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SOMETHING QUEER ABOUT THE NATION
SEXUAL SUBVERSIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MAGHREBIAN
LITERATURE OF FRENCH EXPRESSION

by
JARROD HAYES

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

1996

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

**SOMETHING QUEER ABOUT THE NATION
SEXUAL SUBVERSIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MAGHREBIAN
LITERATURE OF FRENCH EXPRESSION**

by

Jarrod Hayes

Advisors: Professor Nancy K. Miller
 Professor Francesca Canadé Sautman

This dissertation examines the function of marginal sexualities, sexual dissidence, and gender insubordination in the articulation of national identity in Maghrebien novels written in French. Especially in post-independence novels, the unveiling of sexualities that should remain secret plays the political role of contradicting official discourses of Nation, nationalism, and national identity that attempt to deny the existence of these marginalized sexualities. The examination of the role of sexuality in post-independence literature makes it possible to reread novels more traditionally classified as combat novels and to understand how sexuality has always played a role (albeit more subtle) in these earlier novels. Finally, a rereading of even earlier novels, often classified as "ethnographic" (a pejorative label in the context of a certain brand of nationalist literary criticism), creates the possibility of finding anti-colonialist struggle in novels sometimes criticized for pandering to the exoticizing gaze of Western readers. It is through sexual allegories of the political that this rereading can be articulated.

If there has been such an effort to exclude the queer from the Nation (queer in both narrow and larger senses), to show she is an outsider trying to invade or get inside, the

queer must always be inside already; in some ways the Nation is always already queer. When Maghrebian authors formulate representations of marginal sexualities, they are not just challenging sexual taboos, sexual normativity, or patriarchy (which they do); they are also pointing out the queerness of the Nation and articulating a heterogeneous Nation that is impossible to grasp for those who would use the Nation as a weapon against its own citizens; they are "queering" the Nation. Many North African novels, while expressing the necessity to consolidate national identity, first in mobilizing opposition to colonialism, later in constructing a independent nation, nevertheless recognize that any model of identity is impossible to fully embody. They attempt, therefore, without rejecting identity altogether, to articulate a national identity that is heterogeneous in relation to languages, ethnicities, sexualities, and religions, and that questions any totalizing binary opposition to the former colonizer.

for those I have loved:
Dawn, Paul, Sandy, Mark, Steve, Bill, Ali, Daryle, Victor, Edwardo, Massimo, José

Acknowledgments

Many graduate students dream of having a dissertation advisor of the caliber of either of my two advisors. I was fortunate enough to have two. Careful readers of my work, meticulously thorough, full of helpful suggestions, patient, supportive, and caring, Nancy K. Miller and Francesca Canadé Sautman have been the advisors graduate students dream of. Without them, this dissertation may well have not seen the light of day and certainly would not have taken its present form. Both Professors Sautman and Miller have been invaluable mentors throughout my graduate-school career and at the beginning of my academic career. I owe them my sincerest gratitude. I would especially like to thank Professor Miller for the hours we spent strategizing about the job market, interviews, writing samples, and how to present my work. I would especially like to thank Professor Sautman for introducing me to Maghrebian literature; it was in her seminar on North African literature that I discovered the texts examined herein and that I begin to examine the function of sexuality within these novels. She has also helped me with the French versions of my work whenever I have had the opportunity to present it in that way.

I would like to thank my third reader, Ammiel Alcalay, for his support and helpful suggestions. As I was beginning this project, I audited a course he was co-teaching with Ali Jimalé Ahmed on "non-Western" literature. It was in this course that Professor Alcalay showed me how literature can produce its own theory.

During the course of this project a number of people have read portions of this work, suggested corrections, and asked important questions. Gina Fisch-Freedman, in addition to being my best friend throughout the course of this project, has read the talks I have given in French, corrected my grammar, and made important conceptual suggestions. I first met Dalila Hannouche when I gave a talk on Rachid Boudjedra in Casablanca. She has recommended my work to several panel organizers and it is largely because of her that I have been able to meet many of the critics working on the Maghreb. During my several trips to Poughkeepsie and her trips to New York, we have spent long nights discussing

Maghrebian literature and politics. I thank her for her inspiration, her support, and her friendship. I have had the opportunity to participate in several panels with Malek Chebel, and would like to thank him for his support and suggestions; he is an encyclopedia of knowledge, and his work has greatly inspired me. I would also like to thank Ed Stein, who read an early talk and made important comments about my discussion of sexuality. I thank Huma Ibrahim, Gaurav Desai, Jean-François Fourny, Eugene Rice, and Thomas Spear for asking me to participate in panels when it was important to share my work. I thank Sue Houchins, Réda Bensmaïa, Hédi Abdel-Jaouad, Ronnie Scharfman, Clarisse Zimra, Elizabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, Bernard Aresu, and Martin Bauml Duberman for listening to and/or reading my work and offering support and helpful comments. Many thanks to Fazia Aïtel and Nadir Moknèche for their friendship and suggestions.

A number of professors, while not directly involved in this project, have made important contributions to my intellectual formation. I would like to thank Royal S. Brown for his passion for theory, for his film classes, for reading my work on film, and for American translations of French videos. I would like to thank Mary Ann Caws for her professional and intellectual support. I would like to thank Marcel Gutwirth who, as Executive Officer, brought me into the program at the Graduate Center, offered intellectual support for my work, obtained financial support so I could eat and live in the expensive city of New York, and supported this particular project. Though our approaches to literature could hardly be more different, I greatly admire him. He has proven to be a most principled educator on many occasions. I would also like to thank Renée Waldinger for continuing that support. Patrick Cullen and Mason Cooley, though not in my field, have been, in addition to dear friends, invaluable mentors and have introduced me to the cultural life of New York.

I would finally like to thank my parents, Wanda West Hayes and Jesse Lee Hayes. From elementary school on, they stressed the importance of education and pushed me to perform not only better than average but my best. They financed my college education

when it was not easy to do so. They have offered unending support for my educational endeavors. They have loved me when I wanted to move out at sixteen to finish high school, through my political commitments, when I left my home state, my country, and finally came to New York to finish my education, and finally, when I came out.

I would like to thank the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics for the most influential of my educational experiences. I would like to thank the Fulbright Foundation for the opportunity to live in France for a year, teach English, and perfect my French. I would like to thank the Mellon Foundation for their full support during my first two years of graduate school and for the fifth. And I would like to thank the Graduate School and University Center for their full support during my third and fourth years and for the Graduate Teaching Fellowship during my sixth year.

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INTRODUCTION

Some nationalist practices are progressive; others are not.

—Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory*

"Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my fatherland." This slogan, adopted in the 1930s by the Association of Ulema, lead by Sheikh Abd-el-Hamid Ben Badis, is perhaps the most concise expression of Algerian nationalism. It was to remain a battle cry of the Algerian revolution and has proven its effectiveness in anti-colonial struggle. As a definition of the Algerian nation, however, the slogan is exclusionary; according to the formula, only Arab-speaking Muslims can be truly Algerian. This official version of Algeria excludes many who have no "fatherland" other than Algeria (Berbers and Algerian Jews, to name two of the most blatant exclusions). Although defining Algeria in opposition to the French colonizing power was necessary in justifying a national struggle of decolonization, must all definitions and discursive deployments of the Nation¹ exclude in order to be effective? In literary discourse at least, Algerian as well as Moroccan and Tunisian writers have envisioned the possibility of defining the Nation as an inclusive space. In particular, sexuality, especially marginal sexualities and the transgression of sexual taboos, play an important role in the articulation of national identity within Maghrebian novels written in French.

In Arabic discourse, the Arab world has traditionally been divided into two parts, the Mashreq or eastern part and the Maghreb, literally the west or where the sun sets. The Maghreb is thus the part of the Arab world to the west of Egypt, including Islamic Spain. This study deals specifically with the part of North Africa colonized by the French: Algeria, a French colony from 1830–1962,² Tunisia, a French protectorate from 1881–

¹Throughout this study, I shall capitalize "Nation" whenever indicating the concept of Nation, to emphasize its abstractness, its nature as an ideological and discursive phenomenon or construct. I shall use the lower case whenever referring to specific nations or the actual embodiment of Nation as geo-political entities.

²Administratively, the northern portions of Algeria were divided into three départements, Oran, Algiers, and Constantine (which were considered part of France) during the Second Republic.

1956, and Morocco, also a protectorate from 1912–1956. Maghrebian Francophone literature began to articulate a national identity, to distinguish itself from the literary conventions of metropolitan France (and Europe), and to formulate an anti-colonialist position in the aftermath of World War II and on the eve of the various independence struggles (a full-blown revolution in Algeria's case) in the early 1950s. Regardless of policies of Arabization in all three post-independence countries, Maghrebian literature in French continues to be written alongside an Arabic literature, especially in Morocco and Algeria.

The notion of combat literature, a category elaborated by Frantz Fanon (Les damnés de la terre 162) and taken up by Jean Déjeux (Littérature maghrébine 37–39), has often been limited to works dealing with the struggles for independence. In Les damnés de la terre (1962), Fanon expressed his hope that national consciousness would lead to a broader social and political consciousness and that the national struggle would lead to a socialist revolution (146). By stressing the continuity between combat literature and the post-independence novels that contest the power held by the very national bourgeoisies Fanon criticizes, I argue that his hope is still alive in Maghrebian postcolonial literature. Combat literature can then be seen less as a category that includes some works while excluding others than as a potential space within all Maghrebian literature; in addition to texts about revolution or anti-colonial struggles, the rubric of combat literature could also include critiques of postcolonial or neocolonial oppression, women's struggles, and resistance to sexual normativity regardless of whether these political questions are central or marginal within the text as a whole. The space of combat literature confronts literary discourse with other discourses often considered extra-literary (such as official proclamations, the media, and political, academic, and religious discourses) and allows these discourses to reflect on and challenge one another. Within this space, especially in post-independence novels, the revelation or unveiling of sexualities that should remain secret fulfills the political function of contradicting the official discourses of Nation, nationalism, and national identity that

attempt to deny the existence of these marginalized sexualities. The examination of the political role of sexuality in post-independence literature makes it possible to reread novels more traditionally classified as combat novels and to understand how sexuality has always played a role (albeit more subtle) in these earlier novels. Finally, a rereading of even earlier novels, often classified as "ethnographic" (a derogatory label in the context of a particular nationalist critique that arose out of the various independence movements) and inscribed in a narrative of progress where combat literature represents an advancement in political consciousness over its more "naïve" predecessors, creates the possibility of finding anti-colonialist struggle in novels sometimes criticized for pandering to the exoticizing gaze of Western readers. Again, it is through sexuality, through sexual allegories of the political, that this rereading can be articulated.

This study draws on the recent studies on nationalism that have proliferated in cultural and postcolonial studies. In some cases, as in the anthology Nationalisms and Sexualities (1992), edited by Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, these studies overlap with queer theory and lesbian and gay studies. This interest in the Nation coincides with a number of current world events: in particular, the resurgence of Serbian nationalism and the other nationalisms it has engendered in the former Yugoslavia, the revival of nationalisms in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union, the wars accompanying these nationalisms, and inter-ethnic civil strife in Somalia, Liberia, Mali, Burundi, and Rwanda. Since nationalism often involves a return to a nation's past, a narrative deployment of national origins that justifies the existing geo-political entity of a nation, the return to "pure" religious traditions exemplified in the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria can be said to be a phenomenon related to the resurgence of nationalisms worldwide.³ Serbian ethnic cleansing and the assassination of those who do not fit either the official or the fundamentalist definitions of Algerian identity, therefore, operate according to the same logic. Whereas these current events are often described in a

³Edward Said links the phenomena of nationalism and fundamentalism in his concept of "nativism" (Culture and Imperialism 228–32).

negative light, in the 1960s, nationalism was viewed by many in a more positive way, as it represented the hope of liberation for many colonized peoples, including those of North Africa.

Likewise, many theorists have distinguished between positive and negative forms of national identity and nationalism. Frantz Fanon distinguishes between a national consciousness that leads to a political and social consciousness and nationalism, which serves only a national bourgeoisie; whereas national consciousness was necessary to mobilize Algerians in the war for independence, he was afraid nationalism would only pave the way for a national elite to replace the colonizer as a source of oppressive rule, a fear that turned out not to be unfounded (*Les damnés de la terre*). Christopher L. Miller, in his study on sub-Saharan African literature, "Nationalism as Resistance and Resistance to Nationalism in the Literature of Francophone Africa" (1993), makes a Fanonian distinction between two different views towards African nationalism. Before independence, nationalism was a form of resistance: "The character of African nationalism before independence is peculiar: 'nationalism' in this period refers not to affiliation with a particular state but simply any form of resistance to colonialism and any explicit assertion of African rights" (64–65). After independence, however, nationalism becomes the target of resistance: "Then, after Independence, an irony of history intervenes: having demanded nationhood in this peculiar generalized sense, Africans found themselves subject to nationalism of a quite different, more vulgar sort. The arbitrary borders between African states, which had been ignored or critiqued as arbitrary by the theory of Pan-African nationalism, were reasserted as the armatures of a more familiar state nationalism at the service of new elites" (65). For Aijaz Ahmad (1992), the deciding factor in deciding whether nationalist practices are progressive or not, is whether they are socialist in outlook (*In Theory* 11).⁴ Julia Kristeva (1992) distinguishes between notions of Nation based on

⁴"...[I]t is only from the prior and explicit socialist location that I select particular nationalist positions for criticisms, even at times very harsh denunciation; a critique of nationalism without that explicit location in the determinate socialist project has never made any sense to me either politically or theoretically. Nor do I accept that nationalism is some unitary thing, always progressive or always

inclusion and those based on exclusion, which she characterizes as relying heavily on a cult of national origins ("La question nationale aujourd'hui").⁵ A similar interest in criticizing exclusion on the part of Maghrebian writers who articulate the need for a heterogeneous nation is indicated by the titles of Tahar Ben Jelloun's "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb" (1991) and Abdelkebir Khatibi's Maghreb pluriel (1983).⁶

Allegories

A number of theorists have asserted that nations are like fictions and that, in fact, they are supported by narratives: history, narratives of origin, tales of heroism. If one understands narrative as a complex structure of images, visual symbols, abstract ideas, concepts, and feelings, as well as words and stories, one could even consider nations to be the fictions that construct them. Many critics of poststructural theories, especially some Marxists, have questioned this sort of emphasis on the discursive, and they claim that this emphasis downplays material force, power relations, and oppression. To read the Nation as narrative fiction does not mean that the Nation isn't real, that it is more akin to a lie. To assert the discursive aspect of the Nation does not deny the "realness" of power or its materiality. Applying discourse analysis to the Nation does, however, acknowledge that what constitutes power, oppression, and the benefits or drawbacks of the Nation constitutes contested ground, that any claim to the truth should be viewed with suspicion (though not necessarily rejected).

In response to such critiques, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990), perhaps more than any other, has clarified what poststructuralist analysis does and does not do. She has

retrograde. What role any given nationalism would play always depends on the configuration of the class forces and sociopolitical practices which organize the power bloc within which any particular set of nationalist initiatives become historically effective. That position...recognizes the actuality, even the necessity, of progressive and revolutionary kinds of nationalism, and does not characterize nations and states as coercive entities as such."

⁵See also Etrangers à nous-mêmes and Lettre ouverte à Harlem Désir. While Kristeva's faith in France's ability to hospitably "welcome" immigrants might seem unfounded and her articulation of the need for immigrants to assimilate into French society might seem to parallel French racist discourse and the colonialist notion of the "évolué," I find her formulation of exclusion and inclusion and her notion of "nations without nationalism" (cf. the title of her Nations without Nationalism) helpful.

⁶On the discussion of heterogeneity in postcolonial identity see also Edouard Glissant's Le discours antillais (1981).

described a post-structuralist "acknowledgment [of] the impulse to narrate, [of] the impulse to think of origins and ends" (*The Post-colonial Critic* 20); in other words, while it is possible to deconstruct collective narratives, these narratives, however much they are questioned, do not nevertheless go away. Discussing the Nation as narrative does not reduce the nation-state to "mere words"; rather, it acknowledges that without narratives of origin, the Nation could not exist. Likewise, to deconstruct the Nation as narrative does not make nations go away, nor does it necessarily mean the deconstructor wants them to go away.⁷ Spivak is careful to point out that the deconstruction of such narratives as the Nation does not necessarily lead to any particular political action:

Deconstruction cannot found a political program of any kind.... It is a corrective and a critical movement.... Deconstruction, also insistently claims that there cannot be a fully practicing deconstructor. For, the subject is always centered as subject.... What deconstruction looks at is the limits of this centering, and points at the fact that these boundaries of the centering of the subject are indeterminate and that the subject (being always centered) is obliged to describe them as determinate. Politically, all this does is not allow for fundamentalisms and totalitarianisms of various kinds, however seemingly benevolent. (*The Post-colonial Critic* 104)

Combined with a political program, however, the deconstruction of nationalist narratives can strengthen a critique of the interests served by the formation of a particular nation. In the case of national struggles against colonialism, one might recognize the necessity of these narratives while still remaining suspicious of them, lest they might fall into the hands of the new national elite Fanon warned against.

In some respects, Maghrebian novels participated in the rise of national consciousness that led to independence struggles by writing the Nation through narratives of coming to

⁷Spivak also writes: "So it's not a question of waging war on narratives, but they're realising that the impulse to narrate is not necessarily a solution to problems in the world." She stresses instead the importance of "looking at the limits of narration" (*The Post-colonial Critic* 19).

national identity and returning to the Nation's roots. A major technique of narrating the Nation involves allegory, using an individual's story to represent the story of an entire collectivity, a physical journey to represent the return to the roots of national identity and the birth of political consciousness. In postcolonial studies, the form of the national allegory has been one of prolonged debate. Fredric Jameson, in "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (1987), maintains that all "Third-World literature" is a national allegory. Aijaz Ahmad, in "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" (*In Theory* 95–122), rightly criticizes this all-encompassing characterization. He first rejects the notion that a single generalization such as Jameson's could apply to every work that comes out of the great part of the planet lumped under a single rubric, the "Third World." He also points out that much First-World literature, especially subaltern First-World literature, can be national allegory as well and that Third-World literature doesn't necessarily have to be. In general, Ahmad questions the usefulness of the First-/Third-World binary as well as of privileging the Nation as the only category of analysis. Ahmad's work, itself, has also provoked many strong (and often negative) reactions (see the special issue of *Public Culture* [6.1] on Ahmad's work). In the entire debate, however, no one has questioned the usefulness of reading some postcolonial literature as allegorical of the "birth of the Nation."

Because many Maghrebian novels have participated in the articulation of national identity, they constitute narratives of Nation; they are a part of the national narrative. Often, however, Maghrebian allegories of national identity also question dominant narratives of the Nation; they tend to deconstruct the Nation. Paul de Man, in *Allegories of Reading* (1979), argues that "any narrative is primarily the allegory of its own reading" and also "the narrative of its own deconstruction" (76–77). While I am not sure that De Man's generalization always holds true, many Maghrebian authors write narratives of Nation that deconstruct themselves and that also offer a paradigm for their own reading. As Spivak points out, however, this deconstruction does not deny the existence of the Nation, nor

does it imply a desire to overcome the national as a framework for the political organization of the world. This deconstruction does point out, however, the problems within the narrative of the Nation: many of the Nation's citizens cannot embody official versions of national identity fully and completely.

Because of the close relation between Nation and narrative, this study focuses almost exclusively on narrative literature and especially the novel. To the extent that more traditional forms of linear narrative break down, especially in post-independence novels, so too does the narrative of Nation and national identity. In more recent novels, narrative seems to have been abandoned altogether in some cases. If the journey or itinerary has been the spatial metaphor par excellence of the search for national identity, in this recent class of novels, the journey, with its established beginning and end, has been replaced by wandering (errance).

Roots

Homi K. Bhabha has written, "Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (Nation and Narration 1). Thus, an important part of writing the Nation, of constructing national identity, involves narratives of return to national origins. In a similar manner, the consolidation of national consciousness that paved the way for anti-colonial struggle often involved a return to pre-colonial traditions or origins of the Nation. The colonizers had attempted to sever colonized peoples from their pre-colonial history and traditions and even to deny that such a history existed before colonization. France, for example, denied the existence of an Algerian nation before the French conquest. To counter such justifications for colonial rule, nationalist discourses sought alternate origins, in the resistance of ^cAbd al Qadir, for instance.⁸ After Algerian independence, the revolution became a glorified origin as streets were renamed after its heroes, and SNED, the national press, favored novels that glorified the revolution. To take up Christopher Miller's formula again, before independence, roots

⁸cAbd al Qadir led an army against the French in Algeria from 1838 to 1847.

or national origins were a source of resistance to colonialism. After independence, however, the same origins were used to justify more specific nation-states now ruled by post-independence national elites. Kristeva's emphasis on the importance of a cult of origins in exclusive or homogenizing definitions of the Nation makes more sense in the African context after independence. Kristeva's distinction between nations based on exclusion and those based on inclusion becomes more politically useful when considered alongside Fanon's distinction between a national consciousness necessary for anti-colonial struggle and the misuse of national consciousness by national elites. Kristeva's nation based on exclusion and its cult of origins, especially in the post-independence context, can then be seen as serving the interests of the elite Fanon condemns in *Les damnés de la terre*.⁹

Many Maghrebian writers, while participating in a nationalist return to origins (often through the use of allegory), also seem to recognize the problematic nature of roots, especially when post-independence official discourses use them to consolidate power in the hands of a new national elite. Allegorical journeys of return to such roots also become allegories of the subversion of narratives of return to national origins. In rewriting the Nation, many authors, rather than rejecting the notion of roots or origins, repeat official narratives of return, but with a difference. Rather than rejecting all claims to the roots of national identity, they offer alternate origins that compete with the single official one and dislodge it from its hegemonic position. This proliferation of roots of identity opens up the

⁹The current Algerian situation complicates Fanon's paradigm of a national elite replacing the colonial power after independence. The elite in power is being contested by a fundamentalist movement that, though it may be considered a different kind of elite, has much popular support. The fundamentalist movement deploys its own narratives of returning to religious traditions, narratives that conflict with official versions of national origins. Many Algerian intellectuals, however, emphasize the connections between the ruling elite, often referred to as the "mafia politico-financière," and the fundamentalist movement. (See Smâil Goumeziane, "Algérie: « Quatre ans ça suffit »,," which features two Algerian Feminists, Louiza Hanoune and Salina Ghezali, who take this position.) They point out that, in a hasty effort to Arabicize public education, schools were virtually handed over to fundamentalist teachers (who were the only ones qualified to teach Arabic after years of the French system) and that the government made many concessions to fundamentalists in the 1970s and '80s in order to counterbalance the threat posed by Algerian leftist movements. In the late '80s, therefore, when it became evident that the regime in power was totally bankrupt, the government had considerably strengthened the fundamentalist movement and had all but crushed the Algerian Left, thereby leaving fundamentalists—as it seemed to many—as the only viable alternative.

Nation to those who do not share the official version of identity. A useful analogy is offered by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) in her discussion of the importance of multiple accounts of gay origins:

In this unstable balance of assumptions between nature and culture, at any rate, under the overarching, relatively unchallenged aegis of a culture's desire that gay people not be, there is no unthreatened, unthreatening conceptual home for a concept of gay origins. We have all the more reason, then, to keep our understanding of gay origin, of gay cultural and material reproduction, plural, multi-capillaried, argus-eyed, respectful, and endlessly cherished. (*Epistemology of the Closet* 43–44)

If a single cause of homosexuality were ever discovered in a homophobic society, Sedgwick warns, there would be an immediate attempt to eliminate the effect by removing the cause. The history of scientific experimentation on lesbian and gay people attests to the desire to find such a cause. Likewise, any attempt to fix a single source of the Nation, of national identity, to legislate a people's roots, would then be used to marginalize, exclude, and even exterminate those who cannot trace their history to these roots. Many Maghrebien authors, therefore, counter official prescriptions of a single source of the Nation; rather than uprooting national identity, their novels extend alternate and multiple roots. In this way, their model of national identity parallels Edouard Glissant's replacement of roots with rhizomes:

Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari ont critiqué les notions de racine et peut-être d'enracinement.¹⁰ La racine est unique, c'est une souche qui prend tout sur elle et tue alentour; ils lui opposent le rhizome qui est une racine démultipliée, étendue en réseaux dans la terre ou dans l'air, sans qu'aucune souche y intervienne en prédateur irrémédiable. La notion du rhizome maintiendrait donc le fait de l'enracinement, mais récusé l'idée d'une racine totalitaire. La pensée du rhizome

¹⁰Glissant, here is referring to "Introduction: Rhizome" in *Mille plateaux* (9–37).

serait au principe de ce que j'appelle une poétique de la Relation, selon laquelle toute identité s'étend dans un rapport à l'Autre. (Poétique de la relation 23)

Glissant's rhizomatic identity would therefore satisfy Sedgwick's articulated need for multiple origins, sources. Instead of rejecting the concept of roots, Glissant proposes a model of multiple, even competing, origins. With such a proliferation of origins, the Nation becomes a more heterogeneous space where marginalized citizens can find a place to plant the roots of their identity.

Queering the Nation

If Lisa Duggan can write, "The time has come to think about queering the state" ("Queering the State" 1),¹¹ perhaps the time has come to think about queering the Nation. The basis for exclusion from the Nation has historically included not only race, ethnicity, gender norms, religion, and political beliefs and activities, but also sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and desire. There are quite a few examples in North African literature where homosexuality is associated with foreigners, with the colonizer, or with an evil from without. (This is a trick that certainly could have been learned from the French, if not known before. In the nineteenth century, the French blamed homosexuality on the bad influence of Arabs on French soldiers in Algeria.)¹² One might also think of McCarthyite discourse from the 1950s in which homosexuality, along with communism, was seen as a threat to America, American-ness, and the American way.¹³ However, one cannot exclude someone from the Nation unless she is already there; there is no need to exclude an outsider. Nationalist discourses that define the Nation by positing marginal sexualities as foreign, as other, as external to the Nation and its values, aren't stating what is already the case, but are actively carrying out exclusion. If there must be such an effort to exclude the queer from the Nation (queer in both narrow and larger senses), if there has been such an

¹¹Duggan takes the inspiration for her opening sentence from Gayle Rubin, who began her essay, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," with the following sentence: "The time has come to think about sex" (267).

¹²Greenberg 353.

¹³On this topic, see D'Emilio (40–53), Corber, Before Stonewall, and Edelman.

effort to show she is an outsider trying to invade, to get inside, the queer must always be inside already; that is, in some ways the Nation is always already queer.

One of the common themes running throughout Nationalisms and Sexualities is that whenever there is an attempt to exclude a group from the Nation or consolidate power in the hands of a ruling elite through national narratives, the policing of sexual normativity often comes into play as well. Some of the collection's essays show that when narratives are written as an effort to consolidate national identity as stable subject positions that a nation's citizens can fully occupy, often a parallel consolidation of sexual identity is also involved. More specifically, nationalist narratives serving to consolidate power for a ruling elite often also attempt to affirm patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality¹⁴ as inseparable from national identity. Likewise, counter-narratives that question such conceptions of a homogeneous nation often disrupt sexual hierarchies and question power by challenging sexual norms and "contaminating" national narratives with sexual transgressions. Although one might distinguish between the nationalism of established nations such as the US and the nationalism that fueled the independence movements in the Maghreb and other colonized regions, in both budding and established nations, relations between nationalism and sexuality tend to be the same. When Maghrebian authors formulate representations of homosexuality or homosexual characters, they do not merely challenge sexual taboos, sexual normativity, and patriarchy (which they do); they also reveal the queerness of the Nation. They articulate a heterogeneous Nation that national elites cannot use as a weapon against its own citizens. Many Maghrebian novels, while expressing the necessity to consolidate national identity, first in mobilizing opposition to colonialism, later in constructing a postcolonial, independent nation, nevertheless recognize that any model of identity is impossible to embody fully. They attempt, therefore, without rejecting identity altogether, to articulate a national identity that is heterogeneous in relation to languages,

¹⁴For a definition and discussion of the concept of compulsory heterosexuality, see Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (first published in 1980).

ethnicities, sexualities, and religions, and that questions any totalizing binary opposition to the former colonizer.

