West: text. The narrator experiences both alienation and confusion, for he is now positioned nowhere. Moreover, he is also in the disconcerting position of having not only to prove himself as a writer, but, more importantly to generate a language with which he can address these fundamental questions about writing and existence. His diverse writings (journalism, folktales) entail the narrator's familiarity with different genres and by extension the novel form, whose genre is not only examined but also questioned throughout the novel. Indeed, the novel (as a literary genre) is not a neutral form but belongs to a particular western literary tradition with a historical origin. This textual, bourgeois form so rooted in constructs such as the "individual," conflicts with Farès's Berber culture, which, again, is primarily an oral tradition. So how does the novel form support the oral tradition? What awaits this earlier mode of Berber culture? Does the Berber text signify the

replacement of oral poetry and culture, that is, its death, or will Farès try to reconcile them through his writing?

While the narrative voice might seem to be the appropriate compromise between orality (Berber) and textuality (French-West), it proves to be quite flimsy and has a tendency to change form and even disintegrate—as it does by the end of the novel—even though it is often the only link between the different sections of the novel as well as among the characters (Baldwin, Ali-Saïd, the narrator's cousin, and Conchita, the narrator's lover). Indeed, These characters never meet nor are they fully portrayed but exist only insofar as they relate to the narrator's life or imagination. The narrative voice prevents the novel from being a mere compilation of independent chapters and provides a point of entry into the narrator's concerns and contradictions but it is also contradictory, ambiguous, and continually shifting. The narrator is from the very first page, at war with himself. The mere fact of the interview project brings frustration with his life. *Interviewer quelqu'un qui, de toutes les manières, ne pouvait être que plus vivant que moi. Cette seule idée suffisait à me rendre désagréable à moi-même* [To interview someone who, in any case, could only be more alive than me. This idea alone was enough to make me disagreeable to myself] (11). Brandy Fax is then a melancholic character with a cynical and introspective mind, with an acute awareness of his tendency towards self-destruction, manifest in the repetition of the expression "*je suis foutu*" (I am done for). The fractured self is "legible" in the fractured form of the narration, along with its very loose plot. The plot is problematic, for it embodies the narrator's struggle with the novel form as a means to represent non-western elaboration of identity, an elaboration that necessarily skirts a traditional path—the Bildungsroman, say—in this novel.

In addition to the narrative voice, which is hardly steadfast, biographical elements are sprinkled throughout the text, with the probable objective of giving the illusion of grounding the text in reality. The narrator, for instance, claims to be thirty and during one of his monologues prophesies a major change in his life when he reaches thirty-one. Farès is exactly thirty when his first novel *Yahia, pas de chance* is published in 1970 and *Un passager de l'Occident* follows in 1971. So he was not yet thirty-one when he wrote it, which coincides with the declaration of the narrator:

> *Étant, en ce moment, à l'apogée de mon être (la trentaine) j'envisage une fulgurante apothéose aux alentours de la trente et unième année, apothéose qui consisterait à ne pas risquer un seul oeil vers une désespérante trente-deuxième année.* (142)
>
> Being, at this time, at the apogee of my being (thirty) I envision a flashing apotheosis around my thirty-first year, which would consist in not risking one single glance into a despairing thirty-second year.

Apart for the hopelessness and despair evident in this passage and then the presence of death which permeates the novel and which is discussed later in this chapter, Brandy Fax intertwines his existence with that of Nabile Farès. He shares his anxieties as a writer, for example, though he is actually talking about the anxieties linked to the composition of the very novel we are reading. This supposed simultaneity, which suggests that there is no distance between the writer and his work, is coupled with a keen awareness of writing as an activity. Farès plays on this double bind—distance and keen awareness—throughout the novel, and this double bind, I argue, is the symbol of Farès' writing technique. While professing the collapse between writer/ narrator/ writing, Farès constantly reflects on his

position as a writer and an exile, and carefully examines ways in which to write about what is wrong with his peninsula, what went wrong in Algeria, or his moments of happiness with Conchita.

Moreover, Farès affects simultaneity between an event and its narration, an evacuation of time, which means a collapse between the signifier and the signified. A distance—time—is a necessary component of the writing process, and this is where language functions as a facilitator (recapturing the past) and a blockage (words, sentences, and texts take-on variant meanings and significance). This phony "simultaneity" where language is "innocent" could be read as Farès' way of denouncing ready-made interpretations or ideological reading which have at times weighed heavily on Francophone literature, to the point of suffocation. In addition to an ideological tradition, Farès inherits a colonial language, which is inadequate to encompass his experience and identity so that he alters it through a poetic stance with which he can reclaim a density without which his narrative project cannot emerge.

Under this vigorous regimen against seductive and deceptive paradigms, it is not Farès's voice which finally emerges—a voice that is always ambiguous, frail and always unpredictable—but life itself. During this long struggle to emerge, the very survival of the narrator—and here this is Farès—is at stake: « *Je suis,* » he writes, "*quelqu'un qui tente de rejoindre la vie par le cheminement tardif de l'écriture.*" [I am someone who tries to get back to life through the late path of writing]. Writing is a means of survival though some renunciations are necessary. The articulation of an individual voice in writing necessitates the narrator's partition from others. This partition appears at first as a high price to pay considering the importance of the community of others for Kabyles and

considering also Farès's concern for the dilemma his compatriots live in Algeria. Thus, Farès needs to renounce the social function of the writer, his/her engagement as Sartre might have it, at least the way it has been understood so far.

Nabile Farès's texts will not be waved as flags. Instead he writes in an autobiographical vein where he accomplishes much more, even though he also distrusts this mode of writing. Indeed, despite the fact that the narrator and the author are one,[5] the narrator plays with his identity, his voice and the text, which becomes the ultimate sounding board/mirror of both (the identity and the voice) while the biographical elements are set in an arrangement of textual mirrors. And indeed, all the characters (Baldwin, Conchita, and Ali-Saïd) along with the narrator's monologues (on political issues linked to Algeria's new regime and Kabylia's claims), as well as his observations and analysis on Camus and Kateb's writing, all participate in the creation of something much more than a voice—lost in the folds of the writing—— a poetics through the development of an idiosyncratic language.

How to Write Algeria: From the Algerian Mirror to Berber Poetics

> *Moi. L'ogresse native. Qui attendait la venue de cet homme. Et qui fut trompée par la vertu scripturale de cet homme. Qui. Oui. Ne cessa. Devant moi. Sous moi. D'écrire. Et qui. Ainsi. Me trompa. Trompa l'ogresse native (naïve) que j'étais.* (Le champ 85-87)

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[5] For instance, on the book cover Farès writes "*Voilà pourquoi son autre titre est: Ali-Saïd (le chanceux) puisque l'auteur est ici, en personne, innommé, et qu'il est, à sa manière, ce passager de l'Occident.*" [This is why its other title is: Ali-Saïd (the lucky) since the author is here, in person, unnamed, and he is, in his way, this passenger of the West].

To the naturally complex condition of any language—fraught with imperfections—one could add a series of sensible justifications to explain Farès's constant questioning of the novel's genre, language and the meaning that is attributed to it. As mentioned earlier, the literary projects, which strive to create and nurture insights are usually undermined by simplistic interpretations (at best) or fraudulent ideological readings. This is especially true for francophone literature, which has long been read and discussed in terms of its anthropological, sociological or historical components, neglecting thereby its potential literary value. However literary recognition does not inoculate from further distortion and misreading or recuperation, which could be, for instance, generated to reinforce the new regimes in the post-independent era. In this case, authorities recuperate or rather "hijack" these texts to comfort and enhance their newly acquired position and power. To make matters more complicated, many texts lend themselves to easy ideological reading, making them all the more predisposed for such institutional/establishment and propagandistic use.

Farès, through Brandy's monologues on Kateb and Camus, argues that only through poetics can the writing of Algeria be salvaged from such ideological "hijacking," providing a protective shield against recuperation. *Un Passager de l'Occident* opens on an epigraph from Bertolt Brecht's *Ecrits sur la littérature et l'art*. Brecht argues that there are five difficulties a writer needs to overcome if he/she wants to write the truth. Besides the capacity to recognize the truth and the courage to tell it, one needs to endow the truth with the strength to undermine so that it becomes a weapon to transform the world (Desuché 12-13). The fifth difficulty is the use of guile, which most interests Farès. The epigraph reads,

> [...] *nous devons également penser à leur presenter la vérité de façon telle qu'elle puisse entre leurs mains être une arme, et en même temps de façon assez rusée pour que cette transmission échappe à la vigilance et à la riposte de l'ennemi.* (7)
>
> we also need to think about presenting them the truth in such a way that it could become a weapon in their hands, and at the same time, it should be done in a clever way so that the transmission escapes the vigilance and the riposte of the enemy.

Truth must be exposed so that it might be used as a weapon, but this can only be done through guile, with which to circumvent the scrutiny of censors and enemies. Thus, if the truth must be told then this must be through dissimulation. Dissimulation is also a rhetorical device carrying an aesthetic dimension. One cannot, argues Jacques Desuché, expose the core of things without destroying or betraying them, "*On ne peut exposer le coeur des choses sans les tuer ou les trahir*" (14). Stark truth is often unbearable in literary writing where one is expected to allegorize the truth, that is, to present its richness and complexity, not to reduce it. Thus dissimulation, besides its capacity to expose the truth while avoiding censors and deliberate ideological exploitation, is also a rhetorical measure, which is largely exploited by Farès. According to Jacques Desuché, it took Brecht some twenty years of research (in theater) to learn to be this man of guile. Brecht created the dialectic theater and the "theory of distanciation," which generally consists in spatial and time-frame detachment through humor and irony, his well-known *verfremdungseffekt*. Dialectics is also a technique of distanciation, which affirms that each thing carries within itself its own contradiction and that all is in perpetual change. Farès's opening epigraph is not innocent. In the course of the novel, Farès obviously

develops his own techniques of dissimulation and dialectics in order to create his truth, a poetics of difference.

To grasp the "hijacking" of literature and the necessary guile required to prevent it, Farès opposes Kateb Yacine to Albert Camus, and as a personal contribution to this debate on realism and literature, invents what he calls "the blue impression." Farès's discussion in this respect is introduced through a scene involving Brandy Fax and one of Baldwin's friends. Baldwin's unnamed handsome friend declares to the narrator that he was born in Algeria and left it in 1955 when he was 17. When Baldwin returns to the table, his friend announces that Brandy and he are "from the same country." This announcement prompts a long meditation on Algeria's beauty and its entrapments:

> *Je pensais alors que "du même pays" voulait dire splendeur côtière, immensité des paysages, couleur de terre forte, et il m'apparut que toutes les explications des déchirements et désastres et luttes historiques de l'Algérie avaient été grevées d'un grand oubli. Ce grand oubli, on pourrait dire que seuls certains textes d'Albert Camus l'ont exprimé. Mais, s'ils l'ont exprimé, c'est dans son état de piège.* (34)
>
> I then thought that "from the same country" meant splendid coasts, vastness of landscapes, the color of strong earth, and it appeared to me that all the explanations of the distress and disasters and historical struggles of Algeria were burdened with a major lapse. It can be said that only a few texts by Albert Camus have expressed this lapse. But, if they expressed it, it was in its state of entrapment.