Nationalisms and Sexualities, part of a larger trend in cultural studies' examination of identity politics that consists in thinking various categories of identity (race, sex, class, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, etc.) simultaneously, marks a more elaborate articulation of the complex conjunctions of various types of identity. It follows texts such as Cherríe Moraga's Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios (1983), where the author both articulates and narrates the formation of her own identity as a Chicana lesbian who refuses to allow her identity to be separated into neat boxes of ethnic, racial, and sexual categorizations as distinct entities, and Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987), which develops the notion of the borderland as a site where identity is at once asserted, complicated, and called into question through a series of "border crossings" and "border raids." Both texts, written at once in English and Spanish, conduct border raids across separations between languages; both texts, in verse and prose, conduct raids across separations between genres.¹⁵

In the following quotation, Tahar Ben Jelloun links the crossing of national and linguistic borders (of the sort described above) with transgressing taboos, especially sexual ones, and the unveiling of these transgressions in Maghrebian literature written in French:

En général, c'est dans le roman d'expression française qu'on trouve le plus d'audace dans la contestation de l'ordre social et dans la transgression des tabous, surtout d'ordre sexuel. Le fait d'écrire en français incite les auteurs à aller plus loin dans la critique. L'arabe—la langue du Coran—se prête moins au jeu de la dénonciation. Mais la principale originalité de cette littérature se trouve dans son rapport à la langue française. Elle la transforme et l'enrichit tout en l'introduisant dans l'intimité de l'imaginaire maghrébin, parfois le plus secret. Cette tentative de

¹⁵Maghrebian literature offers an example of a similar bilingual text. Nabil Farès's Chants d'histoire et de vie pour des roses de sables: Escuchando tu historia: Texte bilingue pour un peuple sahrawi, in French and Spanish, is dedicated to the people of the Western Sahara, which was taken over by Morocco after the Spanish relinquished control over their former colony.

dévoilement, cette porte ouverte sur un secret, sur un bien caché, est critiquée de manière sévère et souvent brutale par les intellectuels maghrébins arabophones. Cette ouverture sur l'Occident, cette main tendue vers l'échange, cette utilisation de la langue de l'Autre sont considérées par certains comme une trahison. ("Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb" 272)

This passage is central to many of my readings of Maghrebian texts; I shall return to it again and again over the course of this study. It reveals (if not betrays) an intertwining of national identities, especially those that continue to question power after the departure of the colonizer, and desire that crosses linguistic borders, an intertwining that will continue to manifest itself throughout my reading of Maghrebian narrative literature. That sexual crossings of national borders occur precisely in literature written in French is not an accident. Ahlem Mosteghanemi points out that North African literature in Arabic does not reveal the same prevalence of desire for the French Other (*Algérie, femme et écritures* 78–89). The connection between the French language and desire is strengthened by Abderrahim Youssi, who maintains that French continues to be the dominant language for "correspondance intime et amoureuse" in the present-day Maghreb ("Langues et parlers" 275).¹⁶ If sexual identities are constructed—if not exclusively, but even to a large extent—through language, what does it mean to articulate and formulate one's sexual identity in a language that is not one's mother tongue? To what extent will these sexual identities be always already elsewhere, elusive, never identical to themselves? To what extent must they necessarily involve crossing borders? These are questions this inquiry will attempt to answer.

Ben Jelloun's use of the word "trahison" also evokes the trope of national security. McCarthy claimed that homosexuals in the State Department were a threat to national security. Lesbians and gay men in the United States have been excluded from the military, the FBI, and the CIA for similar reasons. Maghrebian literature offers numerous examples

¹⁶Obviously, this statement could only apply to the class of Maghrebians educated in French.

of sexual traitors, characters whose marginal sexualities or sexual transgressions place them in opposition to the heteroNation (based not only on a sexual normativity but also on homogeneity). In the nationalisms of budding nations, as in many models of identity politics, Ben Jelloun's discussion of betrayal, especially as connected to the revelation of secrets, evokes another taboo, the taboo against washing dirty laundry before outsiders, in front of whom a movement should represent a united front. Dissension within the group and any potential embarrassment should remain secret, and skeletons should remain in their closets. According to Ben Jelloun, Francophone Maghrebians have a tendency to reveal what should remain secret and to wash the Nation's dirty laundry in public.

The skeletons writers bring out of the closet are of two sorts, sexual and political. When Maghrebians include marginal sexualities or the transgression of sexual taboos in their novels, they reveal what is considered shameful in official discourse and destroy the officially propagated image of the Maghrebian nation as a nation of good Muslims who abide by the strictest interpretation of Islamic family values. The political skeleton challenges official narratives of national origins: on one level, in narrating returns to national origins, Maghrebians seem to repeat official discourses on identity. On another, they offer alternative roots that contest the same discourse they repeat and uncover origins purposefully hidden by official versions of national origins. Ernest Renan describes these same origins in "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?": "L'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d'une nation, et c'est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger. L'investigation historique, en effet, remet en lumière les faits de violence qui se sont passés à l'origine de toutes les formations politiques, même de celles dont les conséquences ont été le plus bienfaisantes" (891).¹⁷ At its origin, therefore, every nation has a secret ("les faits de violence") that must be forgotten, a secret many authors insist on remembering or

¹⁷Renan wrote during the second half of the nineteenth century and is better known for his racist ideas and justification of French colonialism in North Africa. He delivered "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" as a speech in 1882, just eleven years after France's defeat by Prussia. In spite of his insights on the Nation, he justifies the original violence rather than criticizes it. Cf. Todorov, On Human Diversity 140–53, 222–27.

revealing. Furthermore, some writers draw a parallel between these two types of secrets; the revelation of political secrets often coincides with revealing sexual secrets, and revealing sexual secrets plays a political role in writing alternate roots for national identity. This narrative technique of revelation constitutes one method of queering the Nation.

"Oriental Sex"

Foucault and his disciples have described sexuality as a Western and modern, industrialist, or capitalist construction. According to this view, it would be inappropriate to read sexuality, a Western concept, into North African texts. The often cited sentence of Foucault—"Le sodomite était un relaps, l'homosexuel est maintenant une espèce" (La volonté du savoir 59)—indicates a totalizing view that divides up all Westerners along the homo/hetero binary. While this paradigm may describe dominant discourse, recent studies such as Eve Sedgwick's Epistemology of the Closet have begun to question this model as the only possible way for Westerners to embody their sexual identities. Sedgwick writes,

The project of the present book will be to show how issues of modern homo/heterosexual definition are structured, not by the supercession of one model and the consequent withering away of another, but instead by the relations enabled by the unrationalized coexistence of different models during the times they do coexist. This project does not involve the construction of historical narratives alternative to those that have emerged from Foucault and his followers. Rather, it requires a reassignment of attention and emphasis within those valuable narratives—attempting, perhaps, to denarrativize them somewhat by focusing on a performative space of contradiction that they both delineate and, themselves performative, pass over in silence. I have tended, therefore, in these chapters not to stress the alterity of disappeared or now-supposed-alien understandings of same-sex relations but instead to invest attention in those unexpectedly plural, varied, and contradictory historical understandings whose residual—indeed, whose renewed—force seems most palpable today. My first aim is to

denaturalize the present, rather than the past—in effect, to render less destructively presumable "homosexuality as we know it today." (47–48)

The interesting thing about Sedgwick's comments on Foucault is that, without rejecting what she refers to as the "paradigm shifts" Foucault delineated in Histoire de la sexualité, she articulates the possibility that these paradigms might not be as monolithic as Histoire de la sexualité might lead one to believe. Sedgwick's "aim," here, is "to denaturalize the present," and the present she strives to denaturalize is specifically Western. The distinction between past and present Western sexualities she points to in Foucault's work has also been made between Western and non-Western sexualities. Often, Western sexological studies of Oriental sex have less to do with empirical descriptions of an Oriental difference from the West in matters of sexuality than with normalizing what constitutes Western sexuality and that this underlying basis of Western sexologies of the non-West holds true regardless of how empirically accurate their accounts of Oriental sex may be. Sedgwick's critique within Western paradigms can thus also be useful when talking about Africa.

Western studies of Oriental sexuality have tended to focus on the differences between the West and the non-West in terms of sexuality and, especially, homosexuality. The study of homosexuality across cultures and throughout history often distinguishes between various manifestations of homosexuality.¹⁸ In The Construction of Homosexuality, for example, David F. Greenberg writes,

It is useful in discussing homosexuality to distinguish several different forms on the basis of the relative social statuses of the participants. Three forms are considered in this chapter: transgenerational (in which the partners are of disparate ages), transgenderal (the partners are of different genders), and egalitarian (the partners are socially similar). A fourth pattern, in which partners belong to different social classes, will be taken up in the next chapter. (25)

¹⁸For an overview of various typologies of homosexuality, see Stephen Donaldson and Wayne R. Dync's "Typology of Homosexuality."

The transgenerational category would include Greek (or any other) pederasty, "primitive" initiation rites. The transgenderal would include the berdache phenomenon among Native Americans¹⁹ and drag queens, transvestites, and transsexuals. The egalitarian model would seem to be unique to modern, Western, industrial capitalism according to the Foucauldian paradigm. The active/passive model, whereby one partner is always passive and the other always active, which doesn't necessarily add to the four types Greenberg uses, might constitute a fifth pattern. The active/passive could also be superimposed upon the transgenerational and transgenderal models. In Greek pederasty, for example, the older partner was always the active partner (if the partners conformed to the paradigm). In the transgenderal model, the male or masculine partner fulfills this role. The active-passive model could be used to describe Foucault's characterization of the medieval and early modern concept of sodomy. During the reign of this paradigm, sodomy was not a special category reserved for a minority of sinners who had sexual identities as sodomites (the would-be equivalent of gay identity after Stonewall). Rather, anyone was a potential sodomite. Identity was male or female; as long as men were the active partner, their male identity wasn't questioned (even if they were sinners in the process). Here I want to draw a connection between the paradigm of sodomy and that of pederasty, for both models are superimposed or used interchangeably in describing the sexuality of the Islamic world. In pederasty, as well, an adult man was masculine as long as he was the active partner with women, minors, slaves or non-citizens. Adult, male citizens could not be penetrated. Histories of homosexuality often read like narratives of progress towards the Western model of egalitarian homosexuality, where both partners can be active as well as passive

¹⁹The berdache in some Native American tribes was a cross-gender role (it has disappeared in most places), sometimes having sacred functions. Intercourse between berdache and members of the same sex (but different gender) was often permitted. See Will Roscoe, "The Zuni Man-Woman"; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Must We Deracinate Indians to Find Gay Roots?"; Jonathan Ned Katz, "Native Americans/Gay Americans: 1528–1976," Gay American History 281–334; David F. Greenberg, "Transgenderal Homosexuality," The Construction of Homosexuality 40–56; Harriet Whitehead, "The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America"; Charles Callender and Lee M. Kochems, "The North American Berdache"; and Walter L. Williams, The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture.

and regardless of any masculine or feminine identification on either partner's part. Although these observations may have sociological or anthropological validity, this narrative of progress leaves too little room for dissidence. Today one can think of a number of men in the United States who consider themselves straight because, in sexual intercourse with men, they are always the active partner. In the dominant discourse of the history of homosexuality, these men are holding onto an outdated mode of identity. Is it a coincidence that working class men or men of color are often characterized as embodying this "outdated" model more than middle-class white gay men? Or in the lesbian and gay community one can think of a whole range of identity positions that deviate from the dominant paradigm: top, bottom, butch, femme, drag queen, transsexual, and even femme top and butch bottom. Hence Sedgwick's move to complicate the Foucault's notion of a shift in paradigms. In studies of sexuality in the Islamic world, the active-passive and transgenerational models are also often at work. Arab men, as long as they are active, even with men, are still manly. The passive partner is either a boy or is feminized.²⁰

²⁰I offer the following list as a partial bibliography of studies on Arab Sexuality: Arno Schmitt's and Jehoeda Sofer's Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies, David F. Greenberg's "The House of Islam" (The Construction of Homosexuality 172–82), Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch's "Transvestiten bei arabischen Stämmen," Heinz Grotzfeld's Das Bad im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter (especially pages 89–91), James A Bellamy's "Sex and Society in Islamic Popular Literature," S. D. Goitein's "The Sexual Mores of the Common People," Unni Wikan's "Man Becomes Woman: Transsexualism as a Key to Gender Roles," Maarten Schild's "Islam," and G. H. Bousquet's L'éthique sexuelle en Islam. For a more extensive bibliography see the section "Islam" in Wayne R. Dyne's Homosexuality: A Research Guide and the notes and bibliography to Greenberg's "The House of Islam." I don't mean to say that all of these works are of the same quality or that they all have the same implications. Greenberg's work, in particular, because of its encyclopedic quality throughout, without questioning the commonplaces of sexologies of the Arab world, avoids them simply through the wealth of examples and information on same-sex sexuality throughout history and the diversity (I might even say "queerness") of the different kinds of manifestations of "homosexual" activity.

For studies of Maghrebian or Arab sexualities written by Maghrebians, see Malek Chebel's L'esprit de sérail: Perversions et marginalité sexuelles au Maghreb, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba's "Le hammam: contribution à une psychanalyse de l'Islam" and La sexualité en Islam, Fatma Aït Sabbah's La femme dans l'inconscient musulman, Abdelkebir Khatibi's "La sexualité selon le Coran" (Maghreb pluriel 147–76), Fouad Zeraoui's "Algérie 1952–1962: Colons gay, l'autre histoire," and Tahar Ben Jelloun's La plus haute des solitudes: Misère affective et sexuelle d'émigrés nord-africains. While Maghrebian sexologies do not necessarily contradict those written by Westerners and in many cases even confirm their findings, they do emphasize much less a difference from Western sexualities and tend to be much less interested in all-encompassing paradigms.

When the active/passive or sodomitical model is used to describe Islamic or Arab manifestations of homosexuality, Islamic or Arab "homosexuality" or sodomy becomes surprisingly medieval in its characteristics. The characterization of Arab sexuality as medieval is less surprising when one considers that the literary texts most often considered when looking for examples of male-male love are erotic texts from the classical period of Arabic literature (roughly corresponding to the European Middle Ages). No sexologist of the Western world would even think of using medieval texts to describe modern sexuality. The Arab world, however, is seen as static, unchanging, incapable of adapting to outside influences. S. D. Goitein, for example, in a study of medieval sexualities in the Islamic world, uses Rachid Boudjedra's *La répudiation* (1969) to make one of his points ("The sexual Mores of the Common People" 48). In studies of Arab sexuality, the researcher is permitted to move back and forth across vast spans of time.

A recent work on sexuality in the Islamic world that brings these problems to the fore is *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies*, edited by Arno Schmitt and Jehoeda Sofer. The overall point of view can be summed up by the following statement by Schmitt in his contribution to the collection: "But in these societies there are no 'homosexuals'—there is no word for 'homosexuality'—the concept is completely unfamiliar. There are no heterosexuals either" (5). In a strictly Foucauldian sense, this statement could be true. But does the West have a monopoly on homosexuality? Schmitt's statement turns the nationalist claim that there is no homosexuality in Africa on its head by also denying the existence of heterosexuality. Countering what they claim to be idealizations of Islamic society by some gay scholars (John Boswell and Foucault), Schmitt and Sofer undertake a drastic de-idealization. Yet the novels encountered in this study will directly contradict Schmitt's claims. Many contain homosexual characters. Many discuss homosexuality. Though many examples will seem to confirm the paradigms of sexologists, many others will contradict them. Whenever specific examples of "Oriental

sex" are examined closely, they will always be much queerer than any paradigm could allow for.

Veils

Throughout this study, the topic of the veil will come up numerous times. As an article of clothing, it is discussed at length in both men's and women's writings. Ben Jelloun, in the passage from "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb" quoted above, describes the revelation of sexual transgressions and secrets as an unveiling. As I shall elaborate in the following paragraphs, marginal sexualities are often described as being covered by a veil. The veil, therefore, often functions figuratively to describe a sort of closet.

Many Arab feminists deal in depth with the question of the veil. In colonial discourse, however, the veil became the essence of women's oppression. An unveiled (i.e. Europeanized) woman was a liberated woman, and a veiled woman was necessarily oppressed. Western feminist discourses, at times, have accepted these associations of the veil without questioning them and have even paralleled colonial discourse in what Assia Djebar calls "un maternalisme à relent colonial" (Mortimer, "Entretien avec Assia Djebar" 200). The veil, the harem, the sequestering of women came to stand not only for the oppression of women from societies these practices were seen to represent, but also the universal oppression of women. In some cases, French colonialist discourse deployed a so-called feminist discourse against the veil to justify colonial rule. Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas writes:

During the war, French officials had insisted that Algerian women should be freed from the oppression of the veil. French army trucks had transported village women to urban areas. There these women were forced to unveil publicly thereby proving their renunciation of outworn traditions. Both Algerian men and women resented this symbolic public rape.... How, therefore, could we take up

the issue of the veil as oppressive to women without betraying both the nation and the revolution. ("Women, Nationalism and Religion" 108)

On a similar note, Marnia Lazreg has described how "colonial authorities used women as a stick to beat men" ("Women, a Stumbling Block for Third-World Socialism"²¹). The French had turned Algerian women into the symbol of all of Algeria; unveiling Algerian women made clear the success of colonial penetration. In Beyond the Veil, Fatima Mernissi writes, "Since Western colonizers took over the paternalistic defence of Muslim women's lot, any changes in their conditions were seen as concessions to the colonizer. Since external aspects of women's liberation like abandoning the veil for Western dress were often emulations of Western women, women's liberation was readily identified as a surrender to foreign influences" (7–8). Veiled, Algerian women remained beyond the colonizer's otherwise ubiquitous grasp. Unveiled, they testified to the complete transformation of Algerian society. This use of the "women's question" by the French placed Algerian women in a double bind. By opposing the oppression of women, they were seen as siding with the colonizer against national liberation. To join ranks with the nationalist movement, it seemed, they had to abandon, at least temporarily, a feminist agenda.

Arab feminist discourses have often resisted this simplifying interpretation of the veil, and recently, even Western feminist discourses have begun to become more nuanced in their treatment of these questions. More attention is being paid to what Marnia Lazreg refers to as "[w]omen's strategic use of the veil" (The Eloquence of Silence 14). Attempts are being made to "decolonize feminism."²² The veil is not one but many, ranging from the most encumbering cover for the whole body to the lightest partial covering for only the

²¹An unpublished talk given in 1994.

²²The expression is Lazreg's ("Decolonizing Feminism," The Eloquence of Silence 6–19), even though she uses the expression in opposition to Western feminists, not to describe efforts to decolonize feminism within certain Western feminist discourses.

hair and even to the transparent. Likewise, the veil is worn to varying degrees in the Maghreb.²³

Just as some nationalist discourses have labeled homosexuality as a foreign menace or an evil introduced by colonialism, they have sometimes dismissed feminism as purely Western. Feminists, according to this argument, play into the hands of the colonizer by sowing dissension among the ranks of the national movement and detracting attention from the "main" task at hand, that of liberating the nation. In Women and Gender in Islam (1992), for example, Leila Ahmed writes, "Further, colonialism's use of feminism to promote the culture of the colonizers and undermine native culture has ever since imparted to feminism in non-Western societies the taint of having served as an instrument of colonial domination, rendering it suspect in Arab eyes and vulnerable to the charge of being an ally of colonial interests. That taint has undoubtedly hindered the feminist struggle within Muslim societies" (167). Feminist writings, however, deconstruct harmful divisions that set up nationalism and feminism or Islam and feminism as mutually exclusive. Arab feminisms point to the possibility of a feminist nationalism, of a nation where women are not excluded from the public sphere, of feminist rereadings of the founding texts of Islam.

The question of feminism as it is related to nationalism is a complicated one, especially given the use of a pseudo-feminist discourse by the colonizers as a part of their divide-and-conquer tactics. It is important not to lose sight of colonialism's feminist drag, or the use of the supposed essential misogyny of Arab societies as a justification for colonialism, which is then presented as the liberation of Arab women. Leila Ahmed, describing this use of feminism in British colonial discourse in Egypt, calls it "colonial feminism." She writes,

²³Leila Ahmed does an in-depth study on how Egyptian women adopt "Islamic dress" or "al-ziyy al-islami," as a way of adapting to a changing society. She carefully points out that Islamic dress is not a return to tradition but an innovation. She also challenges the notion that veiled women are necessarily less feminist than unveiled women (Women and Gender in Islam 220–34). For a history of veiling, see Ahmed's chapter, "The Discourse of the Veil" (Women and Gender in Islam 144–68) and Fatima Mernissi who, in The Veil and the Male Elite, carefully demonstrates how neither the Qur'an nor the Prophet calls for the veiling of all women and how veiling came to be imposed in spite of the doctrines of early Islam.

Even as the Victorian male establishment devised theories to contest the claims of feminism, and derided and rejected the ideas of feminism and the notion of men's oppressing women with respect to itself, it captured the language of feminism and redirected it, in the service of colonialism, toward Other men and the cultures of Other men.... The idea that Other men, men in colonized societies or societies beyond the borders of the civilized West, oppressed women was to be used, in the rhetoric of colonialism, to render morally justifiable its project of undermining or eradicating the cultures of colonized peoples. (Women and Gender in Islam 151)

In La femme dans l'inconscient musulman (1985), Fatma Aït Sabbah examines the tradition of Arabic erotic literature to point out that women's sexuality represents a danger in the male imaginary. Rather than claiming women are inferior to men, like much Western sexist discourse, in the Arabo-Muslim context, Aït Sabbah argues, women are seen as powerful, as a threat to male power and privilege and the social order.²⁴ For this reason, the danger women represent must be contained—hidden beneath a veil or enclosed in the domestic sphere. The archetype that embodies the danger of women's sexuality is the omnisexual woman: "Les exigences de l'omnisexuelle vont l'obliger à déclarer la guerre à l'ordre musulman et à violer toutes les règles qui régissent la sexualité canonique, et notamment l'hétérosexualité, la fidélité, l'homogénéité sociale et la chasteté, vertu essentielle d'une vie de femme" (68). This male representation of female subversion, however, isn't necessarily incompatible with official discourse. While the omnisexual woman overthrows the status quo in the male imaginary ("Aucune digue ne lui résiste, elle profane la règle de l'hétérosexualité avec la même aisance que les règles de l'homogénéité sociale" [85]), dominant discourses use this representation to justify male privilege. Because woman represents a danger, this danger must be controlled—veiled, confined, enclosed. Unlike Ben Jelloun, who characterizes the articulation of threatening sexualities

²⁴Western theological and medieval fictional discourses have also stressed that women are dangerous. Inferiority and danger are not always either/or propositions.

as subversive, Aït Sabbah maintains that such an articulation actually supports the status quo; the unveiling in the text actually strengthens calls to send women "back to the veil," as she puts it.

In *Sociologie d'une révolution* (1959), Frantz Fanon devotes an entire chapter to the relation between women's issues and the national struggle: "L'Algérie se dévoile," translated in the English version as "Algeria Unveiled."²⁵ For Fanon, at first, the veil protects from the colonizer's invading and penetrating gaze. Then, it is removed in the struggle for national liberation. In Fanon's notion of unveiling, the transgression of the forbidden plays an important role in revolutionary struggle: "Quand un colonisé entreprend une action contre l'oppresseur, et quand cette oppression s'est exercée sous les formes de la violence exacerbée et continue comme en Algérie, il doit vaincre un nombre important d'interdits" (34). But the veil is put back on in the same struggle, to hide firearms, bombs, hand grenades. Many critics have questioned Fanon's assumption that women's liberation naturally coincides with national liberation. History offers numerous examples where such has not been the case. Winifred Woodhull has also shown how even in the title "L'Algérie se dévoile," the nation is personified as Woman.²⁶ The unveiling of the nation coincides with that of women, or shall we say "Woman," dealing here, as we are, with the male imaginary? Woman is the incarnation of the nation's virtue itself. One might paraphrase Fanon's French title as "Algeria reveals her true nature." The unveiling of the nation is quite explosive, for the veil hides a danger, be it Woman or bomb; unveiling releases, quite literally, an explosion. Fanon describes the veil as hiding a danger (like Aït Sabbah), unveils the danger of women's sexuality (which ignites as an explosive), and deploys this explosion as a weapon against the colonizer. Women's liberation, according to Fanon, naturally follows national liberation. As long as women's liberation is submitted to national liberation, however, women run the risk of being treated like weapons. They are

²⁵ Although a more accurate translation is "Algeria Unveils Itself."

²⁶ "Nedjma, Feminist Scholarship, and North African Women" 58 and *Transfigurations* 3.

unveiled to fight the colonizer, but once the colonizer leaves, they are veiled again; their danger is once again contained. Another problem with Fanon's concept of women's liberation is that unveiling unequivocally equals liberation. In this way, Fanon repeats the colonialist equation of veil and women's oppression, an equation questioned by many Arabo-Muslim feminists²⁷ even as many continue to condemn the veil.

It seems to me that the explosion released by Fanon's unveiling is also at work in many Maghrebian novels, especially Mohammed Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer* (1962). For many writers, unveiling also constitutes a narrative technique, the technique Ben Jelloun describes as a "tentative de dévoilement" and a "porte ouverte sur un secret, sur un bien caché" and associates with "la transgression des tabous, surtout d'ordre sexuel" ("Défendre la diversité culturelle" 272). For Ben Jelloun the danger hidden beneath the veil is that of sexual secrets and sexual transgressions, which should remain hidden but are unveiled in novelistic narrative. The danger Aït Sabbah attributes to women's sexuality and the danger Fanon deploys in his own narrative unveiling also apply to marginal sexualities as they are politically deployed in Maghrebian novels. Unveiling sexual secrets releases an explosion that becomes a weapon in anti-colonial struggles as well as in struggles against post-independence national elites.

As can be seen in the two previous quotations of Aït Sabbah, one of the dangers Woman represents is her threat to the hegemony of heterosexuality (understood here less in a Foucauldian, strictly modern, Western sense, than as the heterosexual union at the center of marriage as the normative mode of the social organization of sexuality). Although it would be dangerous to generalize from male representations of female homosexuality about the role of homosexuality (male or female) in a male (heterosexual) imaginary,²⁸ the political threat that female sexuality poses to the male imaginary Aït Sabbah examines, parallels the danger of homosexuality in general in a number of Maghrebian novels.

²⁷Winifred Woodhull makes this point in *Transfigurations of the Maghreb* (3).

²⁸The representation of "lesbian" sexuality in pornography marketed to straight men is one example of how male imaginaries can exoticize, eroticize, and, by so doing, control female homosexuality and its dangers in ways it does not do with male homosexuality.

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, in La sexualité en Islam, attributes such a danger to homosexuality: "L'homosexualité est contestation de l'ordre du monde tel que l'a voulu Dieu et qui est fondé sur l'harmonie et la séparation radicale des sexes" (46). These dangers threaten not only individual male subjectivities, but also a political order of divine origin. In the modern context, one might define this political order as the Nation. In short, the veil and what is called the closet in English, hide, contain, and control similar dangers. Like Ben Jelloun in "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb," Malek Chebel also describes the veiling of a sexual secret, that of homosexuality: "Tout d'abord, il est indispensable de replier un voile épais, aux doubles coutures: celui du silence gêné. L'homosexuel maghrébin existe et fleurit: toutes les marginalités coexistent là, comme ailleurs, même si, ici, elles sont moins bien connues que là" (16). Is this tendency to associate homosexuality's secret with the veiling of women merely another example of male fantasy projected onto the veil qua screen? Or could one find similarities between the function of "Woman" in the male imaginary and the function of homosexuality in the heterosexual imaginary, similarities in the two types of power relations where some are privileged at the expense of others? As we shall see, for example, in Rachid Boudjedra's La répudiation (1969), the narrator's female companion, and his homosexual brother occupy similar positions in his imaginary. By unveiling marginal sexualities that should remain hidden, Maghrebian authors bring them out of the closet and bring the Nation out of the closet as a queer nation.

Likewise, one purpose of this study is to carry out a similar unveiling. Though representations of marginal sexualities abound in Maghrebian literature, until very recently, this major part of the literature has remained in the closet of literary criticism. Some of these representations are quoted here for the first time in literary criticism. What Maghrebian authors have gone to such lengths to unveil has been veiled again by literary critics (usually Western). It seems to me that this silence has continued long enough. Though my emphasis on the notion of unveiling might seem to repeat easy colonial equations of the veil and women's oppression, I have chosen not to avoid that risk with a

silence, but to confront the silence while hoping and trying to counter the idées reçues surrounding the veil in Western discourse.

Nations

In Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson asserts that "in the modern world everyone can, should, will, 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender" (14). However, in "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'" (In Theory 95–122), Aijaz Ahmad takes Jameson to task for privileging the category of the Nation in his characterization of "Third-World literature." Am I not falling into the same trap with this study? Indeed, of late it has become fashionable to speak of the "transnation": transnational or multinational corporations are said to be a defining characteristic of "late capitalism," a term that permeates Jameson's writings (e.g. "Third World Literature in an Age of Multinational Capitalism" and Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism), a term he attributes to the Frankfurt school (Postmodernism xviii). I argue, however, that while capital is certainly transnational, identity is still rooted in the Nation. Some identities may cross national borders: for example, Muslim identity, Jewish identity, Arab identity, Maghrebian identity, the identity of various sub-Saharan ethnic groups. In that sense, they might be described as transnational identities, but nations have not disappeared under late capitalism.