To be "from the same country" for this young man means to have treasured the same landscape, the same land, the light and the heat, the colors and the smells of this space that happens to be called Algeria. This is almost a spiritual union beyond history and struggles, pains and conflicts. Far from disparaging the friend's evident nostalgia for the Algerian landscape, "*sans cesse des images apparaissaient dans les paysages que je voyais, et je pensais toujours à Bône*" [images would ceaselessly appear in the landscapes that I saw and I always thought about Bône] (34), Brandy sees in it a crucial point, which has been omitted in the explanations of Algeria's tortured past.

Farès chooses Camus's texts to illustrate a fallacious understanding of Algeria. In his texts Camus expresses a spiritual perhaps even metaphysical attachment to Algeria (detached from the people and its history). His vision is allegorical but his texts are taken literally and unfortunately also lend themselves to this literalness. The result of this reading is the use of the texts for advertising purposes while the "useless" remainder is discarded without being understood. The danger is to take the text literally, to see it as the exact transposition of a real Algeria onto paper. Thus, Farès argues, only a poetics can convey this kind of attachment along with explanation without falling into the trap of what he calls "the allegorical reality of Algeria," where allegorical visions of Algeria replace the real Algeria. Such a poetics is at work in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*, which, unlike Camus's texts, can never be turned into an advertising billboard due in part to its labyrinthine narrative form.

Algeria has never been seen for what it is for the simple reason that the allegorical aspect of its historiography has been taken for reality. Like Don Quixote tilting at windmills, the Algerian people have always encountered an allegorized Algeria and have

mistaken it for the real Algeria. To see the real Algeria, it is first necessary to realize the fallacious image one has taking for Algeria, an image that is an allegory, a symbol, a representation, a reading of Algeria, everything but Algeria. Algeria must be discovered somewhere else. The path towards it is through this same poetics where finally Algeria will re-conquer (back) and inhabit its "density." Thus, literary writing comes to the rescue of reality, which has been evacuated.

As an example, Farès's ironically claims to clarify his point by allegorizing it. Camus and many Algerian people, he explains, belong to the "*conscience méduse*" (medusa consciousness), a form of "realistic expression" which constitutes a "reactionary artistic ideology": the realist ideology. "Medusa consciousness" refers to Medusa, the Greek mythological character who had the power to turn onlookers into stone. The television screen in Farès's text symbolizes her petrifying power where "a servant of realism" deceives the onlookers into believing that what they see is real. Medusa, one of the three gorgons sisters, perverts the spiritual instinct into stagnation, a state represented by the spectators' mind in front of the screen. Medusa is also construed as the reflection of a personal guilt, symbolizing a deformed self-image, which petrifies through horror instead of enlightening (Chevalier 482). In all cases, Medusa is the enemy who must be fought.

Tension, movement and antagonism are some of Farès's antidotes against recuperation and the "petrified state," all of which are found in Farès's writing. Writing, a space Farès refers to as purgatory, is also the place of in-between-ness *par excellence* where opposites can coexist in an eternal tension, always on the verge of explosion. Within writing, Farès brings together life and death, suffering and pleasure, meaningfulness and insignificance. He brings together life energy I call "centrifugal force" (directed towards the outside) and

death energy I call "centripetal force"(directed towards the inside). Both elements coexist because they are necessary to create an explosion of meaning and possibilities. Thus, Farès's fatal endings always contain a regenerating power. For instance, the narrator always on the verge of committing suicide, survives after all; Ali-Saïd is dead but survives through his notebook and the end of the Algerian war only announces the beginning of another. Indeed, there is life after Brandy's return to Paris, after the completion of his traveling and the closure of the circle (the end of the novel) because the novel is not quite finished yet. The final two chapters of the novel, which appear to be motivated by the letter Brandy Fax received from an anonymous friend, are puzzling. The chapter (before the last one) is called "Légende du Monde" and includes an explosion of a blue impression, which clearly opposes the gray and bleak atmosphere of the beginning and mixes with it to produce the final chapter.

The blue impression comes from Brandy's mailbox, which contains the sheets of paper relating the history of Crepuscule and Earth composing the story called "Légende du monde." Brandy associates the color blue to the thought process, "*pour connaître quelque pensée il suffit de peindre sa boîte aux lettres en BLEU*" 139 (in order to attain any thought one only needs to paint one's mailbox in BLUE). The fact that Brandy Fax did not paint his mailbox in blue is construed as more than a simple negligence, a "*véritable méconnaissance.*" Thus, the blue impression conveys an awakening of sorts. It indicates an infinite space where the real is transformed into the imaginary and creates a feeling of eternity. To enter into the blue, write Chevalier and Gheerbrant, is like *Alice in Wonderland*, going into the other side of the mirror (Chevalier 131). In Farès's text, the color blue and the aquatic element are often evoked together (the Mediterranean Sea and

the blue cricket cigarette-lighter; the original peninsula and Ali-Saïd's blue call and the blue bullet on his forehead; Cangas and Conchita's blue eyes, the blue gull's wings, etc.) In the text, the aquatic element represents infinite possibilities, all the promises of development and all the threats of annihilation. Both water and the color blue connote unconscious energies as well as energies or spaces without form. However, while the aquatic element is also a mirroring symbol, the color blue is transparent and allows access to what's behind the mirror (Chevalier 374-382).

Writing is finally the written form of the combined characteristics of the aquatic element and the blue color. Sometimes, it leads to a feeling of euphoria or despair which surfaces on odd occasions and in diffused impressions in the text, as for instance the "aquatic" afternoon Brandy spent with Baldwin or the "blue bullet" on Ali-Saïd's forehead. Finally, blue might very well be the color of purgatory and of poetic writing. Besides the blue impression, the chapter also introduces new characters "Earth" and "Crepuscule," and the story of their meeting and dialogues. The humorous creation of new characters who think they are creating the world anew goes hand in hand with the choice of a perfect station of in-between-ness (crepuscule), which does not come as a surprise in a novel written in-between states, on the margins. This station, so ambiguous and at an embryonic stage is however promoted to the position of a full character, a surprising and daring undertaking. Grappling with limits yet again, Farès pushes the function of allegory to its limit in imagining an all-encompassing allegory for the world.

Thus, this chapter and the last chapter, "Les cavales frontalières" point to the full entrance into the poetical world, a boundary crossing we see throughout the novel. "Les cavales frontalières" is a page and a half of poetry that unfolds a poetic flight of evasion

("cavales") reminiscent of Brecht's epigraph about guile and opacity. The flight or journey enables the crossing of all frontiers (territories, countries) and states (life, death, absence, presence), it also allows dwelling in the rich interstices (between "vous" and "nous"). The poem is a maelstrom of images and movements as the last line of the novel demonstrates,

> [...] *Un goût de cendres parcourait le pays, et quelques feux, témoins frémissants, divulguaient Votre piaffement. Vous! Nos cavales frontalières*...(158)
>
> [...] A taste of ashes traveled through the country, and some fires, rustling witnesses, divulged Your prancing. You! Our flights at the frontiers [...]

The color blue from the "blue impression," I argue, is an element of Farès's poetics, which I call "Berber poetics." Many other elements, which establish the foundation of this poetics, emerge in the text through Farès exploitation of a millennium of Berber history and mythology as well as features of the modern Berber experience such as exile. Exile, an open-ended wound, is both linked to loss and eternity while death is construed as a passage into another state that is accessible. Nature also plays a major role where water, the skies, the mountain, along with the porcupine and the tree (especially the fig tree) are essential presences. For instance, on the cover page of *L'exil et le désarroi,* an illustration depicts a tree made of verses. On each side of the tree, two connecting circles are hanging. On one side, one circle contains the word "freedom" the other the word "field." On the other side of the tree, two other similar circles are hanging, one contains the word "meaning" and the other the word "water." At the center of the tree, in another circle, larger, is written "*coeur de l'arbre ouvert dans l'exil*" [heart of the tree open in exile]. This illustration reveals, perhaps, a point of entrance into Farès's poetic world.

Through the character of Ali-Saïd, the narrator's cousin, we see the grandeur and the mystery of the Kabyle mountain. In spite of being an eponymous—albeit clandestine—character (the novel's subtitle *is Ali-Saïd, (le Chanceux)*, Ali-Saïd's story is only discussed in five pages within a section named after him. Two brackets like impassable barriers tightly frame this section, as if to prevent the pain of the story from spreading to the rest of the text. However, brackets also indicate the spoken word, the ultimate sign of direct communication in the written text and an instance of life, when Ali-Saïd is no more. The text comprised within these brackets represents the call for freedom which Ali-Saïd heard and which he probably wrote down in his notebook. The narrator echoes this call, this homage to life and hope, and to a cousin whose life has been curtailed:

> Je *dois dire, et malgré moi, que j'ai perdu l'illusion de la vie et que, de cette désillusion, j'ai gardé un goût appliqué envers les réalités de certains êtres et les mots qui les "représentent". Ali-Saïd en est un, par exemple.* (73)
>
> I must confess that, in spite of myself, I no longer have illusions about life. From my disillusionment, I have retained a soft spot for the reality of certain people and the words that represent them. Ali-Saïd, for example, is one of these beings.

Farès opposes the reality of individuals like Ali-Saïd and the words that represent this reality, to the delusions of life. Hence, Ali-Saïd exemplifies the triumph of life over illusions,

> *tandis que je pensais, à l'arrière-plan d'une colère que je n'aimais pas, à Ali-Saïd qui, de l'intervalle des pages d'un carnet qu'il avait écrit, commençait de m'appeler. [..] Mais, bien heureusement pour moi, ce quelqu'un qui était en moi fouillait (déjà), de mémoire, l'appel d'Ali-Saïd qui, au lever marin du vent de nuit,*

semblait dire : "Je l'écrivis pour toi cette première ligne d'une chanson de la balle bleue..." et j'écrivis (toute la nuit) l'appel (kabyle) et bleu, d'Ali-Saïd (le chanceux). (101)

While I was thinking -- hidden in an anger that displeased me -- about Ali-Saïd, who, from the writings between the pages of his notebook, began to call out to me. . . . But, fortunately for me, the person who was inside of me, searched (already) from memory, the call of Ali-Saïd, who, at the blue rise of the night's wind, seemed to say: "I wrote the first lines for you of a song about the blue bullet . . ." and I wrote (all night long) the call (kabyle) and blue of Ali-Saïd (the lucky one).

Instead of relating Ali-Saïd's call (again, a call which the notebook that he left behind probably records), the narrator dwells on the call Ali-Saïd heard emanating from the mountain, in an attempt to recreate the conditions, which incited Ali-Saïd to leave his sheltered life. The substance of the message is never spelled out nor is the content of the notebook ever divulged. Instead, the focus of this section is on the mountain's power of attraction and its significance for the villagers.

Historically the mountains were the ultimate refuge for Kabyles fleeing successive invaders. Over time, they were forced out of the fertile plains to the arid and unproductive lands around the mountainous regions. This inhospitable environment became a sanctuary, a shelter from the outside world. Majestic, beautiful and inaccessible, the mountain itself came to symbolize a haven for spiritual reflection, for personal growth, reminiscent of the characteristic mystical approach ascetics (such as the Sufis) used to attain knowledge. When Ali-Saïd leaves his village to "know" the mountain ("*pour*

connaître la montagne"), he intends to raise questions, enter into dialogue, which hopefully will generate answers. The verb "to know" stresses the active learning process, which the stay in the mountain entails, in opposition to the knowledge and wisdom Ali-Saïd received from his parents. Their knowledge consisted of "enveloping him with words" ("*l'entourèrent de paroles*") while probably pointing to him a certain direction, guiding him. Furthermore, the mountain entails an ascendancy over the villagers, from whom it withholds secrets and meanings beyond their comprehension:

> *Pour eux elle était (cette montagne) une sorte d'appel inquiétant vers une grandeur qui, de tout temps, les avait dépassés, pour cette raison bien simple que, par nature, par cette façon qu'elle avait de se dresser ainsi, sauvage, dénudée, comme un dos d'ancien volcan, elle demeurait, au regard de tous les villages, démesurement hautaine et nue.* (106-7)
>
> For them she (the mountain) represented a call, that was somewhat troubling, towards a grandeur that, in all times, was beyond them, for the simple reason, that she, by nature, by the way in which she postured, wild and bare, like the back of an old volcano, she remained, in the eyes of all the villagers, excessively haughty and nude.

In spite of its nakedness, the mountain is known to retain a secret that is only accessible to a select few. Like Thebes's Sphinx, it stands tall, dignified, and mute, jealously guarding men's secret. At age twenty, the narrator's cousin, Ali-Saïd, took up the challenge. Soon after, his lifeless body is brought back from the mountain. While the mountain seems to have defeated him—allegorically speaking only because Ali-Saïd was killed in action after he joined his compatriots-fighters in the mountain—his father finds a

singular notebook sewed in his jacket, symbol of the learning Ali-Saïd acquired at a high-price.

In Farès's 1976 novel/poem *L'exil et le désarroi*, Rachida, Ali-Saïd's fiancée, is convinced that Ali-Saïd has not entirely ceased to exist because of the trophy-like object he brought back. His presence is also felt on the bark of the tree, a quasi-reincarnation:

> *Le livre était là, enfin écrit dans le monde, les arbres* [...] *J'ai cru un moment, un court moment, qu'il ne reviendrait jamais, puis,* [...] *j'ai ouvert les yeux, touché le sol et l'amandier. Personne ne m'a crue, mais, moi, je l'ai vu, la, logé dans l'écorce, et le bois, je l'ai vu vivant, et gai, la balle n'avait pas laissé de trace, et son front était jeune et pale, dans le bois.* (L'exil 72)
>
> The book was there, finally written and in the world, the trees [...] I thought for a moment, a brief moment, that he would never return, then,[...] I opened my eyes, touched the ground and the almond tree. No one believed me, but I did see him, there, fixed in the bark, and the wood, I saw him alive and spirited, the bullet didn't leave a trace, and his forehead was young and pale, in the wood.

In *L'exil et le désarroi* the tree (whether it is the olive tree or the almond tree) is the literary figure that embodies life and death as well as exile. In *Un passager de l'Occident*, Farès uses the tropes of the fig tree and the porcupine to create a unique and distinct poetics. The tree is opposed to the Book (the religious learning Ali-Saïd acquired at the Zaouia), life against text, and here a book whose teaching is unsatisfactory and limited. Ali-Saïd whose story is largely disclosed in *L'exil et le désarroi*, was animated by a strong desire for knowledge and love for freedom which generated numerous questions:

> *J'ai interrogé la montagne, et la montagne a exigé plus de choses que le Livre, et toutes ses pages réunies. [...] J'ai alors connu ce choix: être un disciple du Livre, ou un être du monde?* (L'exil 54)
>
> I questioned the mountain and the mountain required more things that the Book, and all its pages combined. [...] Then I had to choose: to be a disciple of the Book or a human being of the world?

Ali-Saïd chose to be "un être du monde," a road paved with questions which leads him to have a sense of his organic life:

> *Voilà ou m'a conduit la terre [...] vers la parole d'arbre et de vent, comme si arbre et vent voulaient être en moi, comme si, [...] la terre était en moi, comme si l'herbe, la pierre, l'eau, et le lointain champ de la source, étaient en moi, parcourant l'intérieur du corps et du songe.* (L'exil 55).
>
> This is where the earth led me [...] towards the word of the tree and the wind, as if tree and wind wanted to be in me, as if, [...] the earth was in me, as if the grass, the rock, the water, and the faraway field of the spring were in me, traveling through the interior of my body and of the dream.

Only then did Ali-Saïd leave for the mountain. The sense of totality /eternity he achieves in this unity with the cosmos through inhabiting the tree points to a rare, almost holistic achievement, elucidating thereby the novel's puzzling subtitle "*ou, Ali-Saïd (le Chanceux).*" While *Un passager de l'Occident* does not allude to Ali-Saïd's post-mortem condition and dwells on the immense potential of the mountain, *L'exil et le désarroi* reveals the decoy the mountain also contains:

> *Les hommes s'étaient crus pour toujours, à l'abri derrière leurs montagnes de pierres et de vent; pour toujours éloignés de la plaine, des tirs, et des politiques. Les hommes ne croyaient pas à leur encerclement.* (58)
>
> The men thought they were forever protected, safe behind their mountains of stone and wind, for always away from the plain, the shootings, and politics. The men didn't believe they were encircled.

This antinomy complicates Farès's point by introducing the question of confinement, which, like one's refusal of the other, must be resisted. Hence, the mountain can be a false refuge if its dwelling means limits and restraint from the world. The mountain then, becomes a dangerous refuge where its potential for safety and dialogue turn into a position to besiege.

The poetics of Farès is founded on his ambivalence towards writing and his experience as a Kabyle-Algerian during the war and then an exile after the war. It is also founded on a vast corpus of Berber myths and legends, which he brings to life through writing; and on Algerian history, and especially its relationship to Kabylia, a region with its own linguistic, cultural and historic specificities.

Kabylia and the Algerian Mirror

Because the first mention of Kabylia is inserted within the conversation Farès has with Baldwin, it suggests affinities between Baldwin being an African American and himself a Kabyle. A larger subterraneous, perhaps buried or even covert connection is also established here between the black American experience and the Berber experience. This connection is very subtle given the fact that this passage—the only one in the novel reflecting on the situation in Kabylia—is inserted in the middle of a conversation, as a

distant reverie the narrator drifts in. The use of italics and the absence of capitalizations after periods enhance this free flowing and daydreaming style.

When the narrator is for the first time asked about his birthplace, he reluctantly answers "*Dans une presqu'île je suis né, entourée d'eau, en Petite Kabylie, à Collo.*" [in a peninsula I was born, surrounded by water, in Little Kabylia, in Collo] Grammatically, the peninsula is the subject of "surrounded by water" but the sentence construction suggests that the narrator is the subject. The subsequent ambiguity suggests that both the narrator and his compatriots from the peninsula lived in a state of almost closure, idea reiterated throughout this daydream:

> *nous, situés dans notre presqu'île, nous savons à peu près ce qu'il se passe ailleurs, aux alentours des grandes routes. nous savons, par exemple, que l'on donne beaucoup d'argent aux hommes sages, ou aux hommes pour qu'ils deviennent sages.* (31)
>
> We, living in our peninsula, we know, to a certain extent, what goes on elsewhere, near the highways, we know, for example, that a lot of money is given to wise men or to men so that they become wise.

Like a few other passages in the novel, the passage on Kabylia is convoluted and enigmatic and allegorical in its tone. The narrator and his compatriots are now united in the personal pronoun "we" suggesting a tacit agreement amongst the people of the peninsula. The narrator exaggerates *reductio ad absurdum* the scope of reference for the pronoun "we." The inhabitants of the peninsula ("we") distinguish themselves from other

"small Kabyles"[6] living inland ("they") who are together distinguished from "Great Kabyles," ("them") who are altogether distinguished from the invaders of the plains, "*le reste appartient aux envahisseurs*" [the rest belongs to the invaders]. The inhabitants of the peninsula share rudimentary notions about an inland corrupt power, which they avoid and a very limited perception of the world outside the peninsula. However, the inhabitants are distressed about an affliction common to all Kabyles, a condition Farès calls "*le malaise du figuier*" [the fig tree malaise].

In Kabylia, the fig tree is essential to the survival of the people who are (mostly) very poor. Adapted to an arid and warm climate, fig trees generously provide people with a means of subsistence and many actually do survive arduous winters thanks to the figs they dry during the fig season. As Mouloud Feraoun describes in a tender account "Les beaux jours," the period of fig picking in Kabylia is memorable. The fig actually gave its name to the season called "lexrif," and the verb "to feast" ("xaref") is derived from it, illustrating the festive atmosphere of this period. Thus,

> *Lekrif se présente aux gens avec l'attrait du fruit défendu. C'est une raison supplémentaire de l'aimer. Il faut savoir qu'il débute par une interdiction. [...] Pendant quinze jours, nul n'aura le droit de toucher aux figues. Qu'elles mûrissent en paix! [...] nous avons très vif l'amour de la proprieté: chacun mange jalousement ses poires, ses glands ou ses pommes de terre mais ses figues, non. C'est un don d'en haut qu'on ne peut refuser au pauvre.* (87-89)

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[6] Kabylia is divided in two parts, "Great Kabylia" (Grande Kabylie) and "Little Kabylia" (Petite Kabylie), which designate two different regions.

> Lekrif starts with the attraction of the forbidden fruit. It is one more reason to love it. The season starts with a ban. [...] For fifteen days, no one can touch the figs. Let them ripe in peace! we are very attached to private property : every one jealously eats his/her pears, acorns or potatoes but not the figs. It is a gift from above that one cannot refuse to the poor.

As this passage tells us, all are banned from picking the figs too early, (so that they can ripe) but once the ban is lifted the figs are eaten collectively. The ensuing feast celebrates "*imma thamer' roust*" (mother fig tree), symbol of unity, solidarity and life. This tree of life, realized by a communal condition and activity, is at stake in Farès's text.

The Kabyle malaise is felt deep down inside but is not fully expressed. The people's vigor, symbolized by the fig tree, is deteriorating, "*si le figuier ne parle plus, c'est qu'on lui a volé son ami. Son ami le hérisson*" [if the fig tree does not speak anymore, it is because they stole his friend] because the porcupine, an animal that comes to symbolize people's vitality has been stolen. The porcupine plays a significant role in Kabyle folklore and is known for its generosity, ingenuity and cunning.[7] One characteristic of the porcupine is that it does not fight back when attacked, instead it can retract or rolls and its spines, which stick out when attacked, protect it. Brahim Zellal in *Le Roman de Chacal* tells the famous story of Porcupine and Jackal who were very hungry one winter and found a fig. Porcupine wanted to share it but Jackal hoping to outsmart him, declared that the oldest should eat the fig. "When were you born?" asked Porcupine, "I was born when the sea was set on fire," answered Jackal. "I set the fire" responded Porcupine and ate the fig. In spite of his small size and physical weakness, Porcupine comes out victorious

because of his cleverness. As for Jackal, he has, according to Tassadit Yacine's original study *chacal ou la ruse des dominés*, an ambiguous status of dominant-dominated. Indeed, Jackal protects order and power and especially the king Lion, who protects him in return. Yacine distinguishes him from Porcupine who is the "dominated of the dominated" and who uses cleverness to survive:

> *Une fois de plus, les dominés des dominés, parce qu'ayant vécu conjointement plusieurs formes de domination, réagiront aussi par compensation et feront de la surenchère "intellectuelle" pour exister. Ce que Nietzsche appelle la vengeance par l'intellect.* (45)
>
> Once again, the dominated among the dominated, because they underwent several forms of domination at the same time, react through compensation and intellectually outbid the other to exist. It is what Nietzsche calls the revenge through the intellect.