The term "transnational" has also tended to replace an older one, "international." In a certain Marxist discourse, Nations were bourgeois constructs. They were to be eliminated in an international class struggle waged by the working class against the ruling class. Marxists who rejected an identification with their nation (especially with their national bourgeoisie) often referred to themselves as internationalists. While I am sympathetic with this position and shall retain the term "international" when referring to this ideal of struggle, self-identifying as an internationalist does not erase one's national identity. Even if the goals of internationalist struggle were realized, national identity would not go away, at least not overnight; it would persist, if only in traces or as history. The persistence of national

identities, especially as cultural differences in a global context, is not necessarily a bad thing, and I would be very wary of any attempt to eradicate them. One tendency of a certain internationalist discourse argues that all national differences result from an identification with the national bourgeoisie. In a world without borders, it logically follows, these differences would wither away. How different are a political program that predicts the disappearance of differences disapproved of and a program that actively undertakes their eradication or extermination? If I am wary of such an internationalist suspicion of difference, it is because homosexuality is one such difference targeted for disappearance. The Revolutionary Communist Party, for example, a Maoist Internationalist organization, has picked out homosexuality for such a disappearance.²⁹

Internationalist organizations do not have a monopoly on attempts to eradicate difference, as national struggles also have a history of targeting homosexuality. Many radical movements have accepted the participation of lesbian and gay activists on a temporary basis, but incompatible with utopian visions of the new nation or the new world, homosexuality would simply disappear after the revolution. In more extreme versions, lesbians and gays would commit suicide.³⁰ In most national struggles, the gains of women have been moderate at most, and the examples of national struggles benefiting sexual minorities are extremely rare indeed.³¹ These few gains are also more than counter-balanced by examples of active repression after national liberation.

²⁹See the articulation of the official party line in "On the Question of Homosexuality and the Emancipation of Women," published in *Revolution* 56 (1988). The more traditional Communist Party (CPUSA) has its own history of rejection and denial of homosexuality even though, before Stalin, the official Soviet stance opposed discrimination against homosexuals (Plant 39). For an example of a pro-gay position of an American Communist Party, see Bob McCubbin's *The Gay Question: A Marxist Appraisal*, which articulates the attitude of the Workers World Party.

³⁰This subject was the topic of a teach-in entitled "Gays and Lesbians in Radical Struggles," which took place at the Graduate School and University Center of The City University of New York while the school was occupied by students (16–25 April) during the 1991 student strikes. The participants were Rena Grant, Maxine Wolfe, and Jim Fouratt, who gave the example of a Québécois revolutionary movement whose lesbian and gay militants were to commit suicide after the revolution. Betsy Andrews ("School's Out") reports on the teach-in in the context of queer participation in the student strikes.

³¹The new constitution of South Africa protects lesbians and gay men. Sandinistas recently voted against Nicaragua's new repressive sodomy law, but did nothing in support of the budding lesbian and gay movement while in power and actually actively discouraged its organization.

As many critics agree, there is something oppressive about the Nation. Yet national identity has fueled many struggles for decolonization that I find just. How does one struggle in the context of nations without assuming their insidious political potential? In a world of nations, of subjectivities situated in national identities, how does one locate spaces of political agency without falling prey to the exclusion and homogenization nations are based on? One is caught in a political double bind between, on the one hand, struggling in a world of nations and accepting the exclusions they involve, and on the other, rejecting the category of Nation and its repressive exclusions and, at the same time, eliminating a major stage of political action. This study attempts to find a way out of this double bind. If there is something oppressive about the Nation, I argue, there is also something queer about the Nation. To understand how Maghrebian authors queer the Nation, I turn to both queer theory and postcolonial theory. When read together, these theories offer a way of rethinking the Nation as queer, of rewriting national narratives in non-exclusive ways.

Theories Postcolonial and Queer

Over a decade before Judith Butler's or Homi K. Bhabha's use of performance theory to describe the embodiment of gender or national identity, Luce Irigaray, in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (1977), attempted to carve out a space for women in language through mimicry. Subjectivity, articulated through a gendered "je," must be masculine or feminine. All theories of subjectivity, however, have taken male subjectivity as the universal and have "othered" women: "Toute théorie du « sujet » aura toujours été appropriée au « masculin ». A s'y assujettir, la femme renonce à son insu à la spécificité de son rapport à l'imaginaire. Se replaçant dans la situation d'être objectivée—en tant que « féminin »—par le discours. S'y réobjectiver elle-même quand elle prétend s'identifier « comme » masculine" (*Speculum* 165). The position of subject has been denied to women, who have been granted only the position of object, and femininity, another word for this object position, has been defined by men. Women are thus in a double bind: they can seize the position of subject, wrest it from male control, but in occupying this masculine position,

they risk leaving behind their specificity. In contrast, reclaiming femininity means performing, for men, a male-written script. Irigaray's solution to this double bind is to mime femininity without fully occupying the feminine:

Jouer de la mimésis, c'est donc, pour une femme, tenter de retrouver le lieu de son exploitation par le discours, sans s'y laisser réduire. C'est se resoumettre—en tant que du côté du « sensible », de la « matière »...—à des « idées », notamment d'elle, élaborées dans/par une logique masculine, mais pour faire « apparaître », par un effet de répétition ludique, ce qui devait rester occulté: le recouvrement d'une possible opération du féminin dans le langage. C'est aussi « dévoiler » le fait que, si les femmes miment si bien, c'est qu'elles ne se résorbent pas simplement dans cette fonction. Elles restent toujours ailleurs: autre instance de « matière », mais aussi de « jouissance ». (*Ce sexe* 74)

Women who mimic the feminine are almost the feminine as defined by male discourse, but not quite. In the difference between their interpretation and the male script, there lies a space that can belong to women.

Almost the same but not quite: this is the expression Bhabha uses to define colonial mimicry: "[C]olonial mimicry is 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 of Culture* 86). Colonial mimicry is the name Bhabha assigns to the so-called white man's burden, his civilizing mission, the colonizer's desire to make the people he colonizes resemble himself, a desire to see sameness in the Other. Total assimilation of the colonized into the colonizer's culture, however, is impossible for two reasons. First, the civilizing mission accomplished, the colonizer could no longer justify colonial rule, he would have to go home. The colonized must remain "[a]lmost the same [as the colonizer] but not white" (89), "not quite/not white" (92)—that is, not quite white, not quite not white, but

nevertheless, not white. Second, the ambivalence that characterizes colonial mimicry, according to Bhabha, is double; mimicry's double is menace: "The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from mimicry—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to menace—a difference that is almost total but not quite" (91). Conflicting with a colonial desire to assimilate the colonized, a racist stereotype tropes the colonized as totally different (or almost—for if the colonized were totally other, there could be no hope of assimilation, and the civilizing mission would still not justify colonialism).

The stereotype, in Bhabha's theory, operates through a similar ambivalence:

Likewise, the stereotype, which is [the] major discursive strategy [of colonial discourse], is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always "in place," already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated...as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.... For it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of problematic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. (The Location of Culture 66)

If the stereotype were proven once and for all, it would not have to be repeated. It is only through the constant repetition or discursive deployment of stereotypes that colonial discourse can remain effective and productive, producing the discrimination that keeps the colonizer in power over the colonized. Many of Bhabha's critics accuse him of delighting in the ambivalence they see him as finding everywhere in colonial discourse; these critics, however, have misunderstood Bhabha's use of the term "ambivalence." Bhabha writes, "I do not intend to deconstruct the colonial discourse to reveal its ideological misconceptions or repression, to exult in its self-reflexivity, or to indulge its liberatory 'excess'" (67). To

expose the ambivalence of colonial discourse is not to claim that it is any less oppressive. For Bhabha, ambivalence is a "process," it is "productive" (66, 67). Through ambivalence, colonial discourse produces the stereotypes necessary to maintain colonial rule. One might, however, see this ambivalence as a weakness in colonial discourse. Yet poststructuralists are far from the first to suggest that oppressive systems have weak points; for Marxists, capitalism eventually digs its own grave and exposing capitalism's contradictions (a major task of Marxist critique) speeds up the grave-digging.

Bhabha characterizes both colonial mimicry and the stereotype as a contradiction or, as he calls it, a "splitting": colonial mimicry is split between almost total difference and almost complete sameness, and the stereotype is split between being such a given that it need not be argued and so excessive that it must be constantly repeated. In his writing on nationality, Bhabha has described a similar splitting between the national ideal (which he labels as pedagogy, the ideal as it is taught) and the various ways it is performed: "In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation" (145–46). The pedagogical involves imparting national ideals and values (including but not limited to the Nation's family values) to students, teaching national identity and the sense of belonging to a nation in the form of narratives that contribute to the fiction of a nation: myths of origin, tales of heroism, the narrative story of national history.³² The repetitive recitation of these narratives constitute nationalist pedagogy in action. Like the stereotype, the Nation as pedagogy must constantly be repeated; it is at once a given (so much so that it need not be argued) and so excessive as to require constant renewal. Constituting oneself as a national subject,

³²In the US, this pedagogy includes the narratives of Columbus's "discovery" of America, Washington's crossing the Delaware, Paul Revere's ride, "Give me liberty or give me death," or the experience of bombing Baghdad behind the wheel of a jet fighter/video machine. In the French colonies, this pedagogy took a more absurd turn as black and brown school children recited their history lessons that referred to a collective "Nos ancêtres les Gaulois."

however, and performing national identity are never quite so simple. The excessive nature of national pedagogy makes the Nation impossible to perform perfectly. This excess makes the Nation oppressive; those whose performance is not good enough can be excluded, incarcerated, deported, or even exterminated. The same excess can also prove to be the Nation's weakness; each performance of the Nation is always a reinterpretation in which there is room for subversion. If one could perform the Nation according to Irigaray's paradigm of miming, one could repeat the role without being totally reduced to it. Judith Butler's notion of subversive gender performances constitutes a similar rewriting of gender, a rewriting, I shall argue, that is also applicable to national identity.

As Bhabha's Nation is split between an ideal or pedagogy and citizens' imperfect quotidian performances of national identity, Butler's concept of heterosexuality and gender (gender being defined through heterosexuality) also involves a discrepancy between the ideal and its enactment:

Insofar as heterosexual gender norms produce inapproximable ideals, heterosexuality can be said to operate through the regulated production of hyperbolic versions of "man" and "woman." These are for the most part compulsory performances, ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate.... Such norms are continually haunted by their own inefficacy; hence, the anxiously repeated effort to install and augment their jurisdiction. (Bodies That Matter 237)

Following Adrienne Rich's argument in "Compulsory Heterosexuality," Butler describes heterosexuality as a compulsory, oppressive system, in other words as Law.³³ The Law of gender offers two identities, Man and Woman, and the two elements of this binary are in a heterosexual relationship with one another. Like Bhabha's stereotype, Butler's gender roles must be repeated constantly, "anxiously repeated" as they both write. For Monique Wittig, "[l]esbians are not women"; they escape compulsory heterosexuality altogether:

³³Monique Wittig described this system as "the social contract" (The Straight Mind 40).

"Lesbians are runaways, fugitive slaves..." (The Straight Mind 32, 45). For Butler, however, one can no more operate outside of gender than outside of the Nation.³⁴ Instead, her solution or way out of the double bind of gender roles resembles Irigaray's mimicry, performing the role with a difference.³⁵

Like Bhabha's colonial mimicry, Butler's gender roles operate along a certain ambivalence:

In this sense, heterosexuality offers normative sexual positions that are intrinsically impossible to embody, and the persistent failure to identify fully and without incoherence with these positions reveals heterosexuality itself not only as a compulsory law, but as an inevitable comedy. Indeed, I would offer this insight into heterosexuality as both a compulsory system and as intrinsic comedy, a constant parody of itself, as an alternative gay/lesbian perspective. (Gender Trouble 122)

In the dominant discursive logic of compulsory heterosexuality, if a woman desires other women, it is because she identifies with men (such was the position of Freud). Her desire must be masculine, because identification and desire cannot have the same gender as their objects—desire must always be heterosexual. According to this logic, homosexuals can only be parodies of heterosexuals; a drag queen mimics real women, and butch/fem lesbian couples mimic heterosexual couples. Butler, however, turns this assumption on its head; even heterosexuals can only parody heterosexuality, and often their parody is no less laughable than that of the obvious drag queen. It is impossible to perform these roles according to the ideal (just as the Nation's citizens cannot perfectly embody national identity). Many critics have accused Butler of treating gender as if it were a voluntary game

³⁴Cf. Anderson's quotation at the beginning of this section. As Wittig has argued for the end of gender, some internationalists have argued for eliminating the category of the Nation. To understand the dangerous effects of trying to deny the Nation's importance, one need only think of the French Communist Party, which opposed Algerian independence and therefore justified France's continued colonial domination of Algeria by arguing that the struggle for Algerian independence would divide French and Algerian workers in the context of an international socialist struggle. By denying the existence of nations in the here-and-now in favor of a future world without borders, the PCF participated in prolonging French colonialism.

³⁵Butler explicitly discusses Irigaray's mimicry in Bodies That Matter (45–49).

of role-playing. It seems to me, however, that they have missed part of her point. For Butler, heterosexual gender "norms are continually haunted by their own inefficacy" (Bodies That Matter 237). One could read this haunting inefficacy as the possibility that the performer may fail to make clear enough that his performance of heterosexuality is not the same one a closeted homosexual performs. Whereas some performances of heterosexuality may be laughable, others, such as queer bashing, are violent. Queer bashers, as well as rapists (especially gang rapists) attempt to compensate for male heterosexuality's haunting inefficacy and thereby prove themselves to be "real men." Rather than delighting in the inefficacy of heterosexual gender roles, one should consider the violence it engenders. Gender roles are oppressive precisely because they are impossible to imitate perfectly. If they were easily performed by everyone, there could be no retaliation against those whose performance is not up to par. (Queer bashing represents, at least in part, a punishment for those whose gender performances don't meet the standards of heteronormativity.)

Part of many misplaced criticisms of Butler's work stems from confusing her use of the term "performance" with theatricality. While theatrical metaphors play an important role in Butler's theory, her notion of the performative is more closely akin with the term's meaning in speech act theory.³⁶ Originally, speech act theory distinguished between two types of speech acts, the constative—words that say or describe—and the performative—words that do what they say (such as the "I do" of the heterosexual marriage ceremony). Sandy Petrey, in Speech Acts and Literary Theory (1990) and Realism and Revolution (1988), has deconstructed the performative/constative distinction to show that even constative speech acts also perform.³⁷ In realist fiction, for example, words that claim merely to describe "reality" actually produce the effect of realness by constructing

³⁶Butler writes, "Performativity is thus not a singular 'act,' for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the convention of which it is a repetition. Moreover, this act is not primarily theatrical; indeed, its theatricality is produced to the extent that its historicity remains dissimulated.... Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Bodies That Matter 12–13).

³⁷For the founding text of speech act theory, see J. L. Austin's How to Do Things with Words (1975). One could also argue, as Petrey does, that the distinction is already deconstructed in Austin's work.

referentiality. Likewise, Butler's gender performances not only repeat pre-given roles (a realist endeavor—being a "real" man or woman), they also produce gender in the process.³⁸

This understanding of the performative coincides with an existential concept of becoming. In Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement, "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient" (Le deuxième sexe 2: 13), sex may be biologically determined, but gender is culturally constructed. Wittig took this statement a step further and proclaimed that sex, as well, was a social construction: "For there is no sex. There is but sex that is oppressed and sex that oppresses. It is oppression that creates sex and not the contrary.... [G]ender is the enforcement of sex in language, working in the same way as the declaration of sex in civil status" (The Straight Mind 2, 79). Butler continues along Wittig's lines: "Hence, for Wittig, there is no distinction between sex and gender; the category of 'sex' is itself a gendered category, fully politically invested, naturalized but not natural" (Gender Trouble 112). Butler takes Beauvoir's notion of becoming a woman and understands it in a Sartrean way.³⁹ Rather than merely an apprenticeship of a subservient role (becoming a woman once and for all), Butler sees this becoming as a constant process containing the potential of liberation. For Sartre, human beings were defined not by essence but by a continual becoming, which was the source of a radical freedom. Sartre defined becoming as a series of constant choices by which people defined their identity, choices made not in a vacuum but in situation. (Situation, in other words, limits freedom.) One could not, for example, simply choose to change social classes; one defined oneself by the choices one made within the limits imposed by one's (class) situation. Although Butler has explicitly

³⁸She also writes, "To claim that discourse is formative is not to claim that it originates, causes, or exhaustively composes that which it concedes; rather, it is to claim that there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formulation of that body. In this sense, the linguistic capacity to refer to sexed bodies is not denied, but the very meaning of 'referentiality' is altered. In philosophical terms, the constative claim is always to some degree performative" (Bodies That Matter 10–11).

³⁹Butler discusses Beauvoir's Le deuxième sexe along Sartrean lines in "Sex and Gender in Beauvoir's Second Sex."

distinguished her theory of gender acts from existentialism,⁴⁰ there remain certain similarities between the two. For Butler, one's gender never consists of an essence defined once and for all. Rather, it is constantly defined through day-to-day gender acts (as human nature, for Sartre, is defined through the actions that constitute one's becoming), acts she describes as performances. The Law of gender dictates the roles gendered subjects perform (it thus determines the "situation" of the performance), but as with any role, there remains a bit of leeway in how one interprets them.

In the discrepancy between the Law of gender and the performance of gender roles, Butler articulates a strategy of not only leading gendered lives without being reduced the roles one must perform but also of envisioning the transformation of the Law itself into a less oppressive system. She offers a way out of the double bind of the binary of heterosexual gender roles by pointing out that, since the performance is never completely faithful to the ideal, in the repetition of performances of the ideal, there lies the possibility of driving a wedge between the ideal and its performance, of widening the difference between the two, and thus of creating a new ideal. Her strategy of subverting the compulsory heterosexual gender system involves parodying the very roles the system imposes: "As a strategy to denaturalize and resignify bodily categories, I describe and propose a set of parodic practices based in a performative theory of gender acts that disrupt the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame" (*Gender Trouble* xii). Her parody involves repeating the model, but with a difference through such acts as butch/femme roles, drag, and camp. Some activists and theorists have denounced such mimicry; according to them, lesbians and gays who parody heterosexual roles are replicating its power structure and its abusiveness—an argument levied against drag, S/M,

⁴⁰"My argument is that there need not be a 'doer behind the deed,' but that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed. This is not a return to an existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts, for the existential theory maintains a prediscursive structure for both the self and its acts" (*Gender Trouble* 142). Thus, Butler's gendered becoming differs from Sartre's in that hers assumes a self constituted through language (speech acts) whereas his assumes a self and the acts that constitute it as prior to and outside of language.

and butch/femme. Butler is certainly not the first to counter such sexual critiques; she follows a whole line of "sex-radical" feminists who have defended butch/femme relations, often by pointing out that the petty-bourgeois feminists who attacked these roles often failed to consider that they were particularly common among working-class lesbians.⁴¹

Butler is especially careful to point out, however, "Parody by itself is not subversive..." (*Gender Trouble* 139). There are many drag shows, for example, that repeat misogynist stereotypes about women that reinforce rather than transform oppressive gender roles. In many examples, drag provides entertainment for heterosexual voyeurs without questioning dominant gender roles (witness *Tootsie* and *Mrs. Doubtfire*).⁴² Butler balances between not denying the oppressive nature of gender roles and not reducing gendered people to their oppression (a reduction that would deny any possibility of revolting against or transforming the "sex/gender system"⁴³). In contradistinction to Foucault, who saw sexuality not (or not only) as the object of repression on the part of power but also as a manifestation of power, Butler also points out the "inefficacies" of power in determining sexuality. Her notion of "subversive bodily acts"⁴⁴ offers a way out of an insidious institution, gender as it now stands, by using gender signs, acts of signifying gender difference, in a way that might change their referent, the Law of gender, into a less oppressive system.

Butler's strategy thus resembles Irigaray's in many ways; it involves repeating gender norms without being reduced to them. There remain, however, important differences between Butler's parody or "subversive gender acts" and Irigaray's mimicry: Irigaray

⁴¹See Sue-Ellen Case, "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," and Joan Nestle, "The Femme Question," *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, "Stone Butch, Drag Butch, Baby Butch," and "Butch-Femme Relationships: Sexual Courage in the 1950's." Nestle also discusses these issues in "'Stonewall: A Gift to the World': An Interview with Joan Nestle and Tony Kushner," by Jarrod Hayes, Lauren Kozol, and Wayne Marat VanSertima.

⁴²On this question, see Elaine Showalter, "Critical Cross-Dressing." While Showalter is much too quick to use films such as *Tootsie*—popular among straight audiences—to describe drag in general (by eliding differences between, say, *Tootsie* and a flourishing drag culture in gay communities—such as Wigstock and African American drag balls), her criticism of these films nonetheless remains valid. See also Craig Owens on Showalter's article ("Outlaws: Gay Men in Feminism").

⁴³The term is Gayle Rubin's ("The Traffic in Women" 159).

⁴⁴This term is the title of the last chapter of *Gender Trouble* (79–141).

targets masculine logic and language, hitherto a domain defined along masculinist terms, whereas Butler targets the Law of heterosexual gender roles. Irigaray seeks to carve out a space for women to articulate their identity in language whereas Butler seeks to change the terms themselves, to change both male and female gender roles as well as heterosexuality. As several feminists have pointed out, in spite of her calls for women "to get together" ("Embrasse-moi. Deux lèvres embrassant deux lèvres: l'ouvert nous est rendu" [*Ce sexe* 209]), Irigaray may in fact invest more in strengthening heterosexuality than in questioning it.⁴⁵ Like Wittig, Butler wishes to destroy compulsory heterosexuality, but unlike Wittig, who thought that if you just left it behind it would cave in, Butler realizes that one cannot operate outside of gender (a product of compulsory heterosexuality).

Like Bhabha's colonial mimicry, Butler's gender roles operate through an excess: "It is the supplément, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all. This illimitable et cetera, however, offers itself as a new departure for feminist theorizing" (*Gender Trouble* 143). Using Bhabha's terminology, one might even say that Butler's parody would be "almost the same" as ideal gender "but not quite." Butler's performance of gender roles, then, parallels Bhabha's performance of the Nation. Her parody, inserting a slight difference from the original, exploits what Bhabha characterizes as the splitting between the ideal and its performance and offers a way of transforming national identity, proliferating it beyond its narrow definition in dominant discourse. If this splitting can be used to challenge dominant models of gendered identity, perhaps it can also be exploited to challenge official models of national identity. Given the parallels between

⁴⁵Christine Holmlund describes Irigaray's successive valorizations of the Lesbian, the Mother, and the Heterosexual Lover: "Irigaray's current preference for the heterosexual female lover and corresponding neglect for the lesbian, for example, does not mean she has repudiated the one for the other. But given the force of heterosexual assumptions and privileges in today's world, we may well need to insist that the lesbian is not a stage to be outgrown en route to mature heterosexuality" ("The Lesbian, the Mother, the Heterosexual Lover" 304). Annamarie Jagose writes, "In Irigaray's argument, femininity appropriates the name of female homosexuality in order to reconstitute the feminine as an autonomous category which provides the basis for a recognition of an emancipated heterosexuality across the repressed and unrepresentable body of the female homosexual. The femininity specularized by phallocentrism is rescued by female homosexuality which then takes its place as the specularized object which allows representation but is itself denied self-representation" (*Lesbian Utopics* 38).

Butler's and Bhabha's deployment of the concepts of performance and excess, I suggest—and argue that the texts of Maghrebian novelists suggest—that Butler's strategy of gender performance as a parody of heterosexual roles can also be deployed as a method of rewriting national identity in heterogeneous and inclusive ways (as opposed to the homogenizing exclusion of dominant nationalist discourse). When Bhabha writes, "Minority discourse acknowledges the status of national culture—and the people—as a contentious, performative space of the perplexity of the living in the midst of the pedagogical representations of the fullness of life" (*The Location of Culture* 157), he also acknowledges that it is especially those at the Nation's margins who can perform such a subversive parody or rewriting of national identity. And this subversive performance of the Nation is related to challenging official versions of national origins: "Minority discourse... contests genealogies of 'origin' that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority" (*The Location of Culture* 157).

As we shall see, Tahar Ben Jelloun offers the paradigm for this rewriting of the Nation in *La prière de l'absent*, whose characters undertake a journey to a site of national origins. The narrative as journey thus repeats a familiar, officially recognized narrative of return to roots. The rewriting of this official narrative occurs when one of the characters' marginal sexuality (which is associated with other forms of social marginalization) interferes with the journey and in the end prevents its completion. The unveiling of a forgotten desire coincides with the revelation of dirty political secrets, and the rewriting of sexual identity is at the same time a rewriting of the Nation. The insights of both queer and postcolonial theories, when combined, provide models for theorizing strategies of simultaneously combating oppression of different sorts, sexual, gender, racial, class, national, colonial, religious, and so on. If national and sexual and gendered identities can be rewritten through the same narrative strategy, other categories can be reconceived as well. Butler's emphasis on the performative follows the theatrical antics of ACT UP, its strategy of manipulating the media by turning the political demonstration into a stage. (And of course

one might see the guerrilla theater of the 1960s and '70s as a precursor of ACT UP's political innovation.) The effectiveness of these tactics show that performativity, far from being apolitical, can actually be incorporated into political struggle, which does not mean that, say, parody or drag in themselves will lead directly to revolution; rather, deployed in political action, such rewritings of dominant models of identity can be one of a whole bag of tricks the postmodern guerrilla has at her disposal. As we shall see, Leïla Sebbar, in the *Shérázade* trilogy, portrays the urban feminist guerrilla at work, using all these tricks at once.

The "subversion of identity" in the subtitle of Butler's *Gender Trouble* is not merely a deconstruction, a subversion of the system of identity, it also involves making identity subversive. It rewrites dominant narratives of sexual identity and subjectivity so that they can be deployed in acts of political struggle. My own subtitle, "Sexual Subversions of National Identity," relies on a similar notion of subversive identity. Likewise, many Maghrebian authors exploit the difference between the ideal of national identity proposed by official discourses of nationality and its embodiment by the Nation's citizens. They take advantage of the fact that the performance of national identity, especially in the case of the Nation's marginalized citizens and even more so in the case of the Nation's sexually marginalized citizens, can never fully live up to the ideal standards. By unveiling sexual secrets, they bring the Nation out of the closet. They neither reject nationalist models nor repeat them the way they are supposed to be embodied. They neither reject a cult of national origins nor accept the single root of identity glorified by this cult. Rather, they propose multiple origins/rhizomes, make the Nation heterogeneous by bringing to the center what it prefers to marginalize, by unveiling what it prefers to stash away in its closets. In their writing of the Maghrebian nation, they rewrite the Nation, they subvert national identity not by destroying it but by making it subversive, available for deployment in struggles within the postcolonial context.

Keywords

Increasingly it has become necessary to clarify how one uses contested or inadequate terms in theoretical and political discourses. Taking an example from Raymond Williams's Keywords, I would like to discuss a few terms I have used already or shall use later in the course of this study. It is not always possible to replace inadequate terms with better ones, sometimes replacements for inadequate terms are themselves not completely adequate, and often the only solution is to limit their application or at least strictly define the parameters of their usage.

Postcolonial—Every year at the annual conference of the African Literature Association, there are lengthy discussions on the validity of the term "postcolonial." Many critics of African and other literatures are concerned that, on a basic level, the "post-" means "after" and the term implies that colonialism is a thing of the past.⁴⁶ The term partially acquired a bad reputation when Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin used it in The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures to include American and Australian literature as well as the literatures of Africa, Asia, and South America.⁴⁷ Many, however, use the term to indicate a historical period following large-scale independence of most (but not all) former colonies, a period when colonial relations linger on in the form of neo-colonialism. The cultural contradictions of such a political situation are often grouped under the rubric "postcolonial." It is true, as Ella Shohat points out, that the term is less offensive to conservative academic powers who might reject terms like "anti-imperialist," "anti-colonialist," or even "neo-colonial" ("Notes on the 'post-Colonial'" 99). But "postcolonial" includes notions such as migration, hybridity, diaspora, and concepts such as the fragmentation of identity often associated

⁴⁶For a critique of this use of the term "postcolonial," see Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonial'" (esp. 86–87), Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'" (esp. 102–4), and Aijaz Ahmad, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality." For further considerations of the term, see Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism."