Socially, Porcupine belongs to the (real) dominated for he is weak and small and has no social position, so the way he fights powers is through his capacity to adapt to situations, his notorious intelligence and his generosity (46). His generosity is displayed in his refusal to trick his own people and the solidarity he feels towards them. He even goes as far as to represent them (45-46). Eventually, Porcupine is always victorious because he possesses two characteristics that are very valued by Kabyle wisdom that is an intimate knowledge of nature, the earth and plants as well as an intimate knowledge of the subtleties, poetry and meaning of the Kabyle word (65). Farès uses the porcupine—

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[7] The porcupine also designates the female sexual organ. (Yacine 48)

symbol of domination and intelligence—and the legends based on it, to identify and illustrate the crisis the Kabyle people experience in Algeria.

The inhabitants of the peninsula also seem to embody some of Porcupine's attributes, since they live in quasi-isolation, having renounced power for the sake of peace and retreat into their peninsula, as into a womb. The porcupine used to enliven the fig tree like sap and the loss of this primordial function is likened to a distress with the name "*un malaise tout à fait narcissique, comparable à un malaise du nom*" [a malaise absolutely narcissistic that is comparable to that of the name"] suggesting a psychological and internal malaise. The description of the inhabitants of the peninsula as somewhat sheltered by their geographical location and their wariness towards the outside world, leads one to think that the reference to narcissism is not fortuitous, but reveals an intentional metaphor to express the distressing psychological state of the inhabitants.

Narcissism, according to Freud's understanding of this term, is a stage in sexual development where the subject 'begins by taking himself, his own body, as his love-object'(Laplanche and Pontalis 255). What he calls "primary narcissism" is a stage prior even to the formation of an ego, which is epitomized by life in the womb. Lacan presses this point further and proposes an intermediate stage, the "mirror stage," prior to the entry of the child into the realm of language. The mirror stage is the necessary groundwork upon which the subject is then formed as the child enters the symbolic order—again, we will simply call it the realm of language, or as Lacan identifies it, the Name of the Father. This new and nominal phase is marked by prohibition and naming, thus, non/nom ("Le stade du miroir" in Lacan). Through the psychological anxiety of the inhabitants of the peninsula, Farès's intention is to question the very terms "Algerian" and "Algeria." What

is Algeria? How is Algeria to be written? Farès indirectly uses the metaphor of the mirror stage in which Algeria appears to be trapped. As the metaphor goes, Algerians (not fully Algerians yet) cannot recognize their reflection in the mirror and therefore even the name Algeria is questioned since there is no nominal possibility in the mirror stage. What is called Algeria, which is not yet Algeria, is the mirror in which various body elements should find unification, at least an imaginary one. However all these different elements see is a ready-made self (body) already called Algeria, with missing parts, thus, a psychological nightmare. One of the missing fragments is the Berber branch.

Farès exemplifies the failure of identification through the example of the Kabyle-Algerian whose reflection in the mirror is blurred by a nominal malaise ("malaise du nom"): Algeria. Obviously, the Kabyle is and should be Algeria but his reflection is nowhere to be found in the term Algeria inscribed in the mirror, a term, which is premature at this stage (mirror stage) anyway. The Kabyle whose existence has been obliterated (absence symbolized by the theft of the porcupine) from the mirror "Algeria," obviously cannot accept a deformed and deficient image of him, and therefore is, like all the other Algerians (not yet Algerians) alienated from his image and trapped in this formative stage.

Yet, the text refers to an earlier period in history where the porcupine was fulfilling its role and permitted the fig tree to talk, elements which suppose the completion of the formation of the ego which founds its unity in language (even though just the illusion of a dissolution between the signifier and the signified i.e. between the subject and its image). And still now, writes Farès, people can speak but they don't want to be heard. ("*il existe même une chanson, une chanson que l'on prononce du bout des lèvres pour montrer que*

l'on sait parler mais qu'on ne veut pas être entendu"[there even exists a song that is pronounced inaudibly to show that we can speak but we don't want to be heard]). The theft of the porcupine is the reason for the tree's symbolic aphasia. This argument entails an earlier completion of the formation of the Kabyle ego. Thus, what is at stake is the Algerian aspect of this subject, an aspect caught in the mirror phase waiting to be formed. It happens that Kabyles are the ones who refuse the nominal phase (the name Algeria and the language that comes with it) before the mirror stage takes place. The subsequent status quo is therefore provoked by their resistance, which prompts Farès to suggest that the fuss made about Kabyles's claim to be Kabyle first has its origin elsewhere and is rather motivated by the fact that Kabylia might well be the caesura of Algeria's national consciousness ("*à moins que la Kabylie ne soit la césure de la conscience nationale*" (33)). Indeed, Farès hints at the real source of the problem, where Kabylia and its "*agitation permanente*" prevents the country from having a clear conscience that of a fabricated Arabo-Islamic identity.

Because of this caesura (interruption) in the formative process, the mirror stage is constantly postponed and the phony union obstructed. Kabylia stands between the Algerians-to-be and the mirror to prevent an identification, which if achieved would lead to a national schizophrenia. This resistance entails a strong wariness vis-à-vis the authorities, which explains the withdrawal and introversion of the inhabitants in their peninsula. As a soothing leitmotiv to express their refusal of the refusal, the inhabitants sing the song of the malaise of the fig tree, which remains incomprehensible for the people of the plains.

In the novel, the theft of the porcupine, or the refusal to acknowledge one's existence, calls to mind another episode the narrator relates which took place during the war of independence where another refusal—that of freedom—was enthusiastically fought, "*Car, ce qui m'avait attiré"* writes Farès *"c'était de vivre contre le refus. Non pas dans le refus, mais contre le refus.* [..] *accepter de refuser le refus de l'autre: telle est la devise d'une position en catastrophe.*" [what attracted me was to live against refusal. Not within refusal, but against it .. to accept to refuse the other's refusal] (61). Farès's position is to fight against refusal ("*accepter de refuser le refus*") which is basically an inclusive approach. Farès humorously illustrates his strategy to "accept to refuse the refusal" without ever loosing sight of its poignancy as the following passage demonstrates:

> *car l'Algérie est une création récente des droits des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes. et si les peuples ont le droit de disposer d'eux-mêmes, nous ne comprenons pas, nous, les habitants de la presqu'île, pourquoi les habitants de ces peuples ne disposeraient pas d'eux-mêmes.* (33)
>
> Algeria is a recent creation of the people's right to self-determination. If the people have the right to self-determination, we, the inhabitants of the peninsula, do not understand why these peoples do not exercise this right, themselves.

The tone of the passage is determined by the pun on the rights of peoples to be free. Beside the simple historical fact that Algeria was created after Kabylia, the modern state against the ancient entity, the very creation of Algeria is embedded in the right of the peoples to be free after a struggle in which he (the narrator/ author) participated. Now, how could the nation he fought to create in order to include him, deny him his own self when the very existence of this nation is and should be rooted in this self? The right to

freedom ("*droits à disposer d'eux-mêmes*") which literally translates as "*rights to have access to oneself*" is amusingly taken literally, and indeed, how could one be refused access to oneself (Taking us back to the mirror)? Substituting the general (rights of peoples) for the particular (the right to one's very person) also turns the attention to the psychological distress this situation induces. The song that relates this distress is still misunderstood outside the peninsula, in spite of its simplicity.

Death and Desire or writing from Purgatory

The ogress in *Le champ des oliviers* best expresses the danger the written page entails for the oral literary form. The ogress blames the book, the written word, which seduced her at first—she was fascinated—and which eventually turned her into an old ogress, toothless and voiceless:

> *Devant moi. Sous moi. Jaillir plusieurs signes aux courbes étranges. Jamais vues ainsi alignées devant moi. Sous moi. Et qui. M'émerveillèrent!...* (Le champ 87)
>
> In front of me. Under me gushing forth several signs with strange curves. Never seen them, aligned in front of me. Under me. And who. Mesmerized me!

Farès is deeply sensitive to this situation and to the way his writing is caught in a paradox of striving to unearth the ogress's story while at the same time contributing to silencing her voice further by using a medium that was partly responsible for her disappearance. His writing faces an impossible challenge, reminiscent of the one the journalist and Berber novelist Tahar Djaout took up and made famous through the following phrase "If you speak, you die, and if you don't speak, you die. So speak and die." Djaout spoke and was assassinated.

As a poet, Farès is conscious of the way his writing is in rupture with the traditional Kabyle poets who shunned any personal ambition or introspective undertakings. Instead they brought together propinquity to the divine world—they were considered prophets—and to the common people. Jean Amrouche's work marked a turning point in a long tradition of bards. His work based on the transcription and translation of traditional Kabyle poems and the writing of his personal poems in French constitute a landmark in Kabyle poetry for its accession to the writing domain. In his introduction to *Chants Berbères de Kabylie,* Jean Amrouche emphasizes the poet's role as a representative of the people in what appears to be a way to salve his own alienation, "*Ils ne s'interrogeaient pas sur leurs propres sentiments, ils ne songent pas à se mirer dans leur ouvrage.*"[8] [They did not question their own feelings, they do not think about reflecting upon themselves in their work]. The traditional poet provides his listeners with ways to soothe a painful absence and to share in a communal joy. Thus, Farès inherits Jean Amrouche's predicament who, unlike his precursors such as the famous Kabyle poet Si Mohand, has a message to transmit but no audience.[9] Amrouche's emphasis on and awareness of his bond to the Kabyle people is celebrated in exalted terms, which bear witness to his sense of alienation, and which Farès acknowledges in his work.

Farès's activity as a novelist is not much simpler. The reference to writing, though mentioned at the beginning of *Un Passager de l'Occident* becomes central in the section where Brandy Fax recounts his meeting and traveling with Conchita. She is one of the

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[8] *Chants berbères* (31).

three protagonists, (with Baldwin and Ali-Saïd) and Farès also makes his dedication to her. Brandy's dark and depressed life is enlivened after meeting Conchita, a cheerful Spanish woman at "La Romance." Her detachment from space and reality, her carefree foreignness ("*venue d'ailleurs*") appeals to him and they decide to travel together to Cangas, a peninsula in Spain near Vigo with a stop at Orense, Conchita's birthplace.

Again, the peninsula of Cangas brings to mind Brandy's peninsula in Algeria from which he is exiled. Conchita's desire to stop at Orense is prompted by a desire to re-appropriate the city, a kind of personal pilgrimage ("*une tentative de récuperation d'elle-même*" 72.) which makes Brandy's presence in the first leg of this trip resemble a return to his birthplace by proxy. It comes as no surprise that the section on Ali-Saïd is written during the couple's stay in the peninsula after an argument, a situation reminiscent of Brandy's birthplace, a place of love and pain. The Spanish peninsula is beneficial to Brandy Fax. It is in Cangas that the narrator decides to write a journal of "happy days" and extensively address issues about writing that he vaguely mentions earlier on in the novel. But it is also Conchita's desire that drives Brandy Fax to reflect on his work. The first time he meets Conchita, Brandy sees her as a kind of Eurydice, "*elle me guida vers la mort.*" In the Greek myth, Orpheus journeyed to Hades to bring (the dead) Eurydice back. He was permitted to do so if he did not look behind him before reaching the earth, which he did and lost her forever. Conchita-Eurydice leads Brandy-Orpheus to this place of death and desire: writing. Conchita becomes the vector of this reflexive moment (Orpheus's return) on the narrator's own writing:

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[9] "Je viens d'écrire ces lignes poussé par un instinct irresistible. Je jette un appel sachant très bien que nul ne répondra" *Chants berbères de Kabylie* (19).

> *J'aurai voulu, plus volontairement, vaincre ma peur, et gagner, sans effort, les eaux larges, talentueuses, d'un pays où l'écriture appartiendrait à ceux qui la desirent, non pour informer, déformer, enseigner, mais seulement pour vivre, pour dire combien elle leur est nécessaire (cette écriture) pour demeurer en vie.* (118-9)
>
> I would have liked, more particularly, to overcome my fears, and to reach, without effort, the wide and talented waters, of a country where writing belongs to those who simply desire it, not to inform, deform, teach, but only to live, to say how much it is necessary to them (this writing) to remain alive.

Writing is first and foremost about desire and its inaccessibility. The past conditional ("*J'aurais voulu*") accentuates Brandy's inevitable frustration. Etching—the process of engraving by cutting into the surface by the action of acid—is Brandy's imagined alternative to his dissatisfaction with a fluctuating language and his perpetual desire to capture a thought (a meaning) and fix it forever—in this case the ephemeral and indefinite feeling of happiness. Etching turns meaning into its exact and eternal representation. The engraver would then capture and fix down the sign (the combination of signifier and signified). Brandy's reverie of a perfect union between signifier and signified testifies to his distrust of writing. Like a jealous lover, Brandy resents writing for its pliability as a commodity ("*informer, déformer, enseigner*") and for its universal availability capacity (it is to anyone.) Coexistent to Brandy's desire for writing is a fear about his aspiration for an aquatic world where writing is exclusively reserved to those whose survival depends on it. The process of writing itself, which is rooted in a death feeling, prompts his fear, "*tenter l'écriture merveilleuse, ne pouvait être qu'un sentiment*

de mort parcourant le merveilleux" [trying to write beautifully could only be a feeling of death, that runs through fantasy] (119). The writing that he both fears and desires is so contradictory and complex that Brandy feels the need for a more mechanical means of (re) production, *« J'aurais voulu disposer à la place d'un stylo apeuré et timide, d'un téléscripteur instantané et parfaitement automatique »* [instead I would have like to own a timid pen, a perfectly automatic teleprinter] (119-20). The highly precise craftsmanship of the etcher is replaced by the coldness and perfection of a teleprinter, reminiscent of the fax machine that Farès ironically uses to name his narrator. This radicalization of the metaphor of writing is caused by Brandy's fear of writing ("*stylo apeuré et timide*") and the death feeling that accompanies it.

Indeed, impressions of death are sprinkled throughout the text and from the very first pages, death and writing are almost inseparable. The narrator thinks himself as "foutu" and reality itself smells like death ("*réalité cadavérique*"15). Brandy lives with death or an impression of it as if it were an old friend so that when he is about to meet Baldwin, he is pleased because *"[il] ne pouvait être que plus vivant que moi*" [he could only be more alive than me] (11). Hoi Sin Sauce crates develop into an interesting signifier of both death and writing. These crates are from Vietnam via the United States and arrive in Paris to end up in the narrator's apartment, used as bookcases, table or chair. Brandy Fax nailed and painted them in black. Because of their shape and color, they actually look like a mortuary procession. ("*une sensible procession mortuaire*"14) and are compared to a "cemetery" ("*ce cimetière encaissé entre quatre murs*"15) These crate-coffins are used as storage for books and interestingly enough, Baldwin's book is in one. Baldwin himself is constantly associated with death; his very presence in Paris is a flight from continual

death threats. His conversation with Brandy Fax is punctuated by the phrase "they killed all my friends," while his novel *Another Country* is about the murder of the black man, illustrated by Rufus's suicide. The crates resurface in Cangas when while he is writing and drinking, Brandy hears someone digging a hole and he feels himself sliding down on it. He writes:

> *Plus le rosé coulait, plus je descendais dans le trou, et retrouvais, sans effort, cette première réalité à laquelle je voulais échapper* [...] (120)
>
> The more the rosé wine flowed, the more I sank into the hole, and found, without effort, that first sense of reality from which I wanted to escape.

Alcohol, and especially wine, is construed as an ally throughout the novel. After all, the very name Brandy refers to alcoholic liquor distilled from wine. In Cangas, wine becomes an incentive to slide down the terrifying hole, which leads to this space of writing and death. With the help of wine—reminiscent of Michaux's experiments with hallucinatory drugs—the narrator is taken back to the first reality he strived to escape, i.e. a feeling of death embedded in his writing and which the crates are a symptom of.

However, this overwhelming feeling of death is not a deterrent for creation. When Brandy Fax accepts its dominion over his writing, it is rather a generator of questions, ideas and thoughts because while death signals an end, it also always signals limits that writing has to overcome. Often death carries its aftermath whether it is another cycle, a birth or a new vision. In a parallel between the fear of writing and Algeria's fear, Brandy finds out that they both originate from the same fear: the unknown outcome of a new birth/creation. ("*Et je comprenais alors que ma peur d'écrire était semblable à la peur d'Algérie, que je savais si proche de moi, attentive à ce qui naissait d'elle*" [and I then

understood that my fear of writing was similar to the fear of Algeria, that I felt so close to me, my fear was attentive to what she was giving birth to] (121). Actually doesn't Brandy owe his own survival to writing i.e. to this impression of death that he can finally put into writing ("*étant de ceux qui [...] tentent de rejoindre la vie par le cheminement tardif de l'écrit*" [being among those who try to join life through the late path of the writing] (119)?

Brandy has reached the end of the novel and of his traveling. The letter he received from an anonymous friend who signed "your friend from purgatory" seems to bring closure to both activities. Indeed, the end of the novel coincides with Brandy's return to his small apartment in Paris where the novel started. This letter, only content of a whole chapter ("Paris, la Fleur"), follows Brandy's return from Spain and emphasizes the end of the passenger's travels while at the same time reflecting on them since it contains a critical closing statement and evaluation on the passenger's life, thoughts and especially writing. The author of this letter, never clearly identified, addresses the narrator with the familiar personal pronoun "tu" and calls him "brother" suggesting a close and friendly relationship. Moreover, he has a very intimate knowledge of Brandy's personal life (his education, fears, humiliating experiences in Algiers, etc...). Also, this supposed friend could not be reached outside of the written world; at the end of the letter, he urges Brandy to write to him, an activity that is highly reflexive, especially given the warning on the specific condition of the word. All of this suggests that he and Brandy are both locked in the world of words. All these elements tend towards identifying this anonymous friend to Brandy's own conscience.

The letter is thus a conclusion and a mirror to Brandy's own writing revealing that the poetic world is the only one worth living in and worth visiting ("*il n'y a qu'un lieu au monde qui mérite d'être visité, ou habité : le mien*" [there is only one place in the world that is worth visiting or inhabiting : mine] (131). His critical mind (or consciousness), observing the world from a high distance (a balcony), scrutinizing Brandy's thoughts and writing, tries to lure the latter into inhabiting a poetical world. In spite of Brandy's new indulgence towards himself (the friend suggests that the most important thing is to stay alive and signs *"affectueusement,"* as a sign of truce), the letter still expresses a tension. It is, after all, the difficult moment of unpleasant truths ("*tu es déjà à peu près "foutu", " si tu veux mourir [...] tu peux le faire en toute tranquillité."* [You are almost done for, if you want to die... you can do it without any worry] (133)), and assessment ("*fais effort et dis ce que tu estimes pouvoir dire sur toi."* [make an effort and say what you think you can say about yourself] (132). One of the criticisms touches on Brandy's incapacity to assume or deal with biographical writing (as a matter of authorial position). The novel is obviously biographical but the writer is so wary of language's deceitfulness that he reluctantly recounts important personal events, which results in a text filled with blank spaces ("trous"). A compromise with the inevitable fallacious aspect of writing as an activity is needed here ("*la part de faux qui te revient*" [your share of untruth] (132). The other criticism concerns Brandy's relationship to Kabylia and the way he "makes people believe" that it exists. ("*une manière de jeune homme qui voyage et qui fait croire à tout le monde que la Kabylie existe*" [a young man's manner who travels and makes everyone believe that Kabylia exists] (132). The sentence is ambiguous and the choice of the verb "to make believe" negates the subordinate clause stating Kabylia's existence to suggest its

non-existence. The suggestion that Kabylia does exist is echoed by the claim that it does not, and the two arguments are put back to back: denying Kabylia's existence is as preposterous as claiming it.

The real stake is elsewhere—and Brandy knows it too—it is at the bottom of the dreaded hole where he feels attracted to when he writes. Due to his education, Brandy escaped death or the prospect of growing into a murderer. Besides the political explanations and the particulars of the Algerian war (the horrors of war, the loss of loved ones, etc...) Brandy's attraction for death seems to be an ingrained force, which sometimes leans towards suicide, a force similar to what Freud called the death instincts. ("*Tu fais partie de ces gens qui sont venus au monde assez tôt pour désirer en sortir le plus rapidement possible*" [you are among these people who have come to the world early enough to desire to leave it as soon as possible] (131)). In *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud defined the death instinct (*thanatos*) as opposed to Eros, the life instinct, and as a striving towards the reduction of tension degree zero, that is, to return the living being to an inorganic state (also defined in Laplanche and Pontalis 97). Education allowed Brandy to defuse or displace this "death wish" into writing, which suggest that the text contains a destructive component. His supposed commitment for Kabylia, which as demonstrated earlier is pointless, keeps him away from literarily exploring the literary path to its end, leaving him in a paralyzed state. This path could actually be more rewarding for the writer and even for Kabylia itself. Again, death (including murder) is in Farès's text a means to reach the end, the limits, which eventually contains its opposite and end product, the dreadful and appealing novelty.