⁴⁷The same editor's have now edited The Post-colonial Studies Reader.

with the postmodern.⁴⁸ "Postcolonial subjectivity" makes more sense than "neo-colonial subjectivity," while "postcolonial economic relations" seems to be a mere euphemism for "neo-colonialism." I prefer to use "neo-colonial" to describe current economic and political relations between former colonies and colonizers. I prefer "postcolonial" to describe a cultural condition, identity, literature, and theory. "Anti-imperialist" and "anti-colonialist" describe political orientations. As a historical marker, "post-independence" seems to be the most accurate.

The dispute over the term "postcolonial" is also inseparable from a more general debate on the relation between "Theory" and "postcolonial" literature, since the term "postcolonial" itself is most often embraced by critics who might be lumped under the label of "theorists." "Theorists" often implies critics who are familiar with and use some version of poststructuralist theories, which are often viewed as Eurocentric.⁴⁹ Many critics of postcolonial theory argue that "theorists" are imposing a theoretical discourse of European origins onto non-European literatures. Postcolonial theory, according to this argument, inevitably leads to a Eurocentric misreading of African (and other) literatures. Even postcolonial theorists from the "Third World," face similar accusations, especially since they often live and work in the US or Europe. When European theories inform readings of African literature in disregard for cultural, political, social, and economic differences, these accusations hold true. Usually, however, using postcolonial theory to read literature also critically engages theory. While I accept criticisms of postcolonial theory as warnings against the misuse of theory, I shall not shy away from theory. If theory is used in a hierarchical application wherein European metadiscourse is imposed onto (i.e. from the top, a position of power and domination) African literature, wherein only readings of literature are altered by theory and theory comes out of the reading unscathed,

⁴⁸On the relation between the postmodern and the postcolonial, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" and Homi K. Bhabha, "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency" (*The Location of Culture* 171–97).

⁴⁹In "The Race for Theory," Barbara Christian argues that the recent rush to theory is Eurocentric (especially in its inaccessible language) and serves to recolonize texts (51–52).

condemnations of using theory on African literature remain valid. But such condemnations often tend to maintain the same hierarchies they purport to criticize. They assume that theory is always imposed, that African literature cannot itself be theoretical, and uphold a European monopoly on theory, which replaces the colonizer and colonizes African literature in their critique.⁵⁰ In contrast this study assumes that it is possible to decolonize theory, that literature itself can be theoretical. In "French Feminism Revisited," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, "I have come to think that there can be an exchange between metropolitan and decolonized feminisms" (56–57). By staging a meeting of French feminists Beauvoir, Cixous, and Irigaray and the Algerian feminist Marie-Aimée Hélié-Lucas in which an exchange occurs in both directions,⁵¹ Spivak articulates a model for reading European and non-European discourses together, which I hope to follow in my own use of theory.

Francophone—Onésime Reclus first used the term "francophonie" in 1880 in France, Algérie et colonies. The term applied to the ensemble of French colonies, and given the date of its use, also implied a colonial project (the scramble for Africa had begun and the Berlin Conference of 1878, where Africa was divided up among European powers, had just taken place). As a geographical term it included all the areas that were to fall into the realm of the French civilizing mission, the mission of taking French language, culture, and civilization to peoples who were supposedly savages, uncivilized, and barbarian. Civilization thus served as a discursive justification for colonization. After most (but not

⁵⁰In "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon," Cedric Robinson, explicitly characterizing theory as colonizer, accuses postcolonial critics of recolonizing Fanon. See also Biodun Jeyifo, "The Nature of Things: Arrested Decolonization and Critical Theory": "The foregoing discussion is especially relevant to current debates over the pertinence of theory to African literature where 'theory' almost always implies 'their' theory in relation to 'our' literature, Western or 'eurocentric' evaluative norms and criteria in relation to non-Western traditions of writing..." (35).

⁵¹Assia Djebar calls for a similar two-way exchange between European and Arab feminists when she writes, "J'ai connu beaucoup de femmes dites féministes qui débarquaient dans des pays arabes pour 'aider' les femmes opprimées; pour moi cela m'apparaissait comme un maternalisme à relent colonial. J'ai aussi connu des femmes qui, vivant quelques jours ou pendant un certain temps au milieu des femmes traditionnelles des pays du Maghreb, s'enrichissaient et retrouvaient une force perdue. Pour moi, le dialogue entre les femmes du 'nord' et les femmes du 'sud,' ne peut se faire que dans un échange; le positif se trouve de chaque côté..." (Mortimer, "Entretien" 200).

all) of France's colonies have gained independence, the concept of francophonie continues to represent an association of France with its possessions and former colonies. France's diplomatic and cultural relations with its former colonies are often justified in the name of francophonie and the propagation and defense of French language and cultures. (The civilizing mission continues under another name!) For this reason, the term "Francophone" rings, or should ring, with neo-colonial implications.

"Francophone" is also a vague term; literally, it refers to anyone who speaks French, including the French themselves. The Conseil International d'Etudes Francophones concerns itself with French cultures and literatures from Francophone Europe, including France, as well as non-European Francophone cultures. In most French literature Departments, however, at least in the US, "Francophone literatures" refers to literatures written in French outside of Europe, or at least by non-Europeans (since many of these writers currently live in Europe). (In this way the term resembles that of "Commonwealth literatures" in English departments.) "Francophone," used in this way, refers to a "minor literature," to use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's term (Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure). Perhaps the term also contributes to a certain marginalization of non-white literatures within French departments.

The term "Francophone" thus leads to an ambiguity. Even in its most restricted sense, it groups cultures upon which French was imposed, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Maghreb, with Quebec, for which holding on to French has been a form of resistance to assimilation into Anglo-Canadian culture. Many writers grouped under the label "Francophone" use French as a written culture and retain another indigenous language as the primary means of oral communication. Since the "-phone" in "Francophone" emphasizes the spoken ("phonein," in Greek, means to produce a sound or to speak), the use of "Francophone" to describe written cultures constitutes a misnomer. Especially in French, a number of alternatives have been proposed, "de langue française," "d'expression française," and "de graphie française," which uses a more appropriate Greek root. Though

I have chosen the second alternative for my title, "Francophone" remains an essential (certainly less cumbersome) if inadequate term.

Arabo-Muslim—Many researchers have devoted entire studies to the Arab world or the Islamic world and have assumed that, in spite of cultural, racial, religious, and linguistic differences, there are generalizations to be made about the portions of the planet that either of these two "worlds" would include. The Maghreb could be and usually is included in both of these regions. And at times, I shall need to situate the Maghreb in a larger regional, cultural, or religious context such as that denoted by the terms "Arab world" and "Islamic world." These terms, however, imply a homogeneity that doesn't exist. A significant portion of the Arab world, even though a minority, is not Muslim. An even greater portion of the Islamic world is not Arab and does not speak Arabic. Portions of the population of the Maghreb do not speak Arabic, at least not as a first language. Other portions are not Muslim, or are Muslim in non-orthodox ways, or are culturally but non-practicing or even atheist Muslims. For these reasons, I prefer the term used by Malek Chebel in L'imaginaire arabo-musulman, "Arabo-Muslim," to refer to a shared cultural context heavily influenced or even dominated by Islam and Arabic and Arab culture but not reducible to either of these influences and certainly not homogeneous. To partake of "Arabo-Muslim" culture, to have one's identity rooted in this culture, one need be neither Arab nor Muslim.

In her article, "Feminism and Difference," Marnia Lazreg criticizes the privileged position of Islam within scholarship on North Africa:

Scholarship on North African and Middle Eastern societies typically focuses on Islam as a privileged subject of inquiry whether it is dealt with as a religion or as a culture. Underlying the study of these societies are a number of problematical assumptions. First, Islam is seen as a self-contained and flawed belief system impervious to change.... Second, Islamic civilization is assumed to have been in decline and to continue to decline.... Attempts made by indigenous people to

change their institutions are more often than not explained in terms of a return to Islam.... Last but not least, it is assumed that "Islam cannot produce adequate, scientific knowledge about itself, since the political conditions of Islamic societies preclude critical, autonomous scholarship. Islam requires Western science to produce valid knowledge of the culture and social organization of the Islamic world."⁵² (83–84)

It is in the effort to avoid such an essentialist reduction of every cultural phenomenon of these regions to Islam, that I prefer the term "Arabo-Muslim."

Queer—In spite of the use of the word "queer" in my title and in my references to the American context, when discussing specifically Maghrebian examples, I find other terms more useful. The Maghrebian sexologist Malek Chebel uses the terms "seraglio spirit," "perversion," and "sexual marginalities":

Nous évoquerons... l'homasse, la femme garçon, les travestis, etc., autant dire, toute la gamme des sexualités qui relient les pôles de la virilité extrême à la féminité totale. Entre ces extrêmes, tout un peuple d'appréciateurs, d'amateurs éclairés et de pervers, de dilettantes végète: ils sont voyeurs, exhibitionnistes invétérés, bisexuels actifs, uranistes aux affectivités troubles. La panoplie est aussi large ici qu'ailleurs et rien ne distingue un pervers d'un autre pervers que la situation inédite dans laquelle se joue leur déviation. (17)

Chebel describes a continuum of marginal sexualities that includes perversion, non-normative sexualities, sexual dissidence⁵³ or transgressions, and gender insubordination. And Chebel's use of the word "perversion" does not denote a pathology, but rather is more akin with the definition offered by Roland Barthes:

"Perversion, quite simply, is a way of being happy."

⁵²The citation is of Bryan S. Turner, Weber and Islam: A Critical Study (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) 6–7.

⁵³The term is Jonathan Dollimore's (Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault).

In the fragment from which this phrase is taken,⁵⁴ I cited the word "perversion" after two allusions to haschisch and homosexuality. Which means that here "perversion" does not have a psychoanalytic rigour—since for psychoanalysis drugs are not strictly classifiable as perversions. Perversion is the search for a pleasure that cannot be turned to the profit of social ends or the species. It is, for example, the pleasure of loving which does not figure in view of procreation. It belongs to an order of voluptuaries practised gratuitously. ("Vocabularies" 206–7)

Chebel describes the Maghreb in a way that seems to me remarkably queer. As I have written above, although some have wanted to open up the word "queer" to anyone who self-identifies as such, I wish to keep it attached to same-sex eroticism and sexuality, in an emphasis not on how sexualities might be normalized but on how they might resist normalization and the hegemony of sexual normativity. Nonetheless, Chebel's passage connects several forms of marginal sexualities, and as many examples of Maghrebian literature demonstrate, there are affinities in the political functions of various marginal sexualities and of other forms of marginalization as Maghrebian authors deploy them within narrative.

Maghrebian—When I tell people that I work on North African literature written in French from the Maghreb, the first author that often comes to their minds is Albert Camus. Some even wonder whether I count L'immoraliste as a North African novel. André Gide did visit North Africa, after all. While I don't consider Camus an Algerian writer, and André Gide infinitely less so, would I automatically exclude every pied noir? On this matter, I accept Jean Déjeux's criteria for what counts as a Maghrebian writer: "Littérature maghrébine, c'est-à-dire issue de la Tunisie, de l'Algérie et du Maroc et produite par des

⁵⁴"Le pouvoir de jouissance d'une perversion (en l'occurrence celle des deux H: homosexualité et haschisch) est toujours sous-estimé. La Loi, la Doxa, la Science ne veulent pas comprendre que la perversion, tout simplement, rend heureux; ou pour préciser davantage, elle produit un plus: je suis plus sensible, plus perceptif, plus locace, mieux distrait, etc—et dans ce plus vient se loger la différence (et partant, le Texte de la vie, la vie comme texte). Dès lors, c'est une déesse, une figure invocable, une voie d'intercession" (Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes 68).

autochtones nés dans les sociétés arabo-berbères ou juives (en ce qui concerne la Tunisie et le Maroc), même si ces Maghrébins ont pu être qualifiés de 'Français musulmans,' comme c'était le cas, par exemple, pour les Algériens. Elle peut être le fait de Français, nés en Algérie, qui ont opté pour la nationalité algérienne" (Littérature maghrébine de langue française 13). The only modification I would make would be to include Algerian Jews, whom Déjeux seems to exclude by only acknowledging Jewish writers in the case of Morocco and Tunisia. I see no reason to exclude Algerian Jews, upon whom French citizenship was imposed, while continuing to include Algerian Muslims who chose French citizenship ("Français musulmans"). The Algerian-ness of such writers as Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous is becoming a topic of consideration in Maghrebian studies.⁵⁵

The most notable example of a pieu noir writer who would fit these criteria is Jean Sénac, but since most of his writings consist of poetry and my study deals primarily with narrative literature, I have chosen not to include him in this study. In matters of sexuality, Jean Sénac will be an important focus for further research. An ardent Algerian nationalist, openly gay, Sénac refused to ever consider himself French. (His mother was Spanish, his father unknown, perhaps a gypsy. He was only French by definition according to French colonial administrative regulations.) He was also an adviser to the Minister of Education under the Ben Bella government until Boumediène's coup.⁵⁶

Because the "three worlds theory" has been so well deconstructed by Aijaz Ahmad (In Theory), I shall try, whenever possible, to avoid the term "Third World" and stick to the more specific region of my research, the Maghreb. The Third World includes so much of the planet—portions of which are indistinguishable from at least some portions of the so-called First World—that any generalization one might make about it would be of very limited use. In some cases, however, the term is unavoidable, so I haven't completely banished it from my vocabulary.

⁵⁵It was the topic of Hédi Abdel-Jaouad's talk, "Derrida's Algeria," given 17 March 1995 at the ALA Conference in Columbus, Ohio.

⁵⁶For a biography of Sénac, see Jean-Pierre Peroncel-Hugoz, Assassinat d'un poète. For Sénac's most fervently nationalist poetry, see Citoyens de beauté. For more homoerotic poems, see dérivations et Vertige.

Ethnography—In Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa (1990), Christopher L. Miller asserts "that a fair Western reading of African literatures demands engagement with, and even dependence on, anthropology" (4). The reason for this assertion, Miller maintains, is that texts cannot be understood separately from their cultural contexts:

The demonstration of this point begins from the premise that good reading does not result from ignorance and that Westerners simply do not know enough about Africa. Much of what I will be arguing here grows out of my basic belief that no responsible Western reading of African literature can take place in the vacuum of a 'direct' and unmediated relationship with the text. What the literary text says is necessary but not sufficient; other texts must be brought into the dialogical exercise of a good reading. (4)

Even though Miller focuses entirely on sub-Saharan literature and, more specifically, on literature from the Mande ethnic group, his point could also be applied to North Africa. He is certainly right that African literature should not be read in a vacuum. Not only must the literary critic be familiar with anthropology, as Miller argues, but I would argue that she must also be able to situate literary texts within political, historical, sociological, religious, and (especially in the case of my study) sexological discourses. In reading literatures from a culture not one's own, the social sciences are of utmost importance. When appropriate, discourses of the social sciences can be used to understand literature and literature can be used to elucidate the social sciences. The Western literary critic attempting to read African literatures without a firm grounding in the social sciences of the continent risks the gravest of blunders.

I would argue, however, against Miller's generalization that anthropology must be central in every reading of African texts. He produces eloquent readings of a number of West African texts, readings made all the more productive through their engagement with anthropology, readings unthinkable without that engagement. However, the importance of

anthropology in literature surely varies from text to text. In the days of the independence movements of the Maghreb, as I have mentioned above, a certain nationalist literary criticism condemned what it labeled the "ethnographic novel" for pandering to a Western ethnographic gaze or desire for extreme alterity, the exotic, and the quaint. One might also apply the same criticism to Miller's assertion. While one of my tasks in this study will be to revise this type of nationalist criticism, I think one of its points should be well taken: Literature is more than a secondary text for the social sciences, and it is about more than ethnography. Novels may illustrate anthropological findings, they may contest them, or they may have no relation to anthropology at all. My own tendency is to de-emphasize the ethnographic in my readings, and in some cases, I shall argue that Maghrebian texts actively refuse ethnographic readings. My position is not an a priori refusal of all uses of ethnography within literary criticism per se, but rather a suspicion. If Miller is correct that every Western literary critic working on Africa should avoid ignorance of the anthropology of the regions she researches, there is a second danger, that of using literary texts as a way of satisfying a desire to know, and perhaps have power over, an exotic Other. I do not mean to imply that any anthropological reading necessarily falls into the paradigm of an exoticizing gaze, but merely that there are two opposing dangers to negotiate between instead of the one Miller discusses so thoroughly.

* * *

My first two chapters could be grouped under a single rubric: allegories of reading Maghrebian literature. The first chapter is concerned more with allegories of misreading the Maghreb. I am far from the first to attempt a queering of the Maghreb; French Orientalist discourses from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries constructed the Orient as a polymorphously perverse space and a playground for the Western tourist. Likewise, many Western sexologies of the Arabo-Muslim world articulate Arabo-Muslim sexuality as totally Other. I am concerned that any sexual reading of the Maghreb might risk falling into well-known Orientalist paradigms (specifically), and (more generally) that reading in a

multicultural context might become a form of "academic tourism." This chapter uses readings of tourist guides and their treatment of sexuality as a component of the tourist experience to establish the collaboration between this tourist paradigm and the clichés of sexual studies of the Maghreb or the Arabo-Muslim world. Critiques of sexual Orientalism are also quite abundant by now. These critiques often tend to see homosexual tourism as the most exploitative, as the epitome of sexual colonialism, and often rely on puritan notions of sex, especially promiscuous sex, as inherently evil. In contradistinction to homophobic critiques of sexual tourism that see homosexuality as essentially exploitative or colonialist, I analyze the connection between colonialism and the consolidation of compulsory heterosexuality. This chapter looks for ways of criticizing sexual tourism without falling into a fear of "miscegenation"⁵⁷ that often characterizes nationalist condemnations of "sleeping with the enemy."⁵⁸ I also examine two Maghrebian novels that treat questions of sexual tourism, or (more generally) the sexual crossing of cultural boundaries with much more complexity than what is often seen in criticisms of sexual tourism.

The second chapter consists of a close reading of a single Maghrebian novel, Moha le fou, Moha le sage, by the Moroccan novelist, Tahar Ben Jelloun. I use this novel as an example of how Maghrebian novels can be read as allegories of reading. In contradistinction to the possible misreadings examined in the first chapter, Moha le fou, Moha le sage offers suggestions for reading the relation of theory to literature, the political role of the postcolonial writer and postcolonial literature, postcolonial subjectivity, the politics of sexuality within literature, the conflict between feminism and nationalism, and queer sexualities within the Nation. Moha's polyvocal discourse becomes a paradigm for

⁵⁷Although "miscegenation" literally means darkening the race through reproductive sexual intercourse, I use the term to denote the taboo against any interracial desire or sexuality. Phillip Brian Harper uses the term in such a way in "Private Affairs: Race, Sex, Property, and Persons," whose title in an earlier version explicitly renders his position ("Parallel Anxieties: Homosexual Panic and the Fear of Miscegenation"). Bhabha seems to use the term similarly when he describes "the fear/desire of miscegenation" (The Location of Culture 69).

⁵⁸See Robert Vasquez's 1991 article in the New York lesbian and gay weekly Outlook, "(No Longer) Sleeping with the Enemy."

the mixing of cultures, languages, and discourses that is necessary to theorize Maghrebian literature. Moha's voice, I argue, is Theory.

The third chapter reads the political function of marginal sexuality, especially in this case, homosexuality or homoeroticism, in novels by three Maghrebian writers, Rachid Boudjedra, Tahar Djaout, and Tahar Ben Jelloun. I argue that this set of texts can be used to establish a paradigm of reading sexually and politically, a paradigm suggested by Moha le fou, Moha le sage. In these post-independence works, the combat continues. Instead of opposing only colonialism, these novels also question neo-colonial relations with the former colonizer, the corruption of the new national elites, and nationalized oppression. Sometimes they also reveal past collaborations between a supposedly nationalist elite and the former colonizer. In this postcolonial combat, sexuality plays a crucial role in revealing the hypocrisy of a supposedly orthodox Muslim ruling class and in opening up the Nation into a more inclusive, heterogeneous space. In this chapter, I begin a consideration of how novelistic rewritings of history are deployed to contest official history and of the role of uncovering hidden histories, especially of sexual histories, in this rewriting of history. These novels unveil marginalized sexualities forced into the Nation's closet by official discourses of the Nation's family values and reveal the Nation itself as a queer Nation.

The fourth chapter uses this paradigm to reexamine two novels traditionally characterized as combat novels, Mohammed Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer and Kateb Yacine's Nedjma. The sexual paradigms of chapter two pave the way for rereadings of combat literature that point out how the combat, at least in the space of much Maghrebian literature, was sexual all along. In Qui se souvient de la mer, a narrative of the Algerian revolution, the struggle for national liberation is also a sexual revolution that overthrows the patriarchal order in the domestic sphere. The fires of the revolution set fire to the marital bedroom and to compulsory heterosexuality. Nedjma personifies the Nation in the character of a woman, Nedjma, who, far from embodying national virtue and purity, presents the hope of a sexually liberated nation. Nedjma also narrates a return to national

origins and to the roots of national consciousness. At the origin of the Nation in this sexual allegory of the political, Nedjma is kidnapped, veiled, and sequestered. She embodies, therefore, the conflict between nationalism and feminism. Nedjma's landscape is also littered with the traces of history's ruins. The novel articulates a way of dealing with origins and the narrative of history in ways that make the Nation not exclusive, but queer.

The fifth chapter serves as an interlude. After considering revolutionary performances or rewritings of national identity suggested in the previous chapter, I turn to Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel L'enfant de sable and its sequel, La nuit sacrée. These two novels, I argue, constitute an allegory of becoming a woman. If, according to Renan, there is violence at the origin of every nation, Ben Jelloun unveils the violence at the origin of gender. In my reading of these two novels, the law of both national and sexual identity is revealed as requiring constant reinforcement. Subversive repetition of prescribed roles offers the possibility of simultaneously rewriting the Nation and the gender of its citizens.

The sixth chapter examines the role of feminism in challenging the Nation and considers the works of two women writers from the Maghreb, Assia Djebar and Leïla Sebbar, especially in their opposition to compulsory heterosexuality. My consideration of Rich's notion of compulsory heterosexuality outside of the context in which it was written, however, must include an examination of how her theories might (or might not) translate across cultural boundaries. Djebar also envisions a Nation that includes rather than excludes women. Whereas for Kateb a woman is veiled at the Nation's origin, Djebar rewrites the Nation by unveiling women's role in national history, a role often left out of both colonialist and nationalist versions of history. Sebbar articulates a model of postcolonial feminist subjectivity in the character of Shérázade, who appears in all three novels of a trilogy. Shérázade successfully escapes all attempts to legislate her identity and to have heterosexuality forced onto her. She finds a room of her own to write her own identity, not from scratch, but from the traces and fragments of origins, national identities, and narratives of subjectivity she has inherited but cannot fully embody.

The seventh chapter begins with the possibility announced by Djébar's inclusion of autobiography into the writing of history. Whereas Ben Jelloun demonstrates that there is violence at the origin of woman, this chapter demonstrates that there is also violence at the origin of man. I examine how male childhood narratives bring back a personal history of boy's belonging to a feminine world to challenge a present masculinity. Nostalgia for this world creates a desire to relinquish masculinity, a desire of unbecoming men. Féréd Boughedir's film Halfaouine and Albert Memmi's La statue de sel point out how male childhood narratives can bring about the demise of masculinity. I return to Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer, which introduces a childhood narrative into a narrative of revolution (like Djébar's L'amour, la fantasia). Dib thereby challenges earlier nationalist criticisms of childhood narratives as being apolitical. Memmi, reread through Djébar and Dib, also illustrates how, if childhood narratives can be read as allegories of the birth of the Nation, they are very much allegories of a queer nation.

CHAPTER 1

READING AND TOURISM: SEXUAL APPROACHES TO THE MAGHREB

"The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness."

—Edward Said, Orientalism

Orientalism and Sexual Tourism

In Orientalism, Edward Said discusses the sexual attraction that the "Orient" exerted on many Westerners:

We may as well recognize that for nineteenth-century Europe, with its increasing embourgeoisement, sex had been institutionalized to a very considerable degree. On the one hand, there was no such thing as "free" sex, and on the other, sex in society entailed a web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations of a detailed and certainly encumbering sort. Just as the various colonial possessions—quite apart from their economic benefit to metropolitan Europe—were useful as places to send wayward sons, superfluous populations of delinquents, poor people, and other undesirables, so the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe. (190)

The colonization of the "Orient" not only provided a convenient vacation spot for Western tourists, it also provided a sexual playground for tourists to relieve the sexual tensions engendered by Western standards of sexual normativity. Said thus situates what I shall call sexual tourism in the context of colonialism and the Orientalist discourse that often reinforces colonial hegemonies. For the Western tourist, the availability of sex in the Orient can never merely be a matter of intimacy between two individuals in a vacuum (as if it ever could). Sex, rather, takes place in a colonial (before independence) or postcolonial (after independence) context between colonizer and colonized (or former colonizer and former colonized in a neo- or postcolonial situation).

"Oriental Sex," as Said points out, can be obtained just as easily at home: "In time 'Oriental sex' was as standard a commodity as any other available in the mass culture, with

the result that readers and writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the Orient" (190). Even after the large-scale independence of many formerly colonized countries, for example, going to the Bois de Boulogne to pick up (for pay or not) petits arabes remains a cliché in a French gay context. "Oriental sex" is readily available through organized tours to Thailand, and in American gay slang, a variety of terms exists to denote similar sexual tastes in the exotic: dinge queen, bean queen, rice queen, curry queen, snow queen, potato queen. These terms in no way imply that sexual preference for the exotic is restricted to gay communities, merely that American gay communities have developed a vocabulary to discuss and analyze the phenomenon, in ironic and parodic ways. Given the diasporas of colonized peoples into colonizing countries, Westerners find available in their own countries, a space where they can be sexual tourists.

Said also makes the connection between sexual tourism and literary discourse:

Virtually no European writer who wrote on or traveled to the Orient in the period after 1800 exempted himself or herself from this quest: Flaubert, Nerval, "Dirty Dick" Burton, and Lane are only the most notable. In the twentieth century one thinks of Gide, Conrad, Maugham, and dozens of others. What they looked for often—correctly, I think—was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden; but even that quest, if repeated by enough people, could (and did) become as regulated and uniform as learning itself. (190)

The writers he lists were not only sexual tourists in their visits to the "Orient," but they also incorporated their experience of sexual tourism into the literature. Said thus points to "Oriental sex" as a discursive practice, as a subject of narrative, as well as a purely physical, sexual phenomenon. Once sexual tourism becomes a literary practice, sexual tourists do not even need to leave their house to be... sexual tourists; they can consume literature as sexual tourists, because reading becomes another mode of sexual tourism.

In Les 1001 années de la nostalgie, the Algerian writer Rachid Boudjedra suggests that Western readings of "Oriental" texts can also constitute an act of sexual tourism with

colonialist implications. In the novel, a foreign film crew, under the auspices of the indigenous governor Bender Chah, arrives in a small North African village to produce a film version of the Arabian Nights (or Les Mille et une Nuits). Bender Chah and his brother-in-law, the king Khalijie who finances the American production, see the undertaking as a means of promoting Arab culture: "[I]ls venaient à Manama envoyés par le roi de Khajilie, coproducteur avec les étrangers de ces Mille et Une Nuits de la magnificence, pour montrer à l'univers à quel degré de raffinement la civilisation musulmane était arrivée dans le passé" (232) and "Comme il s'agissait du prestige du monde arabe, ce film sur les Mille et une Nuits devrait faire resurgir une civilisation que l'on avait tellement bafouée" (259). The rest of the population sees it as a colonizing gesture: "[L]e Gouverneur y était pour quelque chose dans ce piège du cinématographe qui visait à permettre la recolonisation en douce du village" (231). This colonization is literal—the film crew goes around raping villagers, expropriating whatever property they need to make the film, and even killing villagers to use as corpses in the film. When the villagers revolt against the American "invaders," Khalijie's armed forces bombard the village with shells. This colonization by force also has a discursive parallel; the film is an Orientalizing or exoticizing version of the Arabian Nights that objectifies the local population and figures the "Orient" as Other: "Les Mille et Une Nuits sont merveilleuses. Tout n'y est pas. Les cinéastes étaient en train d'intervertir l'histoire, de la dévergonder. Juste une fantasmagorie de marins qui ont trop bu. L'essentiel était ailleurs" (251). They use the filmic version of the Arabian Nights as a receptacle for all their Orientalist fantasies, sexual and otherwise. Yet the connection between colonialism and the exoticizing discourses of Western Orientalism consists in more than a parallel. As the filmmakers expropriate whatever they need in their colonizing cultural project, they have also stolen the very texts their film is based on: "Les manuscrits authentiques sont sous clés. Pillés par les Occidentaux. Rachetés par les derniers monarques. Ils n'ont plus que ça. Le voyeurisme" (237) and "les 250 000 manuscrits arabes éparpillés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Amérique"

(222). This is especially the case with the Arabian Nights. In the introduction to his translation of the Arabian Nights, René R. Khawar describes, in his effort to return to the source, consulting various manuscripts, all of which he found in European libraries, especially the manuscript "discovered" by Antoine Galland.¹ At the origin of Western readings of the Arabian Nights, therefore, was the theft of a text, a cultural expropriation not unlike the expropriation of lands by the French in Algeria, their primary settler colony.² The particular Western reading of the Arabian Nights that the American film constitutes becomes an allegory for colonization and/or neocolonialism.

Théophile Gautier, in Le roman de la momie, allegorizes such a textual expropriation. Lord Evandale and Dr. Rumphius, an Egyptologist, "discover" the narrative of the novel in an ancient Egyptian tomb. The story that constitutes the rest of the novel is written on the cloth strips wrapped around the female mummy they find and take home to England. The story of Le roman de la momie thus becomes available to Western readers because it was stolen from the culture that produced it. Because it is a woman's body that is stolen, translating the Egyptian text and therefore reading it involve unraveling the text from a woman's body. This cultural expropriation takes on a sexual significance, because the act of interpretive violence (undressing a woman) follows the penetration of two men into a woman's tomb, an act symbolic of both colonial invasion and heterosexual intercourse. Boudjedra's Les 1001 années de la nostalgie allegorizes Western readings of "Oriental" texts with the same sexual and colonial associations Gautier makes in Le roman de la momie. The Arabian Nights serves as a point of departure for exoticizing and Orientalizing approaches to the Orient. Translated by Galland into French in the eighteenth century, it

¹This does not mean that Galland himself was a colonialist; he was a distinguished and erudite scholar who contributed much to European understanding of Arabic literature. It merely means that, in the century that followed his work, Europe began to colonize the geographical region implicated in his area expertise. Of no fault of his own, his research could never be seen in the same way. Continued European possession of Arabic literary treasures remains possible because of colonial, then neo-colonial, relations.

²Many critics would counter that, were these texts not in European libraries, they would probably be subjected to censorship by Arab authorities if not destroyed. European possession of the texts is thus justified by an appeal to a common literary practice whose value Arabs not are supposedly unable to appreciate; protecting these texts falls into the realm of the "white man's burden."

was often the first glimpse of Arabic culture available to French children. Long before André Gide visited North Africa, he was nourished by this collection of tales. Nerval, especially, makes reference to the Arabian Nights in his travel account. This work of fiction (the Arabian Nights) thus served as a sort of tour guide for Western travel, constructed their vision of the Maghreb, and gave meaning their travel experiences. Travel to the "Orient" was the continuation of reading fictive texts.

Given the dominant paradigms of reading sexuality in Orientalist fiction described by Said and those, described by Boudjedra and Gautier, of reading Arabic texts known for their queerness and representations of polymorphous sexualities, any study of Maghrebian literature that wishes to consider representations of sexuality, especially marginal sexualities and sexual dissidence, bears the burden of the colonial use to which similar readings have been put in the past. Sexuality aside, any text taught in a Western classroom in the context of the multicultural movement risks becoming a site of reading qua tourism, that is, of being read for its titillating exotic qualities. A study of sexuality in Maghrebian literature must therefore find a way of avoiding sexual tourism if it wishes to contest colonial readings rather than reinforce them. In contrast, most critiques of sexual tourism articulated to date, while pretending on the surface to condemn colonialist relations, end up being more about an anxiety about desires that cross racial, cultural, or class boundaries. These critiques often single out homosexual sexual tourism (which I shall call homo sexual tourism hereafter) for a particularly vehement criticism that tropes homosexuality as essentially exploitative in nature. Any critique of sexual tourism that also wishes to avoid this heterosexism and fear of miscegenation must also critique critiques of sexual tourism and navigate between a rock and a hard place—the colonialist implications of sexual tourism and the sexual conservatism of most critiques of sexual tourism. This chapter thus examines a number of texts that provides allegories of reading through this double bind. Upon negotiating this double bind, one may then uncover what most critiques of homo

sexual tourism tend to hide, the collaboration between colonialism and compulsory heterosexuality.

In "Vacation Cruises; or, The Homoerotics of Orientalism," Joseph A. Boone addresses "the way in which the public and personal texts produced by both straight and non straight travelers are implicated in a colonizing enterprise that often 'others' the homosexually inscribed Arab male, a condition that obtains, albeit with differing valences and contexts, whether that 'other' is perceived with dread or desire" (90). Boone's reading of the homoerotics of Western tourism in the "Orient" differs from many critiques of homosexual sexual tourism by uncovering the homophobia of many Western heterosexual tourists:

In particular, by gridding the geographical and sexual oppositions—West/East, heterosexual/homosexual—onto and across each other's axes, I have attempted to call attention to the sexual and textual politics that complicate many Western male travelers' encounters with a homoeroticized Near East. In accounts of orientalism that assume the heterosexuality of the erotic adventurer, for example, the confrontation with the specter of homosexuality that lurks in Western fantasies of Eastern decadence destabilizes the assumed authority of the tourist as a distant, uncontaminated spectator. In narratives where the occidental traveler by virtue of his homosexuality is already the other, the presumed equivalence of Eastern homosexuality and occidental personal liberation may disguise the specter of colonial privilege and exploitation encoded in the hierarchy white man/brown boy. (104)

While I agree with all of Boone's assertions in the above passage and hope that his study will produce further analysis along these lines, this chapter's approach differs from his: instead of focusing on potential heterosexist implications of Orientalist fiction written by heterosexual French writers, this chapter considers how some of these texts reveal a relationship of collaboration between colonialism and compulsory heterosexuality: in the

colonies, the colonizer attempted to impose compulsory heterosexuality Western style to render his colonial efforts more effective, and at home, the colonial enterprise helped to consolidate compulsory heterosexuality, an institution that was just coming into being as we know it today. Instead of focusing on the colonialist implications of gay Western texts that deal with the "Orient," this chapter reveals the complexities of the interaction of colonial and sexual discourses within these texts.

Heterosexism and Critiques of Sexual Tourism

Although Boone marks his distance from "Said's failure to account for homoerotic elements in orientalist pursuits" (92), his analysis "of the complex undercurrents of those fantasized geographics of male desire that depend on, even as they resist, the homoerotics of an orientalizing discourse [with] phallocentric collusions and resistant excitations" (104) remains a part of the body of Saidian criticism of sexual tourism's colonial implications. Whereas Boone takes an anti-homophobic approach, often revealing the heterosexist implications in the homoerotics deployed by many heterosexual Western writers, other critics of homo sexual tourism use anti-colonial analysis as a disguise for heterosexism. Irene L. Szyliowicz's discussion of Pierre Loti's homosexuality in Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman is one such critique. She begins by criticizing Loti for his vision of the women he represents in his Oriental novels, a vision with both sexist and colonialist implications:

Although [Loti] was convinced that his relationships with women were based on mutual admiration and understanding, I perceive him as an exploiter of women, ready to use them to satisfy his various needs. Further, Loti formed these associations in order to better understand the people and cultures of the different countries in which he lived.... These women became the instruments by which he could gain a more penetrating perception of the area, and when he had to depart, he severed his emotional attachment with little thought of the consequences for his mistresses, their unhappiness and suffering. (13)

Szyliowicz makes a Foucauldian connection between knowledge and power whereby "penetration" takes on several meanings. Said already made the connection between knowing the Orient and having power over it and examined the sexual implications of colonial penetration:

Yet in each case the relation between the Middle East and the West is really defined as sexual: as I said earlier in discussing Flaubert, the association between the Orient and sex is remarkably persistent. The Middle East is resistant, as any virgin would be, but the male scholar wins the prize by bursting open, penetrating through the Gordian knot despite "the taxing task." Harmony is the result of the conquest of maidenly coyness; it is not by any means the coexistence of equals. (Orientalism 309)

Szyliowicz combines these two associations into a penetration that is both colonial and sexual, both physical and hermeneutic. Penetrating/understanding the Orient involves penetrating/understanding the Oriental woman. As Orientalist discourse constructs a feminized Orient for Said, according to Szyliowicz, Loti sees in the Oriental woman a site of conquest and an object of the Orientalist will to knowledge. In this sexualized paradigm of colonization and of its parallel, Orientalism, colonizing, and Orientalizing are heterosexual activities, are acts of heterosexual penetration.

Yet, instead of making such an observation, instead of making the connection between the system of compulsory heterosexuality and the colonial system, Szyliowicz blames Pierre Loti's "real-life" homosexuality for his colonizing and Orientalizing approach to the Orient and Oriental women: "Moreover, Loti frequently used women to mask a homosexual relationship or to draw attention away from an unsavory liaison. In addition, women supplied Loti with the necessary self-confidence and ego-satisfying emotions to enable him to promote his own self-image to his readers" (13–14). She even blames homosexuality for sexism in general: "Homosexuals (and we know that Loti was at least

bisexual if not homosexual) frequently need to vilify women as a compensatory mechanism to deal with their guilt for their own sexual persuasions" (58).

As Szyliowicz's example demonstrates, critiques of sexual tourism or Orientalism have been levied against homosexual and heterosexual tourists unevenly, without any consideration of differences between dominant and marginalized Western sexualities as they are transplanted into the Orient. That homophobia should be related to homo sexual tourism is never suggested. Such critiques, often inspired by Said, are thus far less nuanced than Orientalism, which at least suggests a relation between sexual repression at home and sexual tourism abroad. Often condemnations of sexual tourism take on a puritanical tone: what is insidious about sexual tourism is that it involves sex; never is there any suggestion that tourism in itself might merit interrogation and that sexual tourism might only be a smaller part of a larger manifestation of exploitation. Instead, characteristic critiques of sexual tourism rely on a phobic reaction to homosexual encounters that cross national and racial boundaries.

In Sexual Dissidence, Jonathan Dollimore, incorporating Said's connection made between Western sexual repression and sexual tourism, critiques critiques of sexual tourism such as Szyliowicz's:

The second reason why the homosexual is involved with difference is because, contrary to what the foregoing theory implies, she or he has, in historical actuality, embraced both cultural and racial difference. The relationship to these other kinds of difference has, for some homosexuals, constituted a crucial dimension of their culture. Sexually exiled from the repressiveness of the home culture..., homosexuals have searched instead for fulfillment in the realm of the foreign. Not necessarily as a second best: over and again in the culture of homosexuality, differences of race and class are intensely cathected. That this has also occurred in exploitative, sentimental, and/or racist forms does not diminish its significance; if anything it increases it. Those who move too hastily to

denounce homosexuality across race and class as essentially or only exploitative, sentimental, or racist betray their own homophobic ignorance. This crossing constitutes a complex, difficult history, one from which we can learn. (250)

Dollimore, here, does not attempt to justify sexual tourism; rather, he places it in the context of homophobia at home and interrogates the validity of certain positions from which sexual tourism (of which homo sexual tourism is often seen as the most disturbing example or even as the epitome of what is colonialist about tourism) is critiqued.

After Orientalism

Dollimore's critique of critiques of sexual tourism can be situated in the context of a more general discussion of Said's work. Since Orientalism, a number of theorists have complicated his paradigms.³ Without going into the entire body of work Orientalism has provoked, here, I shall focus on responses, direct or indirect, to the implications of Said's work for discussions of tourism, sexual or otherwise. Ali Behdad's Belated Travelers takes as its specific project the task of challenging Said:

Significant as it is, Said's monolithic notion of Orientalism as a purely reductive and biased discourse of power leaves no room for the possibility of differences among the various modes of Orientalist representation and in the field of its power relations.... It is precisely away from such essentialist views of Orientalism that I wish to travel. Although I agree with Said's compelling argument that European discourses of the Other are exercises of power that contribute to the colonial exploitation of the Orient, his insistence on the coherence and monolithic character of Orientalism seems paradoxically consistent with the logic of Orientalism/colonialism. To argue that all representations of the Orient are always produced according to the discriminating strategies of a hegemonic cultural

³Alain Roussillon provides a synopsis of the debate among Arab intellectuals in "Le débat sur l'orientalisme dans le champ intellectuel arabe." See also James Clifford's "On Orientalism," Aijaz Ahmad's polemical criticism of Orientalism in "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the work of Edward Said" and "Marx on India: A Clarification" (In Theory 159–242), Said's own response to criticism of his work in "Orientalism Reconsidered," Ali Behdad's Belated Travelers, and Orientalism after "Orientalism", a special issue of L'Esprit Créateur edited by Behdad.

discourse is to remain within the limits of the old metaphysical binary structure on which the discourse of Orientalism is predicated. (11)

Without rejecting Said's work on Orientalism, Behdad sets out to complicate it, to create distinctions Said did not make. The major distinction important for this discussion is the one between Orientalism, the discourse written by scholars who were "discovering"—that is, inventing—the "Orient," and tourism, the discourse of and for travelers who had to follow in the footsteps of Orientalism, which at least in part constructed the tourists' experiences for them. To describe this nuance, Behdad uses Althusser's concept of belatedness: "A belated reading is not an orthodox reiteration or a reapplication of a previous theory; rather, it is an interventionary articulation of a new problematic through the detour—or, perhaps more accurately, *retour*—of an earlier practice" (Belated Travelers 3). Tourism, therefore, is belated Orientalism:

The orientalists of [the mid- to late nineteenth century] undertook an exoticist project marked by an anxiety of coming after what had come before. Traveling in the Orient at a time when the European colonial power structure and the rise of tourism had transformed the exotic referent into the familiar sign of Western hegemony, these orientalists could not help but experience a sense of displacement in time and space, an experience that produced either a sense of disorientation and loss or an obsessive urge to discover an "authentic" Other. (13)

The belatedness of tourism, then, offers the possibility of a critique of Orientalism:

The necessary construction of the reading subject as a potential traveler in the tourist discourse, I will argue, problematizes the orientalist desire for knowledge and power and implies a new relation between the European traveler and the Oriental in which the "lordly" practice of signification through fieldwork is displaced by a leisurely tour of exoticism.... The discourse of tourism unsettles the authority of the Orientalist savant, but it reimplicates its shifting forces in a whole series of new and more efficient relations of power. (16)

Behdad does not recuperate tourism as a positive practice, but situates it in relation to colonialism and its discursive parallel, Orientalism. Tourism both exists thanks to colonialism and "unsettles" colonialist discourse. Behdad explicitly equates tourism with the practice of reading, thereby suggesting a reading strategy that uses tourism as the point of departure for anti-colonial critique.

In "Female Trouble in the Colonial Harem," Emily Apter articulates a similar reading strategy that uses Orientalist stereotypes to question both colonialism and Western sexual repression. She reads Orientalist representations of the "harem" "to show, on the one hand, how the sexual fantasies codified in harem texts may be used to construe an antiphallic, gynarchic model of 'what a woman wants' mediated by cultural difference, and, on the other, how the erotics of clausturation allegorize the French enclosure and domination of North Africa" (207). In other words, Apter finds in harem texts an example of exactly what the West fears the most in the Orient and causes the undoing of Orientalism and colonialist discourse; inside the harem, "native" women escape colonial domination. In "Acting Out Orientalism: Sapphic Theatricality in Turn-of-the-Century Paris," Apter describes "the use of Orientalism as an erotic cipher, a genre of theatricality in which acting 'Oriental' becomes a form of outing, and outing is revealed to be thoroughly consonant with putting on an act (each flips into the other unpredictably)" (106).

Her reading of Loti differs significantly from Szyliowicz's by demonstrating how Loti deconstructs the very gaze Szyliowicz criticized him for: "When Loti tries to test Aziyadé's love by 'playing the sultan,' forcing her to suffer his liaison with another Turkish woman, his cultural masquerade backfires as he finds himself rendered impotent by the courtesan's Europeanized dress" ("Acting Out Orientalism" 108). The Orient may have also served as the stage for Loti's coming out:

The masculinist demise, coinciding as it does with his inability to carry off the part of despotic pasha, implies that Arif-effendi's staged harem is really a convenient disguise of Loti's homoerotic closet. Aziyadé herself, childlike and

subservient, emerges as the travestied stand-in for Loti's young servant Samuel, with whom he savors "the vices of Sodom" in the brothels of the red-light district. Falling asleep on a boat with Samuel by his side, Loti floats into a wet dream punctuated by the sudden eruption of enemy fire.... Queered in this way, Loti's Turkophilia (acted "out" in real life, so to speak, through his propensity for cultural transvestism) gives a new twist to Said's characterization of the colonial traveler's perception of the Orient as a "living tableau of queerness." (108–9)⁴

Apter offers, then, the possibility of queering Orientalist texts, of bringing what seemed queer about the Orient in the Western heterosexual clichés and fantasies that constitute the Orient back to haunt the West. Her notion of queering Orientalist texts also have the added benefit of making the connection between compulsory heterosexuality and both colonialism and its Orientalist discourse.

One finds another example of the Orient as locus for coming out in Oscar Wilde's Salomé. Regenia Gagnier, in Idylls of the Market Place: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public writes, "In Salomé, the daughter of Herodias promised a young captain who was loved by a page a 'little green flower' on the condition that he release to her John the Baptist." Gagnier states that Wilde wanted some men to wear green carnations (worn by homosexuals in Paris as a secret code for recognition) to the first performance of the play in England. Because the English were unaware of this symbolism, the audience would see a young man wearing a carnation on stage and would realize they were participating in the performance. Gagnier remarks, "If [Wilde] was compelled to double as heterosexual, he had the pleasure at the premiere of watching straight men unwittingly bearing the emblem of homosexuality" (163–64). One could then read Salomé's unveiling as the coming out Wilde could not perform openly⁵ and apply Apter's reading to much more recent texts, such as Charles Ludlam's version of Flaubert's Salammbô, written for the Ridiculous

⁴Said's quotation can be found in Orientalism (103).

⁵A few years after the publication of the play, however, Wilde was forcibly outed by the English judicial system, which tried and imprisoned him for homosexual activity.

Theatrical Company whose Everett Quinton performed *Salammbô* in drag. If for Flaubert, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi," Salomé doubled as Wilde's persona, and *Salammbô* for Ludlam's and Quinton's (and for many of the gay men in the audience who share this camp identification). In Flaubert's original, set in Carthage, *Salammbô* worships the moon goddess Tanit, whose statue in the temple is veiled. Mâtho, leader of the mercenaries in revolt against Carthage, steals the veil from the temple to harness the power it is believed to wield. *Salammbô* dances with the temple snake before going to steal back the veil. Though the Derridean association of veil and hymen and the Lacanian notion that the phallus (i.e. the snake) must be veiled to signify (when the veil is stolen from the temple in *Salammbô*, the snake falls ill) are at work in Flaubert's text (or at least as twentieth-century critics read it⁶), in Ludlam's adaptation, these elements take on an added exaggeration and become camp. When Quinton dances in drag with a huge phallus, the phallus, especially as it is associated with male privilege and power, becomes a joke and is, in short, unveiled.

Though not in response to Said, Kobena Mercer also provides a revision of critiques of the exoticizing gazes at work in many examples of sexual tourism. Mercer's revision is interesting in that it involves a repositioning from an earlier position. In "Imaging the Black Man's Sex" (*Welcome to the Jungle* 171–189),⁷ Mercer criticizes Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men for their use of "the fetish of skin color in the codes of racial discourse" (183). According to Mercer's first reading, Mapplethorpe's photographs essentializes black bodies as purely sexual beings. And Mapplethorpe's photographs participate in the sexual politics of Orientalist discourse described by Said because "each image thus nourishes the racialized and sexualized fantasy of appropriating the Other's body as a virgin territory to be penetrated and possessed by an all-powerful

⁶For psychoanalytic readings of the veil in *Salammbô*, see Carol A. Mossman, "*Salammbô*: Seeing the Moon through the Veil," Sima Godfrey, "The Fabrication of *Salammbô*: The Surface of the Veil," and especially, Andrew J. McKenna, "Flaubert's Freudian Thing: Violence and Representation in *Salammbô*." For readings of male hysteria in *Salammbô*, see B. F. Bart, "Male Hysteria in *Salammbô*," and Jan Goldstein, "The Uses of Male Hysteria: Medical and Literary Discourse in Nineteenth-Century France."

⁷First published in *Photography/Politics: Two*, ed. Jo Spence, Patricia Holland, and Simon Watney (London: Comedia, 1986).

desire, 'to probe and explore an alien body'⁸ (177). In "Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary" (Welcome to the Jungle 189–219),⁹ Mercer considerably revises his first criticism: "I want to recontextualize what I previously described as the erotic objectification and aestheticization of racial difference by proposing an alternative reading that revises the assumption that 'fetishism' is necessarily a bad thing" (190). He points to a multiplicity of possible political interpretations of Mapplethorpe's work:

The photographs can confirm a racist reading as easily as they can produce an antiracist one; they can elicit a homophobic reading as easily as they can confirm a homoerotic one. Once ambivalence and undecidability are situated in the contextual relations between author, text and audiences, a cultural struggle ensues in which antagonistic efforts compete to articulate their preferred meanings in the text. (203–4)

Using the post-structuralist notion of the death of the author, Mercer argues that "certain kinds of performative utterances produce different meanings, not so much because of what is said but because of who is saying it" (204). Gay men, especially black gay men, because they inhabit a context of cultural signifiers Mapplethorpe draws on, have at their disposal the critical tools necessary to read Mapplethorpe's photographs less as an uncritical reiteration of the racist stereotypes Mercer discusses in his first reading of Mapplethorpe than as a reflection—perhaps even playful reflection—on them. Mapplethorpe can be read by "those in the know" (205) of these cultural signifiers as a critical rereading of the stereotypes he draws on. Mapplethorpe's photographs then become a sort of parody of the clichés of the sexualized black male body. Instead of contradicting his former position, Mercer sees the possibility of reading the photographs as

⁸The quotation is Edmund White's, in Mapplethorpe's Black Males (Amsterdam: Gallerie Jurka, 1983).

⁹First published in How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video, ed. Bad Object Choices (Seattle: Bay P, 1989).

carrying the same critique he articulated in his earlier essay. Though Mercer does not mention Said's Orientalism in his readings of Mapplethorpe's work, he points to the possibility of rereading texts criticized earlier for a similar exoticizing or Orientalizing gaze.

Mommies, Pedophiles and Sexual Tourists

A number of Maghrebian writers have also taken up, directly or indirectly, the question of sexual tourism. Though more directly a complex consideration of the relation between pedophilia, mothering, and feminism, Leïla Sebbar's Le pédophile et la maman: L'amour des enfants also addresses sexual tourism that some of the novel's pedophiles engages in. By separating the questions of sexual tourism, cross-racial desire, and pedophilia, Sebbar suggests the possibility of a cross-generational desire that is not exploitative, of cross-racial desire that is not tourism, and of a critique of sexual exploitation is not sexually conservative and that affirms rather than condemns the desire for alterity. Leïla Sebbar is rapidly becoming a very prominent writer in Maghrebian studies, in spite of the fact that, being born of a French mother (une Française de France) and an Algerian father and speaking French as her native language, she considers herself neither a Beure nor Algerian. Literary studies of her work, however, never mention Le pédophile et la maman, as if the sexual questions raised by the novel would violate the more prudish standards of literary studies, which prefers to confine the novel to the closets of criticism, in spite of the fact that Le pédophile et la maman may be crucial for understanding Sebbar's later novels, in which the themes of sexual tourism, pornography, and prostitution constantly recur. When these themes are taken up in literary criticism, they are usually read as a flat denunciation of sexual exploitation in postcolonial contexts. Sebbar's treatment of these issues, however, is always more complicated and sophisticated than the body of criticism on her work would leave one to believe.

The narrative of Le pédophile et la maman consists of three parts, a pedophile's journal, a mother's journal, and an exchange of letters between two feminists of the MLF. In the introduction that frames the narrative, Sebbar begins with a juxtaposition:

On dit: une mère aime ses enfants.

 un pédophile aime les enfants, garçon ou fille. (13)

In a context where the mere mention of pedophilia often provokes panic-like reaction and pleas for parents to protect their children from potential child molesters, Sebbar points out the similarities between mothers and pedophiles. In prevalent discourses the two should be enemies—pedophiles attempt to steal children from their mothers—but Sebbar disrupts this cliché by revealing what links mothers and pedophiles. Condemnations of pedophilia have in common with critiques of homo sexual tourism the fact that both discourses often rely on visions of homosexuals as child molesters by nature in the one case and of homosexuality as essentially exploitative in the other. A discussion of sexual tourism enters Sebbar's consideration of pedophilia because, given taboos against inter-generational sex in the French context, pedophiles often travel or cross cultural boundaries at home to obtain sex. The pedophile whose journal serves as the first part of the novel, however, offers a critique of sexual tourism. In one passage he quotes remarks made by one of his friends, a pedophile and sexual tourist:

Je t'ai parlé de l'Afrique du Nord. J'ai aussi connu des enfants africains, noirs. Je les adore. Ce côté animiste, cette douceur, cette félinité, La beauté d'un jeune Noir est pour moi insurpassable. Cette grâce. Certains n'aiment pas les petits Africains. Ils préfèrent dans l'ordre: les Blancs européens, les Arabes, les Asiatiques... Pour ma part, je n'établis pas de hiérarchie. Un petit Africain, c'est doux et beau comme un animal. (77)

Although this passage reverses the dominant European standards of beauty wherein racial differences are categorized according to gradations hierarchical ranked with white on top and black on bottom, and although the passage goes beyond the usual cliché of the sexual availability of the petit arabe the remarks of the pedophile's friend are especially disturbing for its animalization of bodies of color. The eponymous pedophile proceeds to criticize the colonialist implications of his friend's touristic desire: "Je lui ai expliqué combien j'étais

gêné par ce mélange de primitivisme et de mysticisme, si souvent liés chez les pédophiles tiers-mondistes, et qui prend à mes yeux une coloration colonialiste: un bon colonialisme certes, non-violent... mais où je vois du missionnaire, malgré tout" (77). His critique, however, is mitigated by a qualification and by a certain amount of compassion:

Je ne peux m'empêcher de trouver suspecte cette passion des petits Arabes... Je pense à ces coloniaux et négriers qui méprisent les indigènes et mettaient dans leur lit les filles et les garçons, nègres ou Arabes qui leur plaisaient... Je vais peut-être trop loin dans l'association; ces jeunes hommes ont de meilleurs sentiments: s'ils sont de droite, c'est une droite charitable et généreuse; s'ils sont de gauche, c'est une gauche laïque, égalitaire; s'ils sont à l'extrême gauche, c'est une extrême gauche mystique... (91)

This compassion is paralleled by that of the mother, who in her love for her own children, identifies with pedophiles. She reads the novels of Tony Duvert, an author who defends the cause of pedophiles, keeps a collection of newspaper clippings about pedophiles, and sympathizes with the radical French pedophile movement's critique of the heterosexual family unit wherein children are the private property of their biological or legal parents.

By situating the critique of sexual tourism in the voice of a pedophile and the identification with pedophilia in the voice of the mother (who bears some autobiographical resemblance to Sebbar herself), Sebbar dislodges assumptions about the pedophile/sexual tourist and the pedophile as enemy of children and, therefore, a parent's nightmare. She thus creates the possibility of a double-edged critical sword with which one can articulate a critique of sexual tourism without reinforcing the heterosexism of most such critiques and a critique of the colonial or neo-colonial implications of some sexual encounters without the abjection of non-normative sexualities in and of themselves.

Genet's Cross-Racial Desire as Political Solidarity

Sebbar's double-edged analysis can then be applied to the writings of some sexual tourists to uncover ways in which these texts articulate anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and

anti-racist positions. Jean Genet, himself sexual tourist, also had two long-term relationships with North African men, neither of whom were, strictly speaking, gay-identified or exclusively homosexual. The first, Abdallah Bentaga, son of an Algerian man and a German mother, was an acrobat and committed suicide when Genet began to neglect him for a race-car driver after an accident left Bentaga unable to perform (White 442–73). The second, Mohammed El Katrani, a Moroccan, eventually married and settled down with his wife in a house Genet built for them in Larache, Morocco. Genet considered El Katrani's son, Azzedine, as his own. When Genet died, he was buried in Larache within view of El Katrani's house, and El Katrani died within a year in an automobile accident. (White 584–635).

In an interview with Hubert Fichte, Genet discusses a Moroccan trick with the racist stereotypes sexual tourism can involve:

Maintenant, il y a aussi des chances: j'ai été au Maroc. J'ai fait la connaissance d'un jeune Marocain de vingt-quatre, vingt-cinq ans, très pauvre. Il montait tous les jours dans ma chambre. Il restait dans ma chambre. Il laissait l'argent. Il ne touchait rien du tout. Est-ce que je l'admire pour ça? Non. Je pense que c'était une ruse. Enfin, je l'admire d'avoir rusé à ce point-là.