Traditionally death has been a necessary phase in all initiations. It gives access to a new life and therefore contains the idea of revelation and introduction. Death, write Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, is not an end in itself, instead it gives access to the spiritual world and to life itself (650-651). The mystery of death produces anxiety and fear, which has more to do with the fear of the unknown, i.e. change, than disappearance into nothingness. Therefore, this regressive element in Brandy's writing should follow its course towards a final explosion/implosion to create a more enticing statement about Berbers, one that is not limited to the cultural and geographical sphere of Kabylia but open to the world. This destructive/creative movement is embedded in the process of writing, which for Farès is symbolized by the space of purgatory, the in-between state at the threshold of the new world. The purgatory of the novel is a place and time of expiation and whose end is purification. And it is an appropriate place for writing because it is a world in itself and writing coincides with this striving, suffering for expression /purification to reach an ever distant state of perfection. Brandy's presence in the purgatory is partly due to the very condition of the word. He writes,

> *Dans le fond, tu voudrais, en littérateur, être peintre, élaborer par petites touches un univers. [...] Or, en tant qu'habitant d'une presqu'île, tu ne peux parvenir (espérer parvenir) au travail du peintre. Quelle illusion car le mot, contrairement à la touche du peintre, n'est pas matière ; il est voix, voix dans l'infini qui se perd. As-tu assez réfléchi à cette condition du mot? Bien. Ecris-moi.* (134)
>
> Actually, you would like, in the field of literature, to be like a painter and create by little brushstrokes a whole universe [...] However, as an inhabitant of a peninsula, you can not aspire (or hope to aspire) to the result of a painter. What an

> illusion because the word, contrary to the brushstroke of a painter, is not matter but a voice, a voice that disappears in the infinity. Have you thought enough about this condition of the word? Good. Write to me. (134)

Brandy strived to attain a "totally artistic life," a phrase he never defines but which suggests the renunciation of all that is dear to him. A major hindrance to this project is his being an inhabitant of a peninsula, condition construed as a heavy determination. Another concern is that Brandy's writing is at the periphery and "on the margin," of the inescapable reality of war (when in Cangas, he wrote a text called "EN MARGE DES PAYS EN GUERRE"[10]). This mode of writing, which probably designates a sphere beyond direct conflicts, arguably overlooks the simple and timeless truth that man is not only a wolf for himself but also a murderer ("*l'homme est un tueur pour l'homme*"). Given the fact that Brandy, as discussed earlier, acknowledges and endures this reality in his life and his writing, the problem resides in how to make this reality coexist with the artistic desire of writing "on the margin"? Finally, writing "artistically" is thwarted by the inherent volatile quality of words ("*le mot* [...] *est voix, voix dans l'infini qui se perd*") Thus, to achieve an artistic life equates achieving perfection in writing: one can always strive towards it but can never reach it. Hence, Brandy is condemned to not fully exist for to exist is to lead an artistic life, which demands all the necessary renunciations. He can only survive in this purgatory. The metaphor of purgatory is therefore both literary and literal.

Conclusion

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[10] It was initially the title of Farès's trilogy changed for "Découverte du Nouveau Monde" itself eventually modified. See Charles Bonn, *Le Roman algérien de langue française* (281).

In *Un Passager de l'Occident*, Farès allies a reflection on the pitfalls of writing with his own reflections on the condition of being a Berber writer. In an article entitled "Civilisation berbère et langue française au Maghreb," Farès writes,

> *Ecrire, et même le berbère, comme tel, c'est s'éloigner de la culture de l'oral. C'est franchir le lieu de l'immédiateté signifiante pour une élaboration et reconstruction de la signification.* (94)
>
> To write even in Berber is to drift away from the oral culture. It is stepping over from the locus of immediacy into an elaboration and a reconstruction of the meaning.

And indeed, writing entails a rupture from the realm of orality—language's immediacy—and a rupture from others, conditions which Farès grapples with in his novels. And so, given his situation "in rupture" (from orality and others), it is not surprising that the only space Farès could conceive to write from is a kind of Purgatory, a realm "in-between:" between life and death; absence and presence; oral and written; One and the Other.

I called this space a Berber poetics because of its foundation in alienation/ rupture, the centrality of the Other, and its Berber constituents, reminiscent of oral legends (Ogress, Porcupine, guile and wisdom) and Kabyle wisdom (the significance of the word, closeness to nature, distrust of hierarchy and power, etc)

Through the writing techniques that he develops throughout his novels—allegorical tone, equivocal narration; evading, delaying or concealing events and information that are revealed later in the text or in another novel—Farès like William Faulkner or Kateb Yacine, creates a specific and inviolable world, and writes a modern saga of the Berber people which sketches a collective fate through a very intimate narration. Tropes such as

the murder of the porcupine, the malaise of the fig tree, the mountain's grandeur and deception, the color blue, loss, exile, and the Other are all elements of a Berber poetics. However Farès rigorously avoids any sort of closure. His loyalty to the principle of openness is manifest in the dialogues (or *mise-en-abîme*) in which he engages with cherished authors such as Kateb Yacine.

> *Déjà, vers l'année 1945, au moment où vers l'Europe s'annonçaient des libérations, il était parti (Ali-Saïd) vers la ville rocheuse de Constantine. Et c'est là, aux journées d'émeutes qui écorchèrent la ville, que Si Mokhtar (semble-t-il), pour la première fois, rencontra Ali-Saïd."* (109)
>
> Already, around 1945, at a time when in Europe liberations were occurring, he (Ali-Saïd) left for the rocky city of Constantine. And that's when, in the midst of the days of riots that wounded the city, that Si Mokhtar (it seems), met Ali-Saïd for the first time.

Ali-Saïd is ten when he meets Si Mokhtar during the demonstration in Constantine in 1945 where the nationalists called the Algerian people to participate in the celebration of the allies' victory and at the same time claim their own liberation, thereby appropriating the French rhetoric of liberty. The repression of the demonstrators was particularly brutal, especially in little Kabylia and in the North of Constantine, and left 45 000 victims according to the Algerian militants.[11] It is probably in Constantine where the child, after witnessing the horrors of the French repression, developed an early sense and desire for what the people had come to celebrate and died for: freedom. This last passage on Ali

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[11] Ouerdane. *La question berbère* (63).

Saïd is Farès's wink at Kateb Yacine who also witnessed this crucial historical event at age sixteen and admitted to have been forever changed by it,

> *C'est en 1945, à Sétif, que mon humanitarisme fut affronté pour la première fois au plus atroce des spectacles. J'avais seize ans. Le choc que je ressentis devant l'impitoyable boucherie qui provoqua la mort de milliers de musulmans, je ne l'ai jamais oublié. Là se cimenta mon nationalisme."*[12]
>
> It was in 1945, in Sétif, that my sense of humanity was assaulted, for the very first time, by the most horrible sight. I was sixteen years old. I have never forgotten the shock that I felt from the terrible massacre, in which thousands of Moslems were killed. That is what crystallized my nationalist feelings.

The narrator is also sixteen when in 1956 he carries a nationalist tract in his socks to show his uncle, entering on his turn into the realm of political consciousness (133). His allusion to the fascinating character of Si Mokhtar in *Un passager de l'occident* continues the dialogue with Kateb Yacine. In *Nedjma,* Si Mokhtar is a prankster who turns out to be the illegitimate father of Nedjma, Algeria's most enigmatic metaphor. He is an old rogue from Constantine, an eccentric adventurer and a libertine, who recalls the famous Arab poet Abu Nuwas (750-810), court poet during the reign of Caliph Harun ar-Rashid who was famous for his erotic and bacchic poetry where he celebrated wine and the extravagance of life:

> *Il nous faisait peur, mais nous l'aimions avec la farouche dissimulation de l'enfance, et ne pouvions nous passer de lui; tous les proverbes, toutes les farces,*

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[12] Favrod, *La révolution algérienne* (76). Cited in Ouerdane (64).

> *toutes les tragédies étaient de Si Mokhtar; nul n'ignorait ce qu'il disait de la guerre, de la religion, de la mort, des femmes, de l'alcool, de la politique [..] Avec ses disciples, il aurait pu constituer une petite armée.* (Kateb 108)
>
> He frightened us, but we loved him, with the passionate dissimulation of childhood; we couldn't bear to be without him. All the proverbs, the tricks, and tragedies were about Si Mokhtar. Everyone knew what he was saying about war, religion, death, women, drinking, politics. . . . With his disciples, he could have put together a small army. (Kateb 108)

In *Nedjma,* he epitomizes unorthodoxy. He debauches women, has them give up the veil, and among other things, ridicules the symbolic of the pilgrimage to Mecca (one of the five pillars of Islamic faith) by simulating a religious rekindling, going to Mecca and eventually divulging that it was an artifice to obtain a passport. Subject to no moral imperative, he represents the ultimate free will, which might attract someone like the young Ali-Saïd in *Un passager de l'occident*, and might also explain why Ali-Saïd's mother thought that the man possessed her boy's soul.

Therefore, in the last passage on Ali-Saïd, Farès allies the celebration of the end of World War II, the nascent revolt of the Algerian people against oppression, and Kabylia's distress through Ali-Saïd's notebook whose content is partially revealed in *L'exil et le désarroi.* The notebook—far from promoting political arguments and postwar expectations, or philosophical and mystical ideals as *Un passager de l'Occident* suggests—is mainly concerned with relating stories and folktales, and naturally includes the Tamazight language (Berber), pervasive in all Algeria. Cultural diversity is therefore one of the most significant aspects of the emerging nation that the leadership has totally

obliterated to solely concentrate on pompous ideological discourses, which soon turned to be empty fables.

> *Il comprit, aussi, que le pays n'était pas encore disposé à lire ces pages, et, surtout, à admettre l'existence de cette langue, que l'on parle, en plusieurs endroits [...] la découverte d'un simple Carnet de vie, d'amour, de rires, de fables, pouvait mettre en cause toute une manière d'envisager l'histoire, la vie, le : Nouveau Monde.* (*L'exil* 105).
>
> He understood that the country wasn't ready to read his writings, and, especially to admit to the existence of that language, that we speak, in many places. . . . [T]he discovery of a notebook of life, love, laughter, fables, had the power of turning upside down a whole way of conceptualizing history, life, the New World. (L'exil 105)

And indeed the "Nouveau Monde" that Farès creates is made up of just that: love, laughter, fables, which are some of the necessary ingredients to question the world.

Conclusion: Barbarology in America

> *Le négre n'est pas. Pas plus que le Blanc. Tous deux ont à s'écarter des voix inhumaines qui furent celles de leurs ancêtres respectifs afin que naisse une authentique communication. [...] Pourquoi tout simplement ne pas essayer de toucher l'autre, de me révéler l'autre? Ma liberté ne m'est-elle pas donnée pour édifier le monde du Toi? A la fin de cet ouvrage, nous aimerions que l'on sente comme nous la dimension ouverte de toute conscience. Mon ultime prière : O mon corps, fais de moi toujours un homme qui interroge!* (Fanon Peau noire 187-188)

American literature was the inspiration for Barbarology, and I originally intended to work on links between novels by Toni Morrison, James Baldwin and William Faulkner (and the latter was the inspiration for several Algerian novelists, notably Kateb Yacine). So, it is appropriate to end with an address to this link, spreading Barbarology from the African continent across the Atlantic to the Americas.

Moreover, and in conclusion to this project I want to revisit another part of Nabile Farès's *Un Passager de l'Occident* which I feel offers a perfect segue and then conclusion. In this novel, Farès recounts and reflects upon his meeting with James Baldwin with whom he discusses the latter's text, *Another Country.* And it is not a coincidence that *Un Passager de l'Occident* starts with an engagement with American literature and with the African presence in the American text.[1] American literature echoes some of the issues with which Farès struggles and which this dissertation addresses, such as the dismissal of the people who are at the core of American identity and the American nation, that is, Native Americans and black Americans. The return of the repressed takes place in literature, as we have seen with Assia Djebar. In the American (con)text, the

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[1] An approach that is the basis of an excellent study by Toni Morrison, some twenty years later, in her text, *Playing in the Dark.*

Black and the Native American presence permeates American literary texts, especially when they are apparently absent—a fundamental idea for Barbarology. Farès insists that the interest, or thrust of White American novels is that they are written by whites and that, "throughout the pages the black man is everywhere."[2] All White authors have in one way or another to face the Black presence, segregation and its aftermath. Thus, Farès deems Faulkner's writing fundamentally Southern and entangled within the Blues' culture and Scott Fitzgerald's oeuvre can only exist as long as it obliterates the Black world, while Henry Miller tried all his life to escape the condition of being white in America. Whether one acknowledges the black presence or not, Farès insists that it is there, following thereby the model of Barbarology which dialectically engages and reveals this presence and that of other suppressed peoples and their histories—thus the Berber-African American bond.