H.F.—Après, vous l'avez amené en France?

G.—Bien sûr, oui, et il a été très habile, je ne regrette pas de l'avoir emmené en France. Dans les pays arabes, dans les pays du tiers-monde, un garçon jeune, quand il rencontre un Blanc un peu attentif à lui, il ne peut voir qu'une victime possible, qu'un homme à dépouiller et c'est normal. (L'ennemi déclaré 169)

Thus the former colonized are exploiting the former colonizers. In Genet's view, even when Moroccan tricks are not stealing, they are still thieves. The cliché maybe complicated somewhat by Genet's life-long career as a thief and his glorification of thieves in his poems, novels, and plays, but the stereotype of the Arab as thief by nature still stands.

What complicates Genet's career as a sexual tourist is his anti-racist and anti-colonialist political commitment. His play Les nègres articulates a subtle analysis of racism and another of his plays, Les paravents, is a complex depiction of the Algerian revolution against French colonialism. When Genet gave up writing, he devoted himself to two political struggles in particular, those of the American Black Panther Party and of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. He came to the US illegally to speak on behalf of the Black Panthers and was given a laisser-passer by Yasser Arafat himself to visit the camps of the Palestinian fedayeen (White 521–635). He gives a poetic written account of his political commitments with the Black Panthers and the PLO and the travels he undertook on behalf of these commitments in Le captif amoureux, and his political speeches, writings, and interviews are collected in L'ennemi déclaré. In an interview with Madeleine Gobeil for Playboy magazine, Genet explicitly associated his political involvement with his sexual attraction for men of color:

C'est [la pédérastie] qui m'a mis sur le chemin de l'écriture et de la compréhension des êtres. Je ne dis pas que cela soit tout à fait ça, mais peut-être que si je n'avais pas fait l'amour avec des Algériens, je n'aurais pas été en faveur du F.L.N. Mais non, je l'aurais été sans doute de toute façon. Mais c'est peut-être la pédérastie qui m'a fait comprendre que les Algériens étaient des hommes comme les autres. (L'ennemi déclaré 24)

In an interview with Hubert Fichte, he even states that he derived erotic pleasure from his political association with the Panthers and the Palestinians:

Je vous ai dit au cours d'entretiens précédents ce qui étaient avouable, les raisons avouables, maintenant, ce qui est plus difficilement avouable, c'est que les Panthers sont des Noirs américains, les Palestiniens sont des Arabes. J'aurais du mal à expliquer pourquoi les choses se font comme ça, mais ces deux groupements ont une charge érotique très forte. Je me demande si j'aurais pu adhérer à des mouvements révolutionnaires qui soient aussi justes que—je les

trouve très justes, le mouvement des Panthers et le mouvement des Palestiniens— mais cette adhésion, cette sympathie, est-ce qu'elle n'est pas commandée en même temps par la charge érotique que représente le monde arabe dans sa totalité ou le monde noir américain, pour moi, pour ma sexualité? (L'ennemi déclaré 156)

Genet, perhaps more than any other French writer, has provoked a great deal of interest and a number of positive writings from Maghrebians: Mohammed Choukri's¹⁰ Jean Genet in Tangier; Tahar Ben Jelloun's "Pour Genet," "Jean Genet avec les Palestiniens," his contribution to the "Dossier Jean Genet" (Masques 12), and his interview in L'ennemi déclaré (207–11); Edmond Amran El Maleh's Jean Genet: Le captif amoureux et autres essais; Abdelkebir Khatibi's "Ultime dissidence de Genet" (Figures de l'étranger 129–200).¹¹ Many of these writings focus on Genet's political commitment without mentioning his erotic attachments. It is Kobena Mercer who has most directly asked the questions that Genet inspires in a consideration of sexual tourism: [cut quotes]

Under what conditions does eroticism mingle with political solidarity? When does it produce an effect of empowerment? And when does it produce an effect of disempowerment? When does identification imply objectification and when does it imply equality?... Genet's affective participation in the political construction of imagined communities suggests that the struggle for democratic agency always entails the negotiation of ambivalence subjectively. (Welcome to the Jungle 219)

According to Mercer Genet's political solidarities with the Black Panthers led "to a radically different subject-position which does not attempt to master or assimilate difference, but which speaks from a position of equality as part of a shared struggle to decolonize inherited models of subjectivity" (Welcome to the Jungle 304). In Genet's case, erotic desire became the basis for not only political action but also an interrogation of his own

¹⁰Choukri is the author of Le pain nu, translated from the Arabic into French by Tahar Ben Jelloun and into English by Paul Bowles.

¹¹On Ben Jelloun's interest in Genet, see also Thomas Spear's "Politics and Literature: An Interview with Tahar Ben Jelloun."

subjectivity, and therefore, of white subjectivity in general. His erotic attachment to the Other led to a questioning of how subjectivity has become constructed as a white category and to the possibility of breaking the white monopoly on subject positions from which one can have a voice.

Barthes's Deconstruction of Tourism

Like Genet, Roland Barthes was another twentieth-century gay male writer who engaged in sexual tourism and articulated his experiences into literature. Barthes describes his sexual adventures in Morocco in his posthumously published *Incidents*, especially in the section entitled "Incidents," which is a series of short *aperçus* of Morocco, Moroccans, and (especially) Moroccan men and his interaction with them.¹² Many of these *aperçus* are sexual in nature and involve Barthes's negotiations with Moroccan men for sex: "Petit instituteur de Marrakech: 'Je ferai tout ce que vous voudrez,' dit-il, plein d'effusion, de bonté et de complicité dans les yeux. Et cela veut dire: je vous niquerai, et cela seulement" (53–54). As in the previous citation, often Barthes's reflection is on the linguistic aspect of sexuality, desire, sexual tourism: "Démonstration de la pertinence phonologique: un jeune vendeur de bazar (d'un air engageant): tu/ti (non pertinent) veux tapis/taper (pertinent)?" (31). Procuring sexual partners as a sexual tourist is a matter of textual interpretation. But is this interpretation any different from that of cruising at home? If there is a difference, it would be that in sexual tourism one interprets texts that are less "home-grown" (that is, native to Morocco, in this case) than a set of clichés one brings along on one's trip, the clichés that make up Orientalist discourse or even racist stereotypes.

¹²In his introduction to *Aziyadé*, Barthes uses the notion of the "incident" to describe Loti's narrative technique. Barthes thus makes especially clear his autobiographical identification with Loti: Ce qui est raconté, ce n'est pas une aventure, ce sont des incidents; il faut prendre le mot dans un sens aussi mince, aussi pudique que possible. L'incident, déjà beaucoup moins fort que l'accident (mais peut-être plus inquiétant) est simplement ce qui tombe doucement, comme une feuille, sur le tapis de la vie; c'est ce pli léger, fuyant, apporté au tissu des jours; c'est ce qui peut être à peine noté: une sorte de degré zéro de la notation, juste ce qu'il faut pour écrire quelque chose. (iv)

In some passages, Barthes reproduces racist stereotypes so accurately that one can only assume that he has accepted them as "truth." The "incident" that most blatantly betrays a racist stereotype is the following:

Dans la rue Samarine, j'allais à contre-courant du fleuve humain. J'eus le sentiment (rien d'érotique) qu'ils avaient tous un zob et que tous ces zobs, au rythme de ma marche, s'égrénaient comme un objet manufacturé qui se détache en cadence du moule. Dans ce flot, mais vêtue de la même étoffe rugueuse, des mêmes couleurs, des mêmes haillons, de temps en temps, une carence de zob.
(53)

This passage could be used as a text-book example of Fanon's description of the racist sexualization of black, male bodies: "[O]n n'aperçoit plus le nègre, mais un membre: le nègre est éclipsé. Il est fait membre. Il est penis" (Peau noire, masques blancs 137). Barthes uses an Arab word for penis, thereby strengthening the essential link between Arab and penis. In the section, "Soirées de Paris," where Barthes describes his evenings of cruising in Paris, he repeats this stereotype: "Paradoxe pur: un Arabe pour qui existe le zob d'un autre et non seulement le sien (qui est son ego)" (103). Yet Barthes seems also to be able to turn the stereotypes of sexual tourism against the sexual tourist himself with a sense of humor typical of the "Incidents": "'Papa,' vieil Anglais charmant et dingue, supprime by sympathy son lunch pendant le Ramadan (by sympathy pour les petits garçons circoncis)" (32). Here Barthes captures the cliché of what the logic of American gay slang might dub a couscous queen, and again, unveiling the cliché is a matter of interpretation. The Englishman states he is going without lunch in solidarity with the practicing Muslims around him, but Barthes decodes this seemingly noble action as concealing the desires of a sexual tourist. Barthes's interpretation of the gesture (enclosed within parentheses) serves as the punch line to a gesture that he reveals to be a cliché. By unveiling the stereotype, Barthes turns the sexual tourist into the butt of a joke. In another "incident," he comments on the stereotypical aspect of his own vision of Morocco: "Une fille me mendie: 'Mon

père est mort. C'est pour acheter un cahier, etc.' (Le moche de la mendicité, c'est l'empoisement des stéréotypes.)" (55). In Incidents, therefore, sexual tourism involves sex with a stereotype; rather than crossing boundaries, the European sexual tourist makes love with the cliché s/he brings him/her.

Barthes elaborates the notion of tourism as visiting what one knows already, visiting a place constructed by European discourse, in L'empire des signes, in which he describes his travels to Japan. While one should be careful not to assimilate Japan, which is not a former colony, with the Maghreb, regardless of however both have been lumped under the vague rubric of the "Orient," Orientalist discourse has constructed Japan as sufficiently other to the West to allow a number of conclusions about sexual tourism even if the same economic disparities do not exist between the tourist and the country s/he is visiting. Barthes declares in his introduction that he is not visiting a "real" country and its culture but a fiction of his own writing:

Si je veux imaginer un peuple fictif, je puis lui donner un nom inventé, le traiter déclarativement comme un sujet romanesque, fonder une nouvelle Garabagne, de façon à ne compromettre aucun pays réel dans ma fantaisie (mais alors c'est cette fantaisie même que je compromets dans les signes de la littérature). Je puis ainsi, sans prétendre en rien représenter ou analyser la moindre réalité (ce sont les gestes majeurs du discours occidental), prélever quelque part dans le monde (là-bas) un certain nombre de traits (mot graphique et linguistique), et de ces traits former délibérément un système. C'est ce système que j'appellerai le Japon.

L'Orient et l'Occident ne peuvent donc être pris ici comme des "réalités" que l'on essaierait d'approcher et d'opposer historiquement, philosophiquement, culturellement, politiquement. (7)

When Barthes visits Japan, he is visiting a set of idées reçues that Said describes as constituting Orientalist discourse. As Abdelkebir Khatibi writes, "D'un coup et dès le début du livre, il écarte tout naturalisme, toute représentation folklorique de l'étranger, de

celui qui lui est étranger. Représentation qui domine les littératures européennes: elle oppose l'Orient à l'Occident en tant que deux identités métaphysiques, celle de la raison et celle du sensible et du sacré" (Figures de l'étranger 65). And Trinh T. Minh-ha also describes how Barthes, by visiting Japan, questions European discourses:

[W]hat he seeks here is not to decipher Asia, but rather to assess his own position vis-à-vis exoticism, ethnocentrism, and, above all, to assess his own hermeneutic posture, his role as decoder. Consequently, he takes great care in L'Empire to situate his work and to set aside any desire to conform to the "real." He neither claims nor desires to analyze an oriental culture.... Suspended between the fictive and the real, Barthes's Japan parries or blocks any criticism based on the vraisemblable. We read the author reading Asia.... The unknown he confronts is neither Japan nor China but his own language, and through it all of the West. ("The Plural Void" 220)¹³

Yet Barthes's examination of Orientalist discourse, unlike Said's, is a self-examination. Unlike Said, who examines this discourse from the outside, Barthes examines it from within. He examines how he has been formed in and through Orientalist and colonialist discourse. Like the French writers of the nineteenth century who visited Africa with the Arabian Nights as their tour guides, Barthes comes to Japan with the cumbersome baggage of Western Orientalist discourse. He examines how European subjectivity is necessarily entangled with these discourses. He even seems to take pleasure in inhabiting it. L'empire des signes takes its title from the quasi-pornographic Japanese film L'empire des sens. The set of signs that constitutes Japan is thus a sensual, a sexual set of signs, a system of signs that gives/elicits pleasure, desire, arousal.

In L'empire des signes, Barthes articulates a philosophy of sexual tourism around what he labels the rendez-vous. The following passage is reproduced handwritten in the text: "Ouvrez un guide de voyage: vous y trouverez d'ordinaire un petit lexique, mais ce

¹³On the question of Barthes and Orientalism, see also Diana Knight's "Barthes and Orientalism."

lexique portera bizarrement sur les choses ennuyeuses et inutiles: la douane, la poste, l'hôtel, le coiffeur, le médecin, les prix. Cependant, qu'est-ce que voyagez? Rencontrer. Le seul lexique important est celui du rendez-vous" (23). Barthes follows up on this passage several times by making up for this lack in typical tourist guides and giving a "lexique du rendez-vous." L'empire des signes thus serves as Barthes's ideal tourist guide to Japan and even suggests that any Western "study" of the Orient (supposedly academic and objective) is a potential tourist guide. Barthes first gives the Japanese words necessary for the preliminaries of suggesting a rendez-vous, the translations of "rendez-vous," "tous les deux," "où?" and "quand?" (27). Then he gives the Japanese words necessary for confirming the rendez-vous, "ici," "ce soir," "aujourd'hui," "à quelle heure," "demain," and "quatre heures" (33). The surprise comes when Barthes gives the necessary words for breaking off or putting off the rendez-vous, "peut-être," "fatigué," "impossible," and "je veux dormir" (51). The leitmotiv of the rendez-vous in L'empire des signes parallels the rendez-vous Barthes sets up then breaks off in "Soirée de Paris." In traveling to Japan, Barthes expects a rendez-vous with the "real" Japan. The Japan of Barthes's expectation, however, is a construction of the Orientalist discourse in which he has been educated. His visit to Japan is then a rendez-vous manqué with another culture, a rendez-vous that cannot but fail.

Les 1001 années de la nostalgie: An Allegory of Reading the Sexual

If Boudjedra's Les 1001 années de la nostalgie, allegorizes European readings of Arabic texts that justify an Orientalizing vision of the Arab world and even colonialism, it also performs a counter-reading of the same texts, which Maghrebians may then use as a starting point for a revolt against European exoticizing readings and colonialism. The villagers, lead by Mohamed S.N.P (sans nom patronymique), revolt against the invaders/filmmakers/readers of Arabic literature, expel them from the country, and overthrow the governor. Mohamed takes his inspiration for his revolt in the texts of the past. He reads the texts of the historian Ibn Khaldoun, erotic classical literature in Arabic,

and the scholarly works of Arab scientists and mathematicians. In particular, he studies the histories of past revolutions in the Islamic world as a source for tactics in the armed struggle against the American presence. The nostalgia of the novel's title contains both colonialist and anti-colonialist possibilities. It is the Orientalizing nostalgia of the filmmakers' gaze directed at a glorious past. It is also Mohamed's nostalgia, which guides him to study classical and erotic Arabic texts and to use these readings as part of an anti-imperialist project. Les 1001 années de la nostalgie itself also takes as its inspiration the Arabian Nights. Boudjedra's novel is replete with fantastical elements reminiscent of the Arabic classic: flying carpets abound, Mohamed controls his shadow's position regardless of the sun's position, women grow silkworms between their legs, and a polar iceberg is transported to North Africa to cool off the weather. Boudjedra, therefore, does not reject the texts that have inspired Orientalist readings; he rereads them, and his rereadings lead to both an anti-Orientalist criticism and an anti-imperialist politics. His counter-reading serves as an example to anyone who seeks to examine sexuality within Maghrebian literature.

Flaubert's Sexual Tour to Egypt

One element of homo sexual tourism that critics often fail to consider is its availability to heterosexual tourists who, conforming to sexual normativity at home, travel to the "Orient" to "play" so that their adventures will not endanger their heterosexual privilege. Gustave Flaubert was one such tourist, who during his travels to Egypt, took advantage of "Oriental sex." Said discusses at length Flaubert's liaison with the dancer Kuchuk Hanem who is often said to have served as the model for Salammbô's dance and for Salomé's in "Hérodiade" (Orientalism 6, 186–8, 207). Boone only slightly amends Said's account to point out that a boy dancer first caught Flaubert's eyes ("Vacation Cruises" 92). What neither critic reveals, however, is Flaubert's homosexual experience in Egypt. In a letter to Louis Bouilhet, Flaubert writes,

Puisque nous causons de bardaches, voici ce que j'en sais. Ici c'est très bien porté. On avoue sa sodomie et on en parle à table d'hôte. Quelquefois on nie un

petit peu, tout le monde alors vous engueule et cela finit par s'avouer. Voyageant pour notre instruction et chargés d'une mission par le gouvernement, nous avons regardé comme de notre devoir de nous livrer à ce mode d'éjaculation. L'occasion ne s'en est pas encore présentée, nous la cherchons pourtant. C'est aux bains que cela se pratique. On retient le bain pour soi... et on enfle son gamin dans une des salles. —Tu sauras du reste que tous les garçons du bain sont bardaches. (572)

In a later letter to Bouilhet, he writes, "A propos, tu me demandes si j'ai consommé l'œuvre des bains. Oui, et sur un jeune gaillard gravé de la petite vérole et qui avait un énorme turban blanc. Ça m'a fait rire, voilà tout. Mais je recommencerai. Pour qu'une expérience soit bien faite, il faut qu'elle soit réitérée" (638). The fact that Flaubert openly admits his homosexual experience and his desire to repeat it suggests a lack of guilt or threat to his heterosexual identity posed by Oriental homosex.

As Proust writes in A la recherche du temps perdu, Oriental homosex can play a specifically heterosexual role in Orientalist discourse: "M. de Charlus, se trouvant dans une ville d'où les hommes déjà faits, qui avaient été jusqu'ici son goût, avaient disparu, faisait comme certains Français, amateurs de femmes en France et vivant aux colonies: il avait par nécessité d'abord pris l'habitude, et ensuite le goût des petits garçons" (4: 349). In the colonies, the colonizer—a heterosexual at home—finds himself a consumer of Oriental homosex abroad. The "Orient" is therefore the place where even straight Westerners can engage in homosexual acts and still be straight. And Oriental homosex is available to the hetero-sexual tourist, whose heterosexual identity is in no way questioned or threatened by his consumption of it. Flaubert, in no way considered a homosexual, open or repressed, was one such sexual tourist.

Balzac in the Colonial Harem

Honoré de Balzac exemplifies another way Western heterosexuality can appropriate Oriental homosex (colonize it, so to speak) for the benefit of its own discursive

consolidation. In Balzac's La fille aux yeux d'or, Henri de Marsay falls in love with Paquita, the eponymous character, who is sequestered in an Orientalized harem. Paquita is Spanish (almost Arab but not quite) and not Oriental, but troped as Oriental, she marks the availability of Oriental sex in Paris. De Marsay manages to penetrate the harem, have an affair with Paquita, and plot her rapture to kidnap her from her master. As the plot unravels, the reader, as well as de Marsay, learns that her master is not Don Hijos, the Marquis de San-Réal, owner of the house where she is kept, but the Marquise, who kills Paquita in a fit of jealousy at the end. The Oriental harem in Paris thus doubles as a closet enclosing lesbian intrigue. The plot of La fille aux yeux d'or, however, firmly situates this "lesbian drama" in a heterosexual narrative. It is the mystery surrounding Paquita that drives de Marsay's desire. The revelation of lesbian drama at the end of the narrative gives this mystery its full meaning. Lesbian drama in La fille aux yeux d'or thus at least partially serves to stimulate heterosexual desire and the penetration of the Oriental harem (a penetration sexually paralleling colonial invasion). As Malek Alloula discusses in the section "Le saphisme oriental" of his study Le harem colonial (64–68), Western heterosexual fantasies about lesbianism within the colonial harem are a trope of Orientalist discourse:

Univers de la perversion généralisée et de l'illimitation absolue de la jouissance, le sérail apparaît bien comme le lien idéal du fantasme dans toute sa contagieuse splendeur.... Le saphisme viendrait de la sorte érotiser davantage l'idée de harem—tout au moins telle que l'élabore et y croit l'Occident. Il en souligne la polysexualité: à l'homosexualité masculine, à la zoophilie et à d'autres vices s'ajoute désormais l'homosexualité féminine.

Mais le harem n'est pas que cela: son extension dans l'imaginaire occidental fait intervenir d'autres éléments. Il est un univers sans hommes. Cette carence du phallus, le Grand Seigneur—qui ne peut jouir de toutes les femmes de son

sérail ni les satisfaire—et les eunuques—négatif absolu de principe mâle—en sont les symboles éloquents. (64)

Thus, lesbianism is more than merely the counterpart to male homosexuality as a component of the "living tableau of queerness," as Said characterizes the Orient (103); lesbianism poses an extra challenge to phallic power, something a man can interrupt if he is a real man. The Oriental harem, guarded as it is, is already difficult to penetrate (both physically and hermeneutically). As a challenge to male desire, it also stimulates that desire and increases it. Lesbianism, or the male fantasy of it, within the harem, drives on male desire even further. Regardless of how much de Marsay's heterosexuality is threatened inside the harem (as he crosses into the realm of the cultural Other, he must also cross-dress¹⁴), he still penetrates the harem with a violence paralleling that of colonialism. In Orientalist discourse, the Orient is troped as feminine, and colonial conquest is figured as a rape. The violence of colonial penetration, therefore, is heterosexual. Balzac's use of lesbianism also resembles the function of lesbianism in Western pornography produced for heterosexual men. Unlike male homosexuality, lesbian acts abound, but only to tease the heterosexual man. Representations of lesbianism in this context, as lesbians often point out, usually have very little to do with the representation of lesbian desire or with lesbian visibility and very much to do with male heterosexual desire. (Fatma Aït Sabbah describes a similar role for lesbianism in classical erotic literature written in Arabic.) Critiques of homosexual Orientalism, however, rarely take into consideration how representations of homosexuality in Orientalist fantasies can serve very heterosexual purposes.

Maupassant's Allegory of Hetero-Colonialism

¹⁴In "Rereading Femininity," Shoshana Felman argues that, "depicting both the interplay and the conflict between homosexual and heterosexual loves, the text at once explores and puts in question the very structure of opposition between the sexes, as well as the respective definitions of masculinity and femininity" (22). Marjorie Garber, in *Vested Interests*, makes a connection between cross dressing that crosses gender boundaries and that which crosses cultural ones. Not surprisingly, it is in the Orient that such a connection can easily be made, as is evidenced by her chapter "The Chic of Araby: Transvestism and the Erotics of Cultural Appropriation" (304–52). Ali Behdad also makes a connection between tourism and cross-dressing in his discussion of Flaubert's dressing as native (*Belated Travelers* 59–60) and of Isabelle Eberhardt ("Allahou Akbar! He is a Woman: Colonialism, Transvestism, and the Orientalist Parasite," *Belated Travelers* 113–32).

Finally, Guy de Maupassant's novel Bel-Ami allegorizes Orientalism's contribution to the consolidation of compulsory heterosexuality. Georges Duroy, nicknamed Bel-Ami by a girl character in the novel, desires to climb the social ladder of Paris. He begins as a journalist writing an account of his participation in the French military campaign in Algeria. As he has difficulty beginning his task, his friend, Forestier, asks his wife to help Duroy. Instead of helping him articulate his own thoughts, she ends up writing the article:

Elle imaginait maintenant les péripéties de la route, peindrait des compagnons de voyage inventés par elle, et ébauchait une aventure d'amour avec la femme d'un capitaine d'infanterie qui allait rejoindre son mari.

Puis, s'étant assise, elle interrogea Duroy sur la topographie de l'Algérie, qu'elle ignorait absolument. En dix minutes, elle en sut autant que lui, et elle fit un petit chapitre de géographie politique et coloniale pour mettre le lecteur au courant et le bien préparer à comprendre les questions sérieuses qui seraient soulevées dans les articles suivants.

Puis elle continua par une excursion dans la province d'Oran, une excursion fantaisiste, où il était surtout question des femmes, des Mauresques, des Juives, des Espagnoles.

—Il n'y a que ça qui intéresse, disait-elle. (46)

Though journalism is often considered among the most referential genres of writing, the most realist, here, accurately representing a referent is much less important than reproducing a set of recognizable idées reçues concerning the Orient. This is the task Said ascribes to Orientalist discourse, and in fact, the Orient is nothing more than this set of idées reçues. In this piece of journalism, the parallel Said makes between colonialism and Orientalist discourse is absolutely clear. The producer of the article (at least the person who gives it a signature) also participated in the military conquest of Algeria, and therefore the novel associates writing about Algeria with colonization. Yet the collaborative project of producing Orientalist discourse serves another function in the narrative of Bel-Ami; it

cements a future heterosexual union, which is part of moving Duroy up the social ladder. Mme Forestier later becomes one in the series of women Duroy uses to increase his social position (ultimately he changes his name to Du Roy, marking his arrival in the Parisian upper class). Bel-Ami thus tells the tale of how colonial exploits (Duroy killed three Arabs in Algeria), when retold in narrative form, contribute to a sexual exploit, the conquest of a woman as trophy. Bel-Ami suggests that not only did heterosexuality serve as a tool in colonization, as I have pointed out above, but also that colonialism was a part of consolidating heterosexuality "as we know it today." Flaubert shows how Oriental homosex can serve as the escape hatch for activities Western heterosexuality abjects. In the Orient, the Western heterosexual can engage in homosex without threatening his heterosexuality or compulsory heterosexuality in general.

Colonialism and Heterosexuality

Nationalist rejections of homosexuality that often inspire critiques of sexual tourism rely on a constructionist model of homosexuality, as not inherent in every human society, but as constructed by a particular society—Western and bourgeois—which exports it to the rest of the world. This version of social construction, however, conveniently leaves out half of its implications. In the Foucauldian paradigm, sexuality in a modern, capitalist, Western society is defined by a homo/hetero binary whereby all individuals are divided up according to their exclusive sexual orientation towards members of the same or the opposite sex. Both homosexuality and heterosexuality are constructed at the same time. (Actually, heterosexuality comes just a bit later.)¹⁵ In a society without homosexuality, therefore, there would be no heterosexuality either. Yet certain nationalist discourses use the Foucauldian paradigm with a slippery logic. A statement such as, "There is no homosexuality in Africa," which could be true in the strictest Foucauldian sense, comes to

¹⁵Cf. David M. Halperin: "Moreover, if homosexuality didn't exist before 1892, heterosexuality couldn't have existed either (it came into being, in fact, like Eve from Adam's rib, eight years later), and without heterosexuality, where would all of us be right now?" (One Hundred Years of Homosexuality 17).

imply, "There is no sex between members of the same sex in Africa," which blatantly denies all evidence to the contrary.¹⁶

Sue Houchins has pointed out how the statement, "There is no homosexuality in Africa," regardless of how true it is, detracts from fully understanding the role of homophobia in colonialism. According to the Foucauldian chronology of the development of homosexuality, homosexuality was coming into existence at approximately the same time as the scramble for Africa. Yet, if homosexuality came to Africa with colonialism, so did homophobia. The argument, "There is no homosexuality in Africa," which makes claims to inscribing itself into an anti-racist or anti-colonialist struggle, can critique one aspect of colonialism only by relying on another—homophobia. Houchins points out that a major part of colonialist discourse was to trope Africans as sexually uncontrollable, as wildly sexual, as polymorphously perverse, a description Freud reserves for children (colonialist accounts of African sexuality are thus also a way of infantilizing colonized peoples). Colonialism, then, undertook several missions, the civilizing mission, missionary evangelization, and conversion of natives to the missionary position (what Houchins calls, in "A Family Matter," the "pressures of the missionary position"). Colonialism, with its own set of family values, undertook, if not a systematic destruction of the extended family, at least a vast reduction of its important political, social, and economic functions. For example, in its expropriation of Algerian lands to allot them to

¹⁶For bibliographical information on this topic see the sections "Islam" and "Africa, Sub-Saharan" in Wayne R. Dynes's extensive bibliography, *Homosexuality: A Research Guide* (156–66, 204–9). See also the chapters "Homosexual Relations in Kinship-Structured Societies," "Inequality and the State: Homosexual Innovations in Archaic Civilizations," and "Early Civilizations: Variations on Homosexual Themes" in David F. Greenberg's *The Construction of Homosexuality* along with the numerous references he provides to these chapters and T. Dunbar Moodie's "Migrancy and Male Sexuality on the South African Gold Mines." It is also important to make a distinction between North African and Sub-Saharan African uses of the statement, "There is no homosexuality in Africa." While the claim has been used on both sides of the Sahara, the southern variant can blame not only the West but also North Africa and the Arab invasion for importing homosexuality. Rachid Boudjedra's *Les 1001 années de la nostalgie* provides an interesting reversal of this claim. When the governor passes a law outlawing homosexual marriages, villagers learn about the existence of homosexuality for the first time. (Homosexuality thus comes into existence simultaneously with its repression in a Foucauldian way.) They later learn that the Governor passed the law to detract attention from the male, black African immigrant workers whom he has hired and who are marrying among themselves.

French settlers, French colonialism destroyed the traditional property system where parcels of land were held by kinship units and not by individuals.¹⁷ The effect of this violence done to the pre-colonial property system was to take away the extended family's economic function, and I would describe the systematic attack on the extended family as a form of heterosexualization. Heterosexuality thus played an important political, economic, and even military role in the workings of colonialist expropriation. Colonized school children, when learning about the "family" in colonial schools, were bombarded with images of maman knitting in a rocking chair by the fireplace, papa reading the journal in his fauteuil, snow on the ground outside, and a Christmas tree by the window. That these images had no relevance in the traditional Algerian context was not taken into consideration by French educators; colonial school children were nevertheless subjected to this colonial pedagogy. The purpose of colonial pedagogy was to impose the value of the nuclear family, which was central to the consolidation of heterosexuality. If, as certain nationalist discourses claim, colonialism imposed homosexuality on Africa, it also imposed heterosexuality, what Ben Jelloun refers to as "la phallocratie hétérosexuelle" (La plus haute des solitudes 73).¹⁸ One does not come without the other. There are, however, no nationalist discourses that decry the colonial imposition of heterosexuality. And the homophobia that constituted a major part of the heterosexuality brought to Africa by colonialism underlies nationalist discourses that definitionally exclude homosexuality from the Nation as well as critiques of sexual tourism that rely on these nationalist discourses.

¹⁷Marnia Lazreg, in The Emergence of Classes in Algeria, describes in detail both the pre-colonial system and how it was dismantled by French colonialism.

¹⁸Ben Jelloun limits the applicability of this expression to France.

CHAPTER 2

MOHA, THE THEORY MACHINE

Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of
the father-stuff,
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung,

Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.
--Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

If, since such work's as Moraga's Loving in the War Years and Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera, the separate categories of race, gender, nationality, class, and sexuality are no longer sufficient to articulate identity, I would also suggest that it is no longer possible, when reading and interpreting postcolonial literature, to merely pick one theory from the Pantheon of Theories that currently inform academic discourses of literary criticism.¹ In the preface to Belated Travelers, Ali Behdad writes: "I have used theoretical texts from various 'fields' of knowledge—including anthropology, literary theory, history, philosophy, and psychoanalysis—considering them, as Gilles Deleuze has suggested, as 'a box of tools' to be used only when they prove useful and only when they add something to other areas of inquiry" (viii–ix). Behdad's approach points to a border crossing between theories, a theoretical métissage or créolité.² In Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture, Françoise Lionnet turns métissage (literally a mixing of races through sexual reproduction) into not only a cultural practice but also a textual and critical one:

¹Cf. Said's description of the state of American academic criticism: "Jargons of an almost unimaginable rebarbateness dominate their styles. Cults like post-modernism, discourse analysis, New Historicism, deconstruction, neo-pragmatism transport them into the country of the blue; an astonishing sense of weightlessness with regard to the gravity of history and individual responsibility fritters away attention to public matters, and to public discourse" (Culture and Imperialism 303). The question is then how to use important lessons of poststructuralist theoretical innovations without turning one or another theory into a metaphysics.

²For an articulation of créolité as a form of postcolonial identity, see Eloge de la créolité by Barnabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant. For the related concept of antillanité, see Edouard Glissant, "Pour l'antillanité," Le discours antillais (421–39).

Métissage is a form of bricolage, in the sense used by Claude Lévi-Strauss, but as an aesthetic concept it encompasses far more: it brings together biology and history, anthropology and philosophy, linguistics and literature. Above all, it is a reading practice that allows me to bring out the interreferential nature of a particular set of texts, which I believe to be of fundamental importance for the understanding of many postcolonial cultures. If, as Teresa de Lauretis has pointed out, identity is strategy, then métissage is the fertile ground of our heterogeneous and heteronomous identities as postcolonial subjects. (8)

Lionnet uses a play on words to describe a "mé-tissage" (29) or a weaving of voices.³ The eponymous character of Tahar Ben Jelloun's Moroccan novel, Moha le fou, Moha le sage, produces such a métissage of voices, a métissage, I argue, that becomes the voice of theory.

Moha, a babbling fool and madman, also speaks words of wisdom. Like the poetic subject of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," quoted in the epigraph to this section, Moha serves as the conduit for many marginalized whose voices, which, otherwise silenced, find an outlet through him. He lends his "voix plurielle" (Saïgh Boustia 43) to other characters: "La voix de Moha est épisodiquement habitée par d'autres voix auxquelles elle offre son hospitalité" (Saïgh Boustia 43).⁴ His rantings constitute a biting critique of post-independence Maghrebien governments as well as a paradigm of postcolonial subjectivity. Moha's subjectivity is constructed through cross-identifications, métissage, and a pastiche of voices and identities. Like Anzaldúa and Moraga, he crosses borders, especially those between himself and others, and formulates his own identity through the articulation of others' identities, even and especially when these other identities should conflict with his

³Lionnet expands on Glissant's discussion of métissage in Le discours antillais (250–52, 462–63). The notion of métissage as a form of tissage is suggested in the following sentence by Glissant: "La poétique du métissage est celle même de la Relation: non linéaire et non prophétique, tissé d'ardues patiences, de dérives incompréhensibles" (251, my emphasis). For a further discussion of métissage, see Françoise Lionnet's forthcoming book, Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity.

⁴Her mention of hospitality recalls the title of Ben Jelloun's study of French racism, ironically entitled Hospitalité française: Racisme et immigration maghrébine.

own. It may be less surprising that a political critique can offer a model of personal subjectivity given the feminist slogan of the '70s, "The personal is political." Following Nancy K. Miller's assertion, "If one of the original premises of seventies feminism (emerging out of sixties slogans) was that 'the personal is political,' eighties feminism has made it possible to see that the personal is also the theoretical: the personal is part of theory's material" (*Getting Personal* 21), I shall argue that *Moha le fou, Moha le sage* also offers, through an individual's story, a theorization of the postcolonial writer's role in society and of ways of reading postcolonial texts. In the Pantheon of Theories, the academic reader finds a wide selection of theories and methods to guide her textual approaches: feminist theories, Marxist theories, postcolonial theories, psychoanalytic theories, structuralist theories, poststructuralist theories, constructionist theories, deconstructionist theories, postmodern theories, queer theories, and the methods of Africana and other ethnic studies. While I am especially interested in crossing the boundaries between queer theory and postcolonial studies in this study, a more accurate description of my theoretical project would be a pastiche, a *méissage*, a *créolité* of theories for which Moha serves as the privileged site.

Moha, as a model of the postcolonial writer, also offers a paradigm for understanding the role of sexuality in postcolonial literature. Like the poetic voice envisioned by Whitman, Moha lifts the veil on "forbidden voices... of sexes and lusts." The task of unveiling as a duty of the postcolonial writer connects *Moha* to Ben Jelloun's description of unveiling in "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb" and advances postcolonial writing as a sexual endeavor. The postcolonial writer is not just any traitor to the Nation as conceived by the ruling class, s/he is a sexual traitor. In *Moha le fou, Moha le sage*, Moha projects sexuality (as one projects projectiles, bombs, rockets, shells) into the public sphere, onto the public square, and thus airs dirty laundry in public. If, after Barthes, any theory of writing might also be a theory of reading, I would also suggest *Moha* offers a way of reading Maghrebian literature to students of postcolonial literature.

In calling Moha a theory machine, I am taking a cue from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who in L'anti-Œdipe, rewrite the Marxist conceptualization of production to include desire and reproduction. The family becomes a unit of production, reproducing itself, children, and above all, the Oedipus complex as a mechanism of directing the libido into capitalist modes of economic and social production. It is their notion of "machines désirantes" that informs my description of Moha as a theory machine. The "machine désirante" blurs the distinction between machine and human—a blurring that characterizes other postmodern writings such as Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto"—as well as the distinction between work (or production in the economic mode) and desire, the distinction that creates the personal/political binary that informs even some Marxist discourses. For Deleuze and Guattari, every flow is produced by machines:

Ça fonctionne partout, tantôt sans arrêt, tantôt discontinu. Ça respire, ça chauffe, ça mange. Ça chie, ça baise. Quelle erreur d'avoir dit le ça. Partout ce sont des machines, pas du tout métaphoriquement: des machines de machines, avec leurs couplages, leurs connexions. Une machine-organe est branchée sur une machine-source: l'une émet un flux, que l'autre coupe.... C'est qu'il y a toujours une machine productrice d'un flux, et une autre qui lui est connectée, opérant une coupure, un prélèvement de flux (le sein—la bouche).... Tout "objet" suppose la continuité d'un flux, tout flux, la fragmentation de l'objet. Sans doute chaque machine-organe interprète le monde entier d'après son flux, d'après l'énergie qui flue d'elle: l'œil interprète tout en termes de voir—le parler, l'entendre, le chier, le baiser.... (L'anti-Œdipe 7–12)

This flow describes the body's excretions (or products) as well as the flow of discourses, textualities, and the interpretations that cut up, cut off, fragment, and interrupt the flow of literary discourses, while producing even more discourses. Literary production is yet another flow produced by desiring machines: "Car lire un texte n'est jamais un exercice érudit à la recherche des signifiés, encore moins un exercice hautement textuel en quête

d'un signifiant, mais un usage productif de la machine littéraire, un montage de machines désirantes, exercice schizoïde qui dégage du texte sa puissance révolutionnaire" (125–26). Schizophrenia and the deterritorialization that characterizes it, produced by capitalism, are also capitalism's limit, its own destruction. The flow produced by desiring machines is a schizophrenic flow, and literary production is a schizophrenic process: "Car la littérature est tout à fait comme la schizophrénie: un processus et non pas un but, une production et non pas une expression" (158–59). The production of literature and literary criticism, as schizophrenic productions, therefore, also contain the anti-capitalist political potential of schizophrenia.

The cutting or fragmentation of objects and flows described by Deleuze and Guattari constitutes the splitting contained in "schizophrenia"'s etymology (schizein=to split) and could be considered a defining characteristic of "the postmodern condition."⁵ Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of schizophrenia, then, is their contribution to postmodern theory, to what constitutes postmodernity. Using poststructuralist theories to theorize approaches to postcolonial texts finds precedents in the writings of a number of critics. In "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency" (The Location of Culture 171–98), Homi K. Bhabha traces connections between theorizations of postmodernity and postcoloniality. Abdelkebir Khatibi, a Moroccan novelist and essayist, describes Derridean deconstruction as an essential element of the decolonization of ideological discourses (Maghreb pluriel 47–48). Edward Said uses the Foucauldian link between power and knowledge to articulate his theory of Orientalism (Orientalism). Edouard Glissant uses Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rhizomes (Mille plateaux 9–37) to formulate his own notion of rhizomatic postcolonial identities, which subvert reliances on genealogies, roots, and origins of identity (Poétique de la relation 23–27). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is both a deconstructionist and a postcolonial critic.⁶ While some theorists have argued that using

⁵Cf. Jean-François Lyotard's La condition postmoderne.

⁶See In Other Worlds, The Post-colonial Critic, and Outside in the Teaching Machine.

European theories to read postcolonial literature replicates the very Eurocentrism of dominant academic discourses that the study of postcolonial texts in the context of the multicultural movement is purported to remedy (see Ahmad's In Theory and Kaye and Zoubir's The Ambiguous Compromise for two examples out of many), others, such as Homi K. Bhabha, have questioned the theory/politics opposition such criticisms of poststructuralism depend on (see "The Commitment to Theory, The Location of Culture 19–39).⁷ While I don't wish to dismiss interrogations of theory's political shortcomings (these criticisms can serve as a warning of the dangers of a depoliticized theory), it seems to me that understanding novels such as Moha le fou, Moha le sage and the other novels examined in this study requires breaking down the theory/politics opposition (as Bhabha does) as well as other oppositions such as personal/political, private/public, self/other, and subject/object. I therefore situate my readings in the tendency Bhabha represents.

Voices from the Margins

In channeling the voices of the novel's characters, *Moha* produces a discursive flow similar to Deleuze and Guattari's description of desiring machines. The voices that speak through him include the Patriarche, a personification of patriarchal power who speaks through *Moha* after his death during a pilgrimage; Aïcha, a servant sold to the Patriarche by her father; Dada, a black slave the Patriarche buys from Sudan who becomes his second wife only to be mistreated by the first; a child from the shantytowns; M. Milliard, the Patriarche's son who becomes rich after his father's death; and a Native American. The novel begins with the report of a man who was tortured to death. The entire novel is thus framed as the voice of this man who also speaks through *Moha*: "C'est sa parole qu'on entendra. Seul *Moha* saura la capter et la transmettre aux autres" (9). *Moha* also dialogues with "son vieil ami Moché, le fou des juifs" (112) and directs a political critique against the bank director and the psychiatrist, who don't have the privilege of speaking through him but argue against him.

⁷For a questioning of the theory/politics opposition independent of postcolonial questions, see Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott's anthology Feminists Theorize the Political.

It is against the bank director, M. Milliard, and the psychiatrist that Moha voices his political critique. The bank director and M. Milliard, as personifications of capital, and the psychiatrist, as the embodiment of the link between psychoanalysis and capitalism established by Deleuze and Guattari, articulate the dominant discourses of the post-independence Maghrebian nation. All three articulate definitions of the Nation that operate through exclusion. For M. Milliard, class struggle is a foreign concept: "Quant à la lutte des classes, c'est une notion importée; elle est étrangère à notre réalité, pernicieuse pour notre société" (97). He repeats a certain tendency within the FLN, which denied the existence of classes in Algeria beyond those of colonizer and colonized, thereby rejecting the necessity of a continued class struggle after independence.⁸ One possible effect of the doctrine (whether or not it was intended) was to cushion a newly forming elite from any potential call to class struggle. For the bank director, it is democracy and socialism that are imported ideals: "Tu me parles de démocratie. La démocratie, c'est une idée importée, comme le socialisme. Tout ça c'est de l'importation. Importation clandestine, invisible!" (127). The psychiatrist repeats this trope in his discussion of the leftist intern who works in his hospital and, according to the psychiatrist, promotes "toutes ces histoires importées de l'étranger" (155).

M. Milliard, the bank director, and the psychiatrist also articulate a notion of nationhood that operates by excluding. Democracy, socialism, and class struggle are foreign notions excluded from official definitions of the Nation through discursive tactics similar to those deployed against marginal sexualities. In a recuperation of nationalist discourses from the time of independence struggles, these three characters associate these notions, labeled as "foreign," with the former colonizer. As, according to dominant discourses, the US is being "invaded" by "illegal aliens" who cost American citizens millions of dollars in tax money for health care and other services (a deployment of the

⁸See Bruno Etienne's *L'Algérie, cultures et révolution* (54). On the complicated question of classes in Algeria, see also Mamia Lazreg's *The Emergence of Classes in Algeria*.

trope of invasion that serves to deflect attention from the more literal, military invasions carried out by the US in recent history), according to the three characters that represent the national elite described by Fanon, Maghrebian nations are being invaded by ideas that threaten the very Nation itself. Yet these articulations of menaces to the Nation are situated in Moha, they are spoken by those whose interests they serve. It is not the entire Nation that is in danger, only its bourgeoisie. Articulations of national identity that attempt to exclude from the nation people who don't satisfy their prescriptions of a homogeneous nation serve a ruling elite in its attempt to consolidate power.

Madness as a Political Weapon

Moha carries out his opposition to post-independence national elites in a number of ways. His verbal joust with the bank director coincides with a peculiar political action, tearing up money in front of the bank. By doing so, like Deleuze and Guattari's machine "opérant une coupure," he stops the flow of capital, interrupts the circulation of money: "Je suis envoyé par le Prophète pour arrêter sa circulation. Je le prends le soir et je le déchire le matin. Quand il tombe entre mes mains, il n'ira plus dans d'autres mains. J'arrête l'argent. J'arrête le cirque..." (91). As Moha becomes a wrench thrown in the machinery of capitalism, a man in the crowd calls for his arrest: "Arrêtez-le; il est fou; il manque de piété. Déchirer l'argent! Il devrait au moins le donner aux pauvres! Appelez la police. Il faut l'arrêter; cet homme est dangereux pour notre société et notre religion" (91). Moha's anti-capitalist politics are characterized as a threat to the Nation and to Islam. Threats to the Nation are dealt with by removing them; they are tucked away at the Nation's margins. Their removal can be physical: imprisonment, internment in psychiatric hospitals, deportation beyond the Nation's borders, or simply elimination by assassination. (Said labels the ultimate form of this exclusion as "exterminism."⁹) Or they can be excluded definitionally: marginalized, defined as a foreign agent or as abnormal, or denied

⁹"The effort to homogenize and isolate populations in the name of nationalism (not liberation) has led to colossal sacrifices and failures.... Taken far enough this produces exterminism, the notion that if you do not get your way or something displeases you it is possible simply to blot it out" (Culture and Imperialism 299).

official papers of identification, all methods deployed by the governments that many Maghrebian novels portray.

Both Moha and the man in the crowd deploy Islam to justify their political positions. The role of Islam in Maghrebian nationalisms is a complicated one: on the one hand, it played a decisive role in consolidating opposition to colonialism and fueling struggle for independence, and on the other, national elites often deploy it to consolidate their own oppressive rule. Moha at once reveals the deployment of Islam to reinforce capitalist forces—"Deux piliers: Islam et le fric" (52)—and reclaims interpretations of Islam that contradict official Islamic orthodoxy and even oppose the status quo. Bhabha has described "[c]ounter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—[and] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities'¹⁰ are given essentialist identities" (*The Location of Culture* 149). Moha articulates a "counter-narrative" of Islam, which, in the Moroccan context, is also always a "counter-narrative of the nation."

But in his opposition to neo-colonial capitalism and the ruling elite, Moha continues political action that he began before independence. As the man in the crowd associated his political action with Moha's madness, this madness also fueled Moha's participation in the national struggle:

Une fois, c'était avant l'indépendance, je hurlais dans le marché contre la présence des Français chez nous. Non, ce n'était pas dans le marché central, c'était dans la casbah (je confonds tout!). J'étais fou, alors je pouvais tout dire. Tout dire! Quel programme! Il y avait un officier français qui se méfiait un peu. Il doutait de ma folie. Il travaillait avec un mouchard du quartier—tiens, aujourd'hui, il est sous-préfet ou directeur, je ne sais plus. Oui, le mouchard glissa dans l'oreille du Français que je faisais le fou et que mon langage était codé. (134–35)

¹⁰The allusion here is to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

The French imprison Moha—suspected of doing the work of a spy, of giving away secrets through secret code—for being a traitor to colonial rule. His giving away of national secrets (the nation here being France), however, doesn't require a secret code, he blurts them out on the public square. Moha's betrayer, the traitor to the nationalist cause (the nation here being an independent Morocco), now works for the very nation he betrayed. Ironically, he is charged with bestowing official national identity—"c'est lui qui délivre les passeports aujourd'hui" (135)—the very official identity Moha has been refused. Moha's madness, like Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenia, is subversive. For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia refuses Oedipus, and therefore psychoanalysis, which uses the Oedipus complex as a structuring narrative. Ben Jelloun stages a similar conflict in Moha's final conflict with the psychoanalyst. At the end of the novel, men in white coats carry Moha away to a psychiatric hospital where the psychiatrist interrogates him and administers the shock therapy that finally kills him. Moha therefore suffers the same fate as the man mentioned in the report that begins the novel. Whereas the French imprisoned him for not "really" being mad, post-independence forces, using his madness as an excuse, imprison him because of his political danger. He is first excluded from the Nation by being locked away from the public sphere, confined to the Nation's margins. His final exclusion (final as in last, but also that exclusion from which there is no return) is his own assassination, his extermination. Since the confinement Moha experienced under colonialism parallels the one he faces at the hands of the new national elite, Ben Jelloun creates a Fanonian link between colonialist powers and the national bourgeoisie, between anti-colonialist struggles and struggles against nationalized oppression.

Michel Foucault, in Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique, traces the history of pathologizing madness into a mental illness; unlike the mad, the mentally ill require medical treatment and therefore confinement to psychiatric institutions where they can be kept under constant surveillance. Deleuze and Guattari, reflecting on Foucault's work write, "Alors, au lieu de participer à une entreprise de libération effective, la psychanalyse prend part à

l'œuvre de répression bourgeoise la plus générale, celle qui a consisté à maintenir l'humanité européenne sous le joug de papa-maman, et à ne pas en finir avec ce problème-là" (*L'anti-Œdipe* 59). Yet "this problem," as Moha points out, wasn't limited to Europe, but was imposed on colonized countries along with colonization: "Avant, avant les Français, il n'y avait pas d'asile" (153). In *Sociologie d'une révolution*, Fanon writes: "La science occidentale introduite en Algérie en même temps que le racisme et l'humiliation, a toujours, en tant que partie du système oppressif, provoqué chez l'autochtone une attitude ambivalente" (107). During the revolution, Fanon writes, the colonial powers withheld medical care as a means of weakening the national struggle. But in the same struggle, finding ways of obtaining clandestine medical care and associating Western medicine with the possibility of healing fighters so they could continue armed confrontation created a trust in Western medicine that did not previously exist in Algeria. In *Moha le fou, Moha le sage*, however, Moha does not experience the same association of medicine and struggle: "Mais aujourd'hui, les gens ne sont plus fous. Ils sont malades" (119). French colonization also brought a new construction of mental illness.

Deleuze and Guattari associate Oedipus (and therefore psychoanalysis) with colonization: "Dans la mesure où il y a œdipianisation, elle est le fait de la colonisation..." (199). Colonialism, then, has its own set of family values, what they call "familialisme," which it imposes on colonized peoples:

Le colonisateur dit: ton père, il est ton père et rien d'autre, ou le grand-père maternel, va pas les prendre pour des chefs, ...tu peux te faire trianguler dans ton coin, et mettre ta maison entre celles des paternels et des maternels, ...ta famille, c'est ta famille et rien d'autre, la reproduction sociale ne passe plus par là, bien qu'on ait juste besoin de la famille pour fournir un matériel qui sera soumis au nouveau régime de la reproduction.... (199)

On the one hand, the narrative of this Oedipianization resembles narratives of progress that often served colonial interests. The chapter "Savages, barbares, civilisés" (163-324)

traces the birth of the Oedipus complex through savage, barbarian, and civilized societies in a way that seems to grant a necessity, a natural path of development of the sort that justified colonialism's civilizing mission. On the other hand, their link between Oedipus—and especially the familialism it implies—and colonialism is a useful one. Other Maghrebien novels also unveil this link along with the heterosexualization that goes along with colonialism.

In *Moha*, the psychiatric hospital serves a political purpose identical to the prison's: "—Il faut le sortir de prison. —Il n'est pas en prison mais à l'hôpital des fous. —C'est la même chose" (93). Like the prison, it is where dangers to the Nation are put away. And *Moha* resists his institutionalization just as he resisted colonialism and postcolonial capitalism. He threatens to turn the psychiatrist's methods against the doctor himself; the patient threatens to hypnotize the doctor: "Arrêtons cette discussion. Tu as un pouvoir maléfique. Une sorte d'hypnose" (155). Rosa Da Silva writes, "Au savoir scientifique du psychiatre qui l'examine, il oppose son expérience de trois siècles. A la certitude du médecin sur l'identité du sujet et la recherche de l'équilibre rationnel, *Moha* oppose sa diversité..." (69). As Rosa Da Silva points out, *Moha* resists that discourse's will to know him. Said describes how a Foucauldian will to knowledge can constitute a Western Orientalist desire to know the Orient, and how Orientalism can collaborate with colonialism. This will to knowledge can have a colonizing power. Psychoanalysis can be an accomplice of colonialism when it operates by colonizing the mind: "*Œdipe*, c'est toujours la colonisation poursuivie par d'autres moyens, c'est la colonie intérieure, et nous verrons que, même chez nous, Européens, c'est notre formation coloniale intime" (*L'anti-Œdipe* 200).¹¹ In the post-independence state, the psychoanalyst's official role is to continue the operation of colonizing postcolonial citizens (subjects).

¹¹On the connection between family values and colonialism, especially in conjunction with slavery in the Caribbean, see Edouard Glissant, "Structures et tensions de groupe" and "Familles sans foyers?" *Le discours antillais* (86–100).

Moha's babbling (or his prophesies, his mantic discourse) continues from beyond the grave; he literally haunts the Nation after his death. When Moha begins to speak from the grave and people begin to gather, he protests: "Je ne suis pas une pierre sacrée. Je ne suis pas un saint, un marabout" (162). The authorities close the cemetery and issue a declaration:

Au nom de Dieu Le Très Haut qui a dit dans son Livre sacré: "Parcourez la terre et voyez ce que fut la fin de ceux qui crièrent au mensonge! Si tu ambitionnes de diriger les Incrédulés (c'est inutile), car celui qu'Allah égare ne saurait être dirigé et n'a aucun auxiliaire" (Sourate, les Abeilles).

Notre religion est l'islam. Notre langue est l'arabe. Notre démocratie est le socialisme. Notre idéologie est dans nos traditions, dans notre patrimoine. Nous sommes décidés à barrer le chemin à toutes les formes d'obscurantisme: délire, folie, prétendue poésie nihiliste et dévastatrice. Nous sommes un Etat moderne. Les fous iront à l'asile. Les vagabonds en prison.

Cet homme qui parlerait dans sa tombe n'existe pas. L'enquête est formelle. Il n'y a pas plus de Moha que d'Indien dans le cimetière. Moha n'a jamais existé.

Allez à vos occupations et oubliez ce cimetière! (163)

Here, in order to negate Moha's voice, official discourse mixes claims to socialism with an appeal to religion, the official version of which Moha refuses to participate in even in death. By labeling his voice as lie, the declaration makes a claim to truth to justify the power that produces the declaration. It also threatens to exclude marginal members of its society by confining them to the spaces of the asylum and the prison. The declaration mimics the Algerian nationalist formula "Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my fatherland," but the specific nation is not named.¹² In addition, the excerpt repeats early FLN claims that socialism is totally consistent with Islam in its modern and progressive

¹²This ambiguity concerning which Maghrebian nation he is actually a citizen of (or should be a citizen of, since his identity is not officially recognized) also occurs in his statement "Nous sommes à Tlemcen. Oui, c'est ça, je reconnais, nous sommes à Salé. Tlemcen. Oui, c'est bien ce que je pensais. Sfax" (151). Tlemcen is a city in Algeria, Salé in Morocco, and Sfax in Tunisia.

manifestations. In the above passage, dominant discourse grants itself the authority to decide who has identity and who does not. Moha, in fact, having no papers, has no officially recognized identity: "C'est vrai, je n'ai pas de papiers d'identité..." (166). And this authority has been carried over from colonialism as indicated by the informant who betrayed Moha to colonial authorities and then became a functionary charged with distributing national identity after independence. When it comes to claiming authority, the declaration picks and chooses from tradition; its treatment of Moha goes against all traditional ways of caring for the mentally ill, as it also rejects the Islamic duty of almsgiving.

Cross Identifications

When the official declaration proclaims that there is no Indian in the graveyard, it lies. There is a Native American (perhaps even several) who speaks through Moha.¹³ Ben Jelloun further extends the borders of national identity by channeling voices of Native Americans through Moha. Moha compares the invasion of their homeland by Europeans to the colonization of North Africa: "Ici, personne ne pense aux Indiens. Et pourtant, nous avons quelque chose de commun avec eux: une blessure aux genoux. Moi, j'aime les Indiens. J'ai un frère indien. Il a cent quarante-trois ans et un soleil dans la main. Je l'ai vu pour la première fois quand les soldats américains nous avaient parqués dans une réserve" (136). Moha's identification with Native Americans also recalls the French procedure of cantonnement—which Marnia Lazreg describes as pushing the indigenous population of Algeria onto reservations (The Emergence of Classes in Algeria 45)—in the expropriation of land for the use of settlers. This identification (identity through identification with others) is one of several others that Moha articulates, including his identification with his Jewish friend and double, Moché, "le fou des juifs" (112).

¹³At the end of the novel, the Native American's words are attributed to T.C. McLuhan's Pieds nus sur la terre sacrée (Denoël) and Héhaka Sapa's Les rites secrets des Indiens sioux (Petite bibliothèque Payot).