And so American narrative shares some of the same issues as the francophone text such as the dual concept of absence/ presence and then the question of how to address these dismissed presences and in what language as well as the entanglement of aesthetic and ideological discourses and issues of representation, to cite only a few. Farès detects these similarities and rather than content himself with what the text offers, he prefers to look for what has not been said, what is buried. The extraction of elements that exist but are hidden or denied is a strategic move and requires a method—and here is Barbarology –which Farès uses extensively in the novel.

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[2] *Car, ce qui fait la qualité des romans blancs américains, c'est qu'ils sont écrits par des blancs et que, à travers les pages, le Noir, l'homme noir, est partout.* (*Un Passager* 19)

The passage Farès quotes from William Faulkner's *Light in August* (10) should then be read according to the same principle. Lena Grove goes from Alabama to Mississippi on foot to find Lucas Burch, the man who impregnated her. She sets off on a long quest with this objective in mind and the quote evokes her long but fruitful journey. Lena is confident because she has an anchor (Alabama) and a plan to carry out. Antipodal to Lena's mission is Joe Christmas, the other central figure in *Light in August,* whom Farès seems to have deliberately ignored. Joe Christmas is a "white" man whose black blood turns him into a fugitive. His mother dies after his birth because her father—who had previously killed Joe's father, a black man—refuses to summon the doctor during the delivery.

Obviously, Joe's story is reminiscent of the (famous) line the narrator attributed to Baldwin at the beginning of the novel: "The United States need to accept the fact that they are a *métisse* nation or the fire next time." Miscegenation is at the core of Joe's tragedy. He cannot escape his racial condition and so he dies (a death that resembles a suicide) torn between two seemingly irreconcilable opposites, whiteness and blackness. The personification of the white and black blood in the final scene where Joe is killed, attests to a permanent division. In the passage Farès quotes from Faulkner (see Faulkner 449) the white and black elements are independent of one another and opposed as enemies, for instance when Joe's black side seizes the pistol, the white part doesn't fire. The predictable destructive result of this coexistence is evidenced by the designation of "stain" which evokes defilement and contamination, eventually leading to degeneration, a quintessential notion in Faulkner's writing. Before dying, Joe Christmas, emasculated, releases, like a last breath, the black blood that has turned him into a Frankenstein-like

creature. Here, the failure of hybridization is unequivocal. For Baldwin, however, hybridization, or in American parlance, inter-racial sexual relations (and that disagreeable word, miscegenation), marks the American experience and should not only be acknowledged but also extolled. Therefore, when Farès claims that Lena's thoughts belong to the South, he purposely truncates Joe's thoughts—which need to be deduced—which also belong to the South, a healthy South not a degenerated one. Lena, in Farès's view, is in a certain way the passenger of the novel whose travel is a disguise for fundamental reflections and changes taking place between the lines.

Berber North Africa meets Black America

Upon meeting, Farès/Brandy immediately feels sympathy towards Baldwin who seals this bond with a smile, which is worth "*la Méditerranée sur les oursins.*" Based on a long-time political sympathy towards the African-American predicament and a strong admiration for the author of *The Fire Next Time*, this bond grows more intimate as the two men become acquainted. That both men are writers is probably one of the most significant affinities they share, highlighted by the gift Baldwin receives from Brandy, a copy of his first book wrapped in the newspaper *Le Monde*. The novel (*Yahia, pas de chance*) functions as a link between the two men, tying them to the same world.

Baldwin and Farès also share a history of struggle. When Baldwin declares, "they killed all my friends" the pain in his voice speaks to Farès and brings back to mind the death of his friend during the Algerian war. Their past is heavy with pain and loss because of racism and colonialism. Baldwin also displays a strong attachment and sensibility towards "his people" ("*les miens*"), which probably echoes the narrator's

feelings for the oppressed Kabyles. Still, the two men diverge on how a writer integrates these elements into his writing.

Farès clearly admires Baldwin's sincerity as evidenced by his dedication: "*à James Baldwin, dont la sincérité d'écriture provoque des réconforts*" [to James Baldwin, whose sincerity in writing provokes comfort]. Also, facing Baldwin's confusion about his role as a writer, Farès suggests that he writes "sincerely." Farès's advice to be genuine and honest reveals a desire to encourage Baldwin to revisit and scrutinize the soul that inspired *The Fire Next Time* and other texts, which are landmarks of African-American criticism. Indeed, when reflecting on racial relations, Baldwin argues at several occasions for the need to go beyond a schematic approach of black and white relationship in the United States. He writes,

> It is not simply the relationship of oppressed to oppressor, of master to slave, nor is it motivated merely by hatred; it is also, literally and morally, a *blood* relationship, perhaps the most profound reality of the American experience, and we cannot begin to unlock it until we accept how very much it contains of the force and anguish and terror of love. (Notes 42)

The essay "Many Thousands Gone" was first published in *Partisan Review* (Nov.-Dec. 1951) and its approach reveals Baldwin's unique vision, which originates from a sincere introspective reflection, even though it is nurtured in his opposition to Richard Wright. Over time, Baldwin comes to realize that writing is political whether one likes it or not and that he has become entangled in the same dilemma about which he warned Richard Wright. Formerly Baldwin warned against assuming the role of representative of one's people, for such self positioning requires that the writer answer expectations causing him

to loose "the wherewithal for his own nourishment" since he is not allowed to "recreate his own experience." However, Baldwin maintains a critical stance vis-à-vis the writer's role even in such a state of confusion.[3] Farès wants to encourage this critical position, which emerges from Baldwin's confusion and despair. Only this position can lead him, Baldwin, through "sincere" writing, to elaborate on this change that is so needed. Frantz Fanon was already intensely aware of the dangers of the status quo in which race relations were caught. So, while reflecting on Hegel's master/slave dialectic, he points to the complexity of this relationship and to its eventual termination through the establishment of an authentic communication. Farès argues that Baldwin fought in his own terms to express and defend the same vision even though through doubts and suspicion.

Farès admits that he admires Baldwin for his sense of "é*clatement,*" his angry outburst. The whole country (The United States) declares Farès, exploded after the eruption of the black reality. Baldwin has retained the impression of this burst, an eruption, which radically demystifies the Manichean perception of American identity: there are no authentic White/ Black Americans. Farès agrees with Baldwin that acknowledging this reality will prove very difficult if not impossible for the White man because it denies his very existence as a White man. Indeed, Baldwin is convinced that the danger, in the mind of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity.[4] Farès

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[3] "*L'artiste est aujourd'hui très important. Il permet d'imposer des réalités. Il peut renverser des mentalités.*" *Puis,* [...] "*Ce qu'il se passe aux Etats-Unis est trop catastrophique. Personne ne peut dire ce qui peut arriver. Mais, ce qu'il faut faire, c'est changer MAINTENANT.* [The artist is very important today. He can impose realities. He can change mentalities. Then, ... what is happening in the United States is too disastrous. No one can tell what might happen. But what needs to be done is to change NOW] (38)

compares this truth about American identity to a bomb (22). Farès conceives an impossible scenario to illustrate Baldwin's answer to America's crisis and the little chance it has to be heard. The choice of a bomb, a violent and destructive instrument, for deliverance attests to the danger of the task. The bomb, according to Farès, must be placed in one's best friend's chest, a detail reminiscent of Baldwin's conviction that the white man is not an enemy, but a man to love. If the word integration means anything, writes Baldwin, it means that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and to begin to change it.[5] Finally, the last step of Farès's scenario and the most improbable one too, is to expect this same best friend's gratitude. Obviously, one doesn't bomb one's best friend and expect a smile in return, but this imaginary plan suitably captures the intensity of the moment and the necessity for change. Undoubtedly, this solution belongs to an impossible discourse, making it the more appealing to the narrator. The alternative that seems to be preferred to Baldwin's answer is for the white man to mask the reality through violence, thereby becoming murderers. Echoing the white man's violence is the violent writing which Farès criticizes, thus siding with Baldwin on the crucial debate over the objectives and needs of African American literature (20). Indeed, far from Baldwin's credo "we cannot be free until they are free," violent writing reflects the racial reality without reflecting on it. Farès condemns authors who reap the benefits of this kind of writing and opposes the thought process involved in Baldwin's texts, to the descriptive social reality, of say Richard Wright, to whom he winks with the mention of the article "*hélas, Vieux Richard.*" In this

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[4] Baldwin, "Letter To My Nephew" in *The Fire* (23).

[5] Ibid note 4.

article, Baldwin recounts the confrontation he had with Richard Wright after the publication of "Everybody's Protest Novel" in *Zero Magazine* where Baldwin harshly criticized the futile violence of Bigger Thomas in *Native Son.* Richard Wright felt betrayed by Baldwin's attack on protest literature,

> "What do you mean, *protest*!" Richard cried. "*All* literature is protest. You can't name a single novel that isn't protest." To this I could only weakly counter that all literature might be protest but all protest was not literature. "Oh," he would say then, looking, as he so often did, bewilderingly juvenile, "here you come again with all that art for art's sake crap. (Baldwin Nobody 197)

The element of violence in the text is for Wright a means of expressing the return of the repressed, manifestation discussed extensively by Frantz Fanon. [6] It expresses the suffering endured by oppressed people and hence carries a political significance, which becomes almost sacred. What is at stake here is an ideological agenda, which was at first embedded in the emergence of an African American literary production but came to impinge upon the freedom of writing. This ideological platform weighs on the black (like the francophone) writer and critic so much that Henry Louis Gates calls it the Inquisition.[7]

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[6] *"Qu'est-ce donc en réalité que cette violence? Nous l'avons vu, c'est l'intuition qu'ont les masses colonisées que leur libération doit se faire, et ne peut se faire que par la force*" (Fanon Les damnés 105).

[7] "The tendency of black criticism toward ideological absolutism, with its attendant Inquisition, must come to an end" ("Preface to Blackness: Text and Pretext") in Napier, *African American Literary Theory, a Reader* (4).

In the same article about his friendship with Richard Wright, Baldwin far from questioning the literariness of his writing —which he acknowledges—questions instead his very commitment vis-à-vis his people:

> When the African said to me *I believe he thinks he's white*, he meant that Richard cared more about his safety and comfort than he cared about the black condition. But it was to this condition, at least in part, that he owed his safety and comfort and power and fame. (Baldwin 212)

Baldwin actually argues that Wright's reputation as a social writer was a disservice for him because both his readers in France and in the US alike were blinded by it and were unable to see what Baldwin calls the "fantastic jewel buried in the grass." Obviously, the jewel is illegible due to the intentional fallacy (following the literary sense of this phrase, Wright's texts are read with the a priori of "intention" that is to say anticipating on what Wright meant to write.) Moreover, Farès's denunciation of writers who reap the benefits of "violent writing" converges with Baldwin's doubts about self-designated social writers.[8] Farès clearly feels implicated in this polemic where his tone leans towards forthright despair (20-1) for the right questions are never asked. The condition is permanent and hopeless like the fate of those condemned to Hell in Dante's *Inferno*. The use of the Sphinx as a simile for Baldwin's enigmatic sentence highlights this tragic tone. But the simile could be extended to include Farès's text among the riddles to be resolved. Why is Baldwin's writing deemed an "eternal enigma" epitomized by the "Sphinx facing

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[8] Earlier in the text, Baldwin writes that he began to suspect "that Richard Wright was never, really, the social polemical writer he took himself to be." In *Nobody* (184).