Moché, whose name is not unlike Moha's, appears like his second self. Unlike other marginal voices that speak through Moha, Moché dialogues with him. With Moché, Ben Jelloun gives the example of physical exclusion from the Nation based on religious difference, the departure of most Maghrebians Jews after independence. Whereas this departure strengthens official national identity, it destroys Moha's concept of who he is, of his identity as rooted in his nation:

Tu sais, Moché, chaque juif qui quitte le pays, c'est un peu de moi-même qui s'en va. Un jour, je vais me retrouver sans mon corps, avec juste une ombre. Ils partent tous. Mais de quoi ont-ils peur? Quel malheur! Il paraît en plus que les juifs d'Europe et d'Amérique, tu sais, les plus riches, méprisent nos enfants. Ils ne sont pas heureux là-bas, je te jure! Alors ils arrivent avec des valises d'illusions et après il se rendent compte que c'est difficile de vivre sans racines. Ils meurent de nostalgie et de mélancolie. Il y en a qui ne parlent pas un mot d'hébreu. Ils ne connaissent que l'arabe ou le berbère. Moi je sais qu'ils ne sont pas heureux là-bas. On ne quitte pas un pays si facilement. La terre vous habite.... (116-17)

Moha reverses the logic of Zionist discourse whereby Israel is the homeland, the promised land. For Moché and Moha, Morocco is the homeland for Arabs and Jews, and, for Moroccan Jews, Israel is a land of exile: "...[S]i Moché avait été emmené en Israël? Non! Il crèverait plutôt que de partir en terre d'exil..." (112). In this reversal of Zionist logic, Moha le fou, Moha le sage resembles many of the works written by Jewish writers from Arab countries. In After Jews and Arabs, Ammiel Alcalay describes this reversal of logic in the context of the power differences between European and "Oriental" Jews in Israel (differences Moha alludes to)¹⁴ and in the context of how the Jew/Arab distinction recently came to be. Alcalay describes a similar Jewish nostalgia for the Arab homeland in many

¹⁴On this point, see Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims."

"Arab" Jewish writings. This nostalgia is also a major characteristic of the works of the Jewish Moroccan writer Edmond Amran El Maleh, currently living in France.¹⁵

In his consideration of the Jewish diaspora (diaspora, here, from two different starting points, Israel, of course, and Morocco), Ben Jelloun extends his questioning of nationalism beyond the borders of the nation-state to include another manifestation of nationalism, Zionism, which like many other nationalisms, including the official Moroccan ones, makes identity (being Jewish in the case of Israel) the basis for inclusion in the Nation. Moha rewrites the official history of Arab/Jewish separation in Morocco by emphasizing a shared experience in the face of French colonialism:

Un événement revenait sans cesse: les soldats français tirant sur la foule—juive et musulmane—qui manifestait à l'entrée du port. C'était au début du siècle; l'armée française s'installait dans le pays. Il y eut beaucoup de morts. Tous des ouvriers, des pêcheurs pauvres. A l'époque, l'administration coloniale ne faisait pas de différence entre les juifs et les musulmans. Ce fut lors de cette manifestation qu'il connut Moha. Ils décidèrent de former un groupe "de démenace infernale" pour lutter contre l'occupant.... Ils transmettaient les messages aux résistants et il leur arrivait même de passer la frontière avec des armes; à l'époque, les deux pays frères s'entraidaient. (113-14)

The reference to the colonial administration's not making a distinction between Arabs and Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century in Morocco recalls an earlier distinction made in Algeria when all Algerian Jews were declared French citizens in 1870 as a part of the French divide-and-conquer tactic. Moha's rewriting counters the French strategy by refusing the divisions that must be internalized by the colonized for the strategy to work.

¹⁵See El Maleh's *Mille ans, un jour, Parcours immobile*, and *Aïlen ou la nuit du récit*. On El Maleh, see Ronnie Scharfman's "The Other's Other: The Moroccan-Jewish Trajectory of Edmond Amran El Maleh." Bouganim Ami treats the question of the Maghrebian Jewish diaspora away from the *Maghreb* in "Le rabbin rieur" (*Récits du mellah* 101-39) and "Le fils du serpent" (*Récits du mellah* 187-220). On related matters see the special issue of *Yale French Studies* edited by Alan Astro, *Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth Century France*, and Guy Dugas, *La littérature judéo-maghrébine d'expression française: Entre Djéha et Cagayous*.

The Feminist Menace

Another border Moha crosses in his delirium (which is the writing of his identity) is the border separating genders. Moha voices a resistance to sexual oppression and identifies with the threat of this resistance, with the feminist menace to the Nation:

Un peu de volonté, ô vous que la lune a damnés! un peu de volupté, ô vous, femmes absentes, femmes emmurées, femmes envoyées aux champs l'enfant dans le dos, femmes du silence; ô femmes, pourquoi vous cultivent-ils dans les ténébres avec des sexes en bois, sans caresses, sans tendresses? Célébrées par le chant, méprisées par le temps et l'oubli.... O femmes, ils vous écartent les jambes depuis des siècles. Ils ne parlent pas. Ils ne murmurent rien. Votre cri est absorbé et vos jambes posées sur leurs épaules. Munissez-vous des lames de rasoir et déchirez sans pitié leur visage et leurs certitudes.... Vous dansez pour faire bander des brutes; des gars heureux de se masturber quand vous faites trembler le ventre et les fesses. (46-47)

In terms of his relation to feminism, Ben Jelloun shares many other male Maghrebian writers' connection of patriarchy or sexism with both colonialism and the post-independence ruling elite. Feminism, then, becomes a weapon in the political critique of these authors. Concerning male writers, a question arises as to whether feminism, like women during the Algerian revolution, is used not in the interest of women's struggles, but to advance other struggles. Moha refers to the participation of women in the Algerian revolution and in the independence struggles of other nations: "C'est vrai, vous avez fait la guerre contre les Français. Vous étiez utiles et courageuses. Vous avez fait des opérations mémorables. Quelques prénoms de femmes sont restés sur front de nuage. Après la libération du pays, ils ont fermé les murs et verrouillé les portes. Même les terrasses vous sont à présent interdites. Zone extrêmement dangereuse pour la sécurité du morceau de bois" (47). Yet after the revolution, gains made by women in terms of being able to circulate freely with their male comrades have been rolled back. The language Ben Jelloun

uses here to describe the "sécurité du morceau de bois" invokes not only the enclosure of women to protect male honor (which resides in the vagina of a faithful wife, the vagina to which the husband claims property rights), but also national security. The domestic sphere, like the Nation, has restricted zones, off-limit territories. The security of the "morceau de bois," therefore, is also a matter of national security. Indeed, the reduction of women to their "morceau de bois," which is to be kept under lock and key, that is, as the property of men, directly follows the triumph of the nationalist struggle. Women, hardly a minority, are locked in the margins of the Nation, out of the public space of its citizens. Moha, by bringing voices out of the margins onto the public square, questions this marginalization and the separation of private and public as feminine and masculine spaces. He also connects national struggles (and implicitly, struggles against the post-independence elite) with women's struggles. When he says, "Munissez-vous des lames de rasoir," he advocates an armed struggle where women fight for themselves instead of just for the Nation, which might later exclude them.

Yet, the voice of women's struggles is spoken by a man who not only expresses solidarity with their struggle but also constitutes himself as its leader: "O femmes, suivez mes pas, suivez-moi dans la folie d'amour et de rire" (46). One might even argue that his cry silences women ("femmes du silence," "Votre cri est absorbé"). In that sense, Moha takes on the role of more than a few male "feminists" of Maghrebian novels written by men, male "feminists" who have the role of criticizing women for not revolting against the bad men, as if the best feminists were all men. I would include in this category the narrator of Rachid Boudjedra's La répudiation and Driss Ferdi in Driss Chraïbi's Le passé simple (though I would not necessarily blame these authors for their characters' faults). This role is conspicuously absent from women's texts.

The "morceau de bois" also refers to the sexual organs that aren't supposed to feel pleasure. Moha decries the lack of pleasure, physical or affective, in conjugal sexual relationships. Ben Jelloun has made similar criticisms of the "poverty" of possibilities in

Maghrebien sexualities as can be seen in the subtitle of his sexual study La plus haute des solitudes: Misère affective et sexuelle d'émigrés nord-africains. But Moha contextualizes the feminist demand for women's right to sexual pleasure (a demand that has been a part of many feminist movements and discourses internationally) as part of marriage, as if pleasure for women can come only from men. On the other hand, Moha also condemns the form marriage has taken and seems to dismiss marriage through mockery: "Ils agitent leurs fesses, bavent par le sexe et par la bouche. Ils sont contents: le devoir conjugal accompli. Et dire qu'ils prient avant! Se mettre en direction de La Mecque pour une prière nocturne avant de pénétrer la femme qui n'ose pas se toucher" (48). Here, Ben Jelloun associates this sexual misery or deprivation with Islam, but in an earlier passage he qualifies this association: "Il y a quelque chose de fêlé entre l'homme et la femme dans notre société. L'Islam. On dit que c'est écrit dans le Livre. Non. Ils font dire ce qu'ils veulent au Livre" (47-48). The Islam that separates the sexes is a particular reading of Islam. Though, on the one hand, Moha criticizes Islam, on the other, he likes to go to Mosque and is able to find the basis of his political critique in Islam: "On trouve tout dans l'Islam, même le socialisme" (79). The bank director condemns himself through Islam: "La religion? Elle condamne la corruption, comme elle interdit le vol, le mensonge, etc. Si on était réellement musulmans, on fermerait toutes les banques. A partir du moment où tu fais de l'argent avec de l'argent, tu as fauté. Donc laissons de côté la morale et la religion" (126). Like many feminists, such as Fatima Mernissi in The Veil and the Male Elite and Assia Djebar in Loin de Médine, who, instead of denouncing Islam as inherently anti-feminist, have gone back to reread the founding texts in order to uncover Islam's feminist possibilities, Moha denounces the role of Islam in official nationalist discourse as a version of Islam, an interpretation of it. He discloses the ways in which other interpretations of it denounce those who deploy it to justify exclusion from the Nation.

Transgressions Unveiled

Moha's final cross-identification is with the Patriarche in his "sexual dissidence," his resistance to the family narrative from within, to its fear of miscegenation. This identification is perhaps the strongest in the novel because it is even stronger than the class antagonism, which given Moha's political positions, should separate the two men. It is so strong Moha even fears it, he fears the Patriarche actually articulates his own identity. After the Patriarche's sexual delirium (quoted in part below), the narrator remarks, "Moha fut réveillé en pleine nuit par cette cascade de mots. Il eut l'impression qu'on lui avait volé certains passages de sa parole" (70). Whitman juxtaposes the "Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves/...And of the rights of them others are down upon" with "forbidden voices/Voices of sexes and lusts" and describes the poetic act of speaking these voices as an unveiling: "voices veil'd and I remove the veil." Likewise, Ben Jelloun, in his essay on cultural diversity in the Maghreb, characterizes the tendency among Maghrebian writers to reveal the transgression of sexual taboos as part of an unveiling that challenges the status quo. Ben Jelloun remarks that this unveiling is often considered an act of treason. Moha, who betrays the Nation by throwing a wrench into its capitalist machinery, is also a sexual traitor.

The most sustained passage of unbridled sexuality is the voice given to the Patriarche's delirium, spoken at the moment of madness, at falling in love (le coup de foudre) with his second wife (whom he bought as a black slave). In every other aspect, the Patriarche would seem to be someone Moha would attack rather than allow to speak through him. The Patriarche is rich, his very name makes him the personification of patriarchy and male privilege. His son, M. Milliard, inherits his wealth and becomes even more adept at exploitation, can even break strikes without calling the police (101-2). But at the moment of his love/madness (which gives him something in common with Moha), the Patriarche's words threaten to destroy his privilege, his power:

...pénis énorme qui vous regarde, il vous surveille; mains... argent... couilles d'Antar...¹⁶ sexe, lèvres du sexe... vu.. visage troué ce n'est pas le mien, c'est le votre, c'est comme pour les dents du sexe... les dents du vagin... le Prophète m'excite... l'anus... les couilles... les miennes, rideaux sur vos yeux... l'anus, mon doigt dans l'anus, je le suce, le ciel, le cheval, la chamelle, le fleuve de gamins... baiser... baiser la vache... ma main sur ses seins... la roue... sept cent mille soleils... le jour... trois cents milliards de sexes et moi qui danse sur les poids du cul... la fenêtre... l'argent... les papillons sur mon sexe.... (66)

Here, the Patriarche fantasizes about giant penises, lots of them, is turned on by the Prophet, is excited anally and by coprophagy, thinks of bestiality (cows and butterflies—quite a range of species), and in fact, also seems rather self-sufficient erotically. At the beginning of the passage, the Patriarche describes a giant penis as a source of surveillance. The state or police that places its citizens under surveillance is thus equipped with a phallic power, the power of phallocracy, of patriarchy. The word "argent" shortly follows, connecting phallic power to capitalism or the flow of money, the very flow Moha cuts off. Moha, as well as the Patriarche, however, distances himself from this power. By invoking the vagina dentata, he raises the specter of castration, as an erotic possibility rather than an anxiety. He then describes a number of erogenous zones, shifting the site of male pleasure from the penis, diffusing it across the entire body. This diffuse eroticism is usually more associated with the feminine. The Patriarche's most notable site of pleasure is his anus; he thus makes himself a candidate for anal stimulation and evokes the possibility of sodomy, in which he would most likely be the passive partner. The Patriarche, far from being the exemplary patriarch, because of his transgressive sexual desire (which involves miscegenation at the expense of upholding the family values of the new Nation), comes to occupy what Kaja Silverman calls "male subjectivity at the margins":

¹⁶According to Malek Chebel, Antar was a poet of the pre-Islamic period who was in love with his cousin, Abba. Antar was the illegitimate son of a Bedouin lord and Abba was of noble birth of a rival tribe. He wrote a *mou'allaga* (pre-Islamic poem of great length) about his love, a mad love, hence the Patriarche's identification with him (*Encyclopédie de l'amour en Islam* 88–89).

The kinds of male subjectivity which will be anatomized here are, moreover, precisely those which open in a variety of ways onto the domain of femininity. To state the case slightly differently, the masculinities which this book will interrogate, and even in certain instances work to eroticize or privilege, are those which not only acknowledge but embrace castration, alterity, and specularity. Although these attributes represent the unavoidable tropes of all subjectivity, they generally feature prominently only within the conscious existence of the female subject. Conventional masculinity is largely predicated upon their denial. (Male Subjectivity at the Margins 3)

While I wouldn't want to reinforce stereotypes of femininity as essentially passive, in a social context where masculinity is seen as the embodiment of activity and femininity as passivity, when men embrace characteristics usually associated with the feminine, they dislodge tropes of the feminine from any supposedly biological grounding of femininity. Throughout this study, I shall encounter many such marginal male subjectivities, a few of which even experience the threat of castration (physical castration) as a source of jouissance.¹⁷ Because he embraces marginal sexuality (and therefore marginal subjectivity), the Patriarche can no longer be considered a model citizen who produces (reproduction qua economic production) new citizens (preferably not black ones) for the Nation, who makes his household the building block of the Nation.

In this delirium and sexual deluge of words, the Patriarche upsets the social hierarchy within his household; he exchanges the positions of master and slave: "...qu'elle revienne la femme noire d'Afrique... je suis à elle, elle m'a acheté sur le marché... je suis son

¹⁷The French word "jouissance" may signify, in general, any intense pleasure (bliss), or more specifically, orgasm. The verb "jouir" can mean "to cum" or "to enjoy" (as one says "jouir d'une bonne santé"—"to enjoy good health"). The word has presented difficulties to translators, especially of Roland Barthes's Le plaisir du texte, in which he makes the distinction between "textes de plaisir" and "textes de jouissance." Richard Miller translates "jouissance" as "bliss," but as Richard Howard points out in his "Note on the Text," which prefaces Miller's translation, "we lack the terms acknowledged and allowed in polite French utterance: we lack jouissance and jouir, as Barthes uses them here" (v). Howard suggests that "coming" might better translate "jouissance." Because of the wider connotation of the French word and because, since Barthes, it has acquired the additional meaning of discursive pleasure, I shall use the French version throughout.

esclave... qu'elle vienne pour que je lui obéisse..." (68). Here, one can see why the first wife and children have done all they could to expel Dada and her daughter from the household. She threatens to lessen each family members share of inheritance, of course. But her class lowers the family standing, she is of a darker race, and even more, through her daughter, she has "darkened" the family through miscegenation. The father's sexual crossing of class, racial, and national boundaries has threatened the identity of all the other family members as if his deviance were contagious. The microcosm of the household, here, serves as the model for what the crossing of these boundaries does to national identities in the macrocosm of the Nation. It is between the Patriarche and Dada that the most literal métissage occurs, in the form of the child they have together. The product of this miscegenation is merely a small part of the various mixings the novel generates: mixings of identities, of cultures, and even of theories. However, while the Patriarche's mad love for his slave may be transgressive in that it breaks taboos against miscegenation, it may also participate in a long tradition of racist stereotypes. Western racist discourses do not hold a monopoly on the hypersexualization of black bodies. The stereotype of the insatiable black African has a long tradition in classical Arabic literature. The Arabian Nights begin as the sultan discovers his wife having sex with a black slave. This racist stereotype also contains a sexist component since women are supposedly only satisfied by black men, with their supposedly oversized penises.

In "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb," Ben Jelloun sets up an opposition between the language of unveiling (French) and the language of the Qur'an (Arabic), perhaps maintaining a sex/religion opposition. The Patriarche, however, experiences religion as erotically charged:

Que Dieu maudisse la religion du vagin de ta mère... venez prier, ma tombe est ouverte... venez mourir dans ma tombe... on forniquera la nuit et le jour nous serons assistés des anges du paradis... on forniquera avec la mer et les sables... la nuit... je suis la nuit et la révélation... je vois le Prophète... non, c'est moi le

Prophète, prophète des temps hideux, prophète de la haine, prophète du malheur... je serai le premier prophète du sexe... (67-69)

The Patriarche, like Moha, doesn't completely reject Islam (he dies on a pilgrimage, we remember and is thus, according to Islamic teachings, guaranteed a place in paradise), but he does produce a counter-narrative of it. Like so many of the counter-narratives of the nation, this counter-narrative of Islam (like many more examined in this study) is sexual. He doesn't reject Islamic tradition; he is perfectly in keeping with an entire tradition of erotic literature written in the language of the Qur'an.¹⁸ (Ben Jelloun seems to pass over this fact.) The Patriarche's invocation of the Prophet to justify illicit sexual acts parallels a similar invocation on Moha's part to justify tearing up money in front of the bank, linking the two acts of resistance, one anti-capitalist, one sexual. In another passage Moha juxtaposes Islam and sexuality in the political denunciation of a religious leader: "Le mage ne dispose pas de son corps. Il lui échappe quand il se cache pour déféquer... Son corps le torture. Mais il aime bien son cul. Il a toujours un petit miroir dans la poche pour voir son anus en train s'expulser les excréments. Oh, moi, je dis tout; je suis assailli de messages et d'informations. Je lève le voile sur la prairie et je vois un terrain" (48-49).

¹⁸Ahmad al-Tifashi (1184–1253) begins The Delight of Hearts or What You Will Not Find in Any Book as follows:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Master of mercy, our Help and Support.

Praise be to God, Who knows that by his nature man is subject to boredom and has not sufficient strength to bear the burdens of existence. Therefore, God on high has allowed him a sense of humor, in both word and deed, and has granted him, at all the moments of his life, new situations, each different from the previous ones, and has appointed for every conversation the language and tone felicitous and appropriate for that situation....

Praise be to God, Who has so disposed matters that pleasant literary anecdotes may serve as an instrument for the polishing of wits and the cleansing of the rust from hearts, as well as for turning men of action into friendly companions—in both private and public intercourse—and Who has classified such anecdotes as pious acts so long as their intention is to amuse comrades worthy of our friendship, and as bad deeds when they are addressed to the common people.

We praise Him, therefore, for His limitless bounty and we call down His blessing and His salvation on His Prophet Muhammad, the purest of those who have proffered both agreeable discourse and serious words. We also invoke the blessing and salvation of God, in boundless and illimitable fashion, on the family and disciples of Muhammad. (43)

Al-Tifashi was born in what is now Tunisia and lived variously in Tunis, Egypt, and Cairo. His anthology collects erotic writing from five centuries. A sampling of what follows this typical and even formulaic introduction would include anecdotes and poems by and about men who like to fuck other men, men who like to get fucked by them, and men who like to do both; helpful suggestions on how to fuck men in their sleep without waking them up; the best lubricants for anal sex; and instructions on training young men to be passive sodomites.

This juxtaposition is articulated as a form of unveiling. Moha unveils the hypocrisy of a religious leader by unveiling his sexual secrets. Unveiling his sexual secrets, in turn, reveals his privilege; he does precisely what he condemns through the very religious discourse he uses to exclude from the Nation others who commit the same "sins."

Homosexuality Unveiled

Similar acts of unveiling, linked by Ben Jelloun to challenging the status quo in "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb," take homosexual acts as their object. These acts also involve the sexual crossing of class boundaries, as is the case of the boys from the shantytowns:

Ils s'amuse dans les champs. Ils se montrent leur sexe. Ils se caressent un peu. Des fois ils partent aux champs avec une nouvelle recrue, généralement un garçon de la ville, un garçon de riches qui s'ennuie dans la villa de ses parents. Vers la fin de la journée, ils lui font comprendre qu'il faut bien qu'il baisse son pantalon. L'enfant citadin se laisse faire mais leur demande de ne pas lui faire mal. Des caresses inégales, sans risques. C'est le prix qu'il faut payer pour passer une journée avec les gosses libres des terrains vagues. Les parents citadins en ont peur. Alors ils protègent leurs enfants par des distractions bien innocentes. (92)

Here, homosexual behavior is attributed to lower-class behavior. The parents' negative reactions to such activity could be due either to their disapproval of its same-sex nature or to the fact that it involves their children's association with lower-class boys, or possibly a combination of both.¹⁹ At any rate, homosexual activity in the above passage is associated with liberty, forbidding the activity with constraint. Yet the passage also seems to share a similar tone in the passage where Moha laments the lack of affection in conjugal relationships. The caresses described here ("Ils se caressent un peu" my underlining, "Des

¹⁹In Mouloud Mammeri's *La colline oubliée*, the narrator's negative reaction to his cousin's homoerotic friendship with a lower-class shepherd may have as much to do with the shepherd's class as with the fact that he is of the same sex. See my discussion of the novel in "Approches de l'homosexualité et de l'homosexualité chez Boudjedra, Mammeri et Sebbar" (171–76).

caresses inégales, sans risques") seem insufficient, as if they should be more. More equal? more affectionate? more numerous? But what is the risk more would bring? The risk of enjoying the caresses as much as the sexual release (justified as physical, biological, physiological need)? The risk of a pleasure incompatible with the developing masculinity of the boys?

Another possible example of homosexual desire occurs in a remark by the bank director: "Je sors aussi pour aller au hammam populaire. J'aime cette chaleur; j'aime les garçons qui y viennent s'amuser" (122). Again, if the boys are having fun sexually, and if it is for that reason the director likes to go to the hammam, homosexual behavior is associated with class ("hammam populaire" my underlining). It is not uniquely a lower-class phenomenon, but it is associated by members of the wealthier classes (the boys parents, the bank director) with lower class behavior. To have homosexual fun, they have to go slumming.²⁰ Saïgh Boustia, however, interprets the remark in the following way: "Lorsque le banquier quitte son bureau, c'est soit pour succomber à l'artifice et aux abstractions du cirque, soit pour se livrer à la sodomie dans le hammam" (48). First of all, there is no proof of any sexual desire or activity at all, much less of sodomy; the passage states that boys have fun in the hammam, not necessarily through sodomy. For Saïgh Boustia's assertion to work, she must assume sodomy is the only possible fulfillment of homosexual desire. Second, by making this remark without commenting on the other passage (more significant in my opinion) about the boys in the fields, Saïgh Boustia marks sodomy as an upper-class vice in a total reversal of the class associations I have suggested are implicit in the novel's (homo)sexual politics. She only discusses the rich banker who goes to "exploit" lower class boys in the hammam. She totally ignores and confines to silence the fact that lower-class boys also "corrupt" upper-class boys in the fields, and in

²⁰This behavior parallels Said's descriptions of Western tourists who treat the "Orient" as their sexual playground: "Just as the various colonial possessions—quite apart from their economic benefit to metropolitan Europe—were useful as places to send wayward sons, superfluous populations of delinquents, poor people, and other undesirables, so the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe" (*Orientalism* 190).

the latter case, the upper-class parents are the ones who have homophobic reactions. By associating sodomy uniquely with the banker (who collaborates with neo-colonial economic oppression) and excluding lower-class same-sex pleasure from her discussion, Saïgh Boustia repeats the definitional act of exclusion that informs some Marxist and nationalist discourses—homosexuality is bourgeois decadence, a Western evil imposed by colonialism—the very exclusion the novel actively resists.

Political Agents and Postcolonial Subjectivity at the Margins

For Silverman, marginal sexualities imply and/or create marginal subjectivities. Moha's marginal sexuality or embracing of the marginal sexualities of those who speak through him constitutes only one of the ways he challenges centered subjectivity; he also destabilizes psychoanalytic discourses that constitute the centered subject. When Edson Rosa Da Silva writes, "A la certitude du médecin sur l'identité... Moha oppose sa diversité" (69), he points out that Moha confronts the psychiatrist and, therefore, the discourse from which the psychiatrist draws his authority. For Deleuze and Guattari the schizophrenic refuses the subjectivity implied by the Oedipus complex and its "triangle papa-maman-moi" (60): "Pourtant le moi, c'est comme papa-maman, il y a longtemps que le schizo n'y croit pas" (30). Resisting the dominant familial (and sexual) structure of the West also challenges subjectivity. The schizophrenic, then, is one of the manifestations of what is commonly acknowledged as the postmodern fragmentation of the subject. Moha is a subject who resists subjectivity; he is, I shall argue, a paradigm of postcolonial subjectivity. Far from being depoliticized or losing agency, the postcolonial subjectivity Moha embodies positions him in an ideal location for acting politically.

Pronounced in French, without the Arabic "h," "Moha" and "moi" are almost identical.²¹ In addition, there are several passages in the text that make a similar rapprochement. In one case, Moha uses the first-person emphatic pronoun in an expression almost identical to the title of the novel: "Moi le fou, moi le pauvre [...] moi le

²¹In Arabic, Moha is short for Mohammed.

sage" (32). Here, "Moha" of the title is replaced with "moi," as if the two were interchangeable. The other case is a simple juxtaposition of the pronoun and the proper name: "Moi, Moha, je vous dis..." (52). But this juxtaposition is strengthened by the fact that Moha is surrounded on each side by a first-person pronoun, and the first three words are in apposition, that is, are equivalents and interchangeable. Yet for "Moha" to be "moi," it must be pronounced à la française. Though an Arab, Moha's subjectivity is articulated, formulated in French. Subjectivity requires assimilation into the colonizing culture. It requires what Homi Bhabha has labeled "mimicry." But Bhabha's mimicry is not a total and complete assimilation: "[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (The Location of Culture 86). In other words, Moha is almost a subject but not quite. He is "not quite/not" a subject (The Location of Culture 92). He occupies that space Bhabha characterizes as "in-between": "It is not the colonialist Self or the colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness—the white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body" (The Location of Culture 45).²² For Luce Irigaray, the feminine is in a similar double bind: "Toute théorie du 'sujet' aura toujours été appropriée au 'masculin.' A s'y assujettir, la femme renonce à son insu à la spécificité de son rapport à l'imaginaire" (Speculum 165). Woman as Object is a male construction, but attempting to claim the position of Subject is also to subject oneself to a male "colonization" of the mind. The space left for women, a liberating space, is to be found behind the looking glass,²³ the other side of the mirror in which Lacan's prototypical Subject (who, he leads us to believe, is not gendered, but whom, as we know from Irigaray, is actually a little boy). Irigaray's place for women is almost that of the Lacanian subject, but not quite. According to Said, the Orientalist represents the Orient as a feminized space, and colonization feminizes the colonized territory (Orientalism 207, 309). Rather than adopt the

²²The allusion here is to Frantz Fanon's Peau noire, masques blancs.

²³See "Le miroir, de l'autre côté" (Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un 7–20) for Irigaray's rewriting of Alice in Wonderland.

position of many dominant anti-colonialist nationalist discourses (a certain American black nationalism being a good example, especially in more recent years during its depoliticization and disconnection from global revolutionary struggle) that called on colonized men to be real men, to