Oedipus" when its riddle was solved by this very same Oedipus, causing the winged female monster to kill itself?

The answer might be found in a kind of dialogue with which Farès engages Baldwin's text, an engagement which is really a *mis-en-abîme*. In *Nobody Knows My Name,* Baldwin portrays Richard Wright's work as "a road-block in my road, the sphinx, really, whose riddles I had to answer before I could become myself."[9] Unlike Oedipus, who has answered the Sphinx's riddle but not the riddle of his own identity, Baldwin intends to pursue his quest and resolve the ultimate enigma, which is about him. Baldwin admits having used Wright to further this personal investigation. Farès's comment seems to be that the Sphinx's role is exactly that, to elicit a process of self-questioning (21). In *Oedipus the king,* the Sphinx is half woman, half lion but Farès only mentions that it is a combination of halves, suggesting a correspondence between (men's) androgyny and (the idea of) "*métissage*": the sphinx is made of halves like the men who face it in order to solve its riddle. The Sphinx therefore reflects mankind's dual identity, like a mirror. The ultimate riddle, "says" the Sphinx, is the riddle of yourself and Baldwin understood it while Oedipus and Wright did not.

Another Country

One way for Baldwin to articulate his position within the American or African-American literary tradition is to dissociate himself from its (and his) spiritual leader, Richard Wright. While questioning the political commitments, which the latter claims to illustrate in his work, Baldwin also attacks the role he plays as a representative of

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[9] Baldwin, *Nobody* (196-7).

African-American consciousness. Baldwin construes these as a burden, which will eventually lead him to a dead end:

> The unlucky shepherd soon finds that, so far from being able to feed the hungry sheep, he has lost the wherewithal for his own nourishment: having not been allowed — so fearful was his burden, so present his audience! — to recreate his own experience (Notes 32-33).

The writer's independence is paramount, for on it depends the quality and depth of his work. Yet when Baldwin meets Farès/Brandy Fax in Paris, the situation he finds himself in resembles the dead end he warned Wright against. The date is July 1970 and by now, many of Baldwin's friends had been assassinated (Medgar Evers in 1963, Malcolm X in 1965, etc.). With Martin Luther King's assassination (1968), his hopes died. From this moment Baldwin is more pessimistic and less forgiving while his view on literature and his role as a writer are now far from the philosophy of the "Art for art's sake" that Wright accused him of advocating. The situation has changed so that the champion of a reconciliation between (American) whites and blacks, who also urged his nephew to accept the white man with love because "we cannot be free until they are free," is now obviously seeking a new and second voice.[10] Farès is the interlocutor of Baldwin's disenchantment, uncertainty and frustration towards himself and a world that he no longer comprehends. Fundamental questions of what to say, how to say it and to whom,

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[10] "*Mais tout doit changer. Comment faire?...Je sais que je peux continuer de parler pour mes frères. Mais comment dire?... A qui dire?... Je n'arrive pas à répondre à ces questions...(25) "Dites-moi ce qu'il y a à faire?... Je ne sais pas du tout ce qu'il y a à faire..."(26) [...] qu'est-ce qu'il y a à dire? et comment le dire?...* " [But everything has to change. How to do it? I know I can continue to speak for my brothers. But how can I say it? ... To whom?... I cannot answer those questions... Tell me what I can do... I really do not know what I can do... what is there to be said? And how to say it?] (53)

directly concern the content, the form and his readership yet Baldwin has lost all landmarks and desperately needs direction. The new reality in the United States, the political situation as well as his role within this complex configuration, require a dramatic change which he fears will take place without him because he senses he has come full circle. ("*Tu sais que cette décision, dit tragiquement Baldwin, c'est un peu la fermeture d'un cercle*" [you know that this decision, Baldwin says with a tragic tone in his voice, it is like coming full circle] (29)). Baldwin imagines his destiny represented by his expulsion from the world after the completion of the circle, a trajectory that indicates failure, fatality and entrapment.

The limit Baldwin has reached is evident in the discussions he and Brandy Fax have about *Another Country*. The narrator, concerned about the form of the narrative, insistently argues that *Another Country* should have been a short story.[11] *Another Country* might have been titled *Easy Rider* (from the name of the first part of the novel and evoking the seminal 1960s film of the same title), which would clearly describe a journey (or a ride) towards the intimacy of an origin and an absolute determination, which the narrator calls "the cage" (because of its inescapable presence.) Like Rufus, the protagonist who commits suicide in *Another Country,* one is condemned to carry this "cage" and live with it and sometimes die because of it. *Easy Rider's* efficacy might lie

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[11] "*Cela aurait été comme si chaque mot, tout comme les notes du piano de Yancey, bouchait les sorties de l'univers, et que, inexorablement, ils nous conduisaient vers cette cage où nous sommes nés. [...] Mais peut-être que cette cage est maintenant impossible à supporter. Que le langage du Blues est trop vrai pour que ce qu'il dit soit encore, et plus longuement, supportable.*" [It would have been as if each word, like Yancey's piano keys, clogged the exits of the universe, inexorably leading us towards this cage where we were born. [...] But maybe this cage is now impossible to bear. Maybe the language of the Blues is too true for what it says to be bearable] (24)

in its short length and explicit and powerful ending. The story would then have expressed both the dead end of racial relations in the United States, but also the dead end of the language to talk about it, for the content and the form converge to relate this final moment. Such unambiguous closure would underline the necessity to halt and reflect on alternative ways of writing. *Easy Rider,* then, could have sealed the completion of Baldwin's circle, which could entail the realization of a need for a new language, a new naissance. ("*pour que ce qui semble blessure d'existence devienne enchantement d'une naissance*" [for what seems like an existential wound becomes the enchantment of a birth] (49)). The blues appropriately illustrates a language whose significance is historically and sociologically framed, a language that expresses a truth and is limited to its expression.

Instead, *Another Country* prolongs an impossible situation that the characters must miserably endure, that is to live in guilt and troubled waters after Rufus's death. The alternative to the novel's deliquescence is Rufus's survival. Brandy Fax imagines Rufus, just before committing suicide, screaming "*Pourquoi?... Pourquoi?...*". "*Dites-moi, Mister Baldwin?*" [Why?.. Why?.. Tell me mister Baldwin]. The scream the character addresses his own creator is significant in the sense that Baldwin is indeed the creator of Rufus's world and only he can change it. In *Another Country*, Rufus first addresses God who abandoned him. He obviously sought his love, protection, and help in vain—as with Baldwin himself before discovering that "God is white"—then a voice rose within him:

> He stood at the center of the bridge and it was freezing cold. He raised his eyes to heaven. He thought, You bastard, you motherfucking bastard. Ain't I our baby, too? He began to cry. [...] The wind tore at him, at his head and shoulders, while

> something in him screamed, Why? Why? He thought of Eric. His straining arms threatened to break. *I can't make it this way.* He thought of Ida. He whispered, *I'm sorry, Leona*, and then the wind took him [...]. He felt a shoe fly off behind him, there was nothing around him, only the wind, *all right, you motherfucking Godalmighly bastard, I'm coming to you* (Early Novels 443).

Rufus intends to confront God his creator about his agony and inability to live. But the question "why?" comes from within, where a part of Rufus wants to live and try to love. Does he not think of Eric, whose love was reciprocated, and his sister Ida and finally Leona whom he also loved in his crazy way? But this tiny voice is powerless against Rufus's destiny decided by Baldwin's streak. In Farès's text, Rufus's interrogation echoes the phrase that Baldwin repeats like a litany "they killed all my friends." Farès parallels Baldwin's stupor and anger about so many assassinations to Rufus's awe at being sacrificed. By addressing the question to Baldwin through Rufus, Farès's subterranean message to Baldwin is that the statement about the killing of his friends is the counterpart of Rufus's death. Both depict the same state of affairs, which needs to be surpassed. Farès indirectly contends that Rufus should have lived and tried to love and create this other country that Baldwin aspires to. Instead, Rufus destroys Leona's life and his own because of despair and hatred. Rufus's death, (inspired by the suicide of Baldwin's good friend, Eugene Worth, who jumped from the George Washington Bridge in the winter of 1946) incarnates the point to which the crisis between the two races has come to, a point the narrator calls "*l'aveugle monde*" [the blind world]. In a gesture meant to alleviate this blindness and pain, the narrator, ironically, produces a flame from a lighter.

Conclusion

Again, this section on Farès and Baldwin demonstrates the proximity and common project of African American and North African reflection on the narrative production, and then the tangled and troubled relation both groups of writers experience in the context of engaged writing. This relationship must be the object of further study so that the richness and vitality of the topic is fully realized. I hope I can pursue this project, in particular, in the future.

So, Barbarology emerged from the tangled questions with which both literatures grapple. This theory, Barbarology, is loosely based on the name given to Imazighen by the invaders, that is Barbarian/Berber and I intentionally used the now shameful "name of the Other" to elaborate this active theory of exile and identity. Barbarology uses what has been recognized as the essential deficiencies in Berbers—such as their internal dissension ("they agree to disagree")—and turns them into assets. For instance we might understand this as a notion of "multiple-consciousness," an internalization of foreignness or as Du Bois has it, a sense of "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others." Combined with exile, this attribute is inspiring and a source of strength. And Barbarology is also a tool based on this force for it permits the identification of sites of coercion and then reveals buried and dismissed presences in texts in a dialectical, self critical mode, free of the liberal contradictions of multiculturalism and post-colonialism.

Through this project, I have revealed and engaged the high stakes associated with the act of writing for francophone novelists today. The novel as a genre presents many shortcomings, with which writers such as Farès and Djebar must grapple. While they both come to terms with the same issues (autobiographical writing, Algeria's identity,

exile, writing in French, etc.), they do it in different ways and with different results. Moreover, since both Djebar and Farès carry the burden of a collective history, their role in this history needs to be examined as well as their role vis-à-vis their respective community. Hence, this project argues that the very urge to re-appropriate as well as the act of re-appropriating one's history (to recover it through fiction) needs to be fully addressed, in all its contradictions, deficiencies, and dead ends and only then can we really appreciate its results.

As a follow up project, I intend to expand and elaborate Barbarology so that it offers an imaginary alternative—a spark for the political unconscious of the oppressed of the world—to what is known as world globalization, a most positive, if not bland name, for global capitalism. Alternatives to a capitalist, patriarchal, anti-democratic, supremacist and ecocidal world exist, but these must properly emerge, yes, they must be sparked and even with engaged writing. While it seems, following Marx's phrase that nothing remains "no other bond between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment,'" in the name of radical humanism, Barbarology strives to prove otherwise.

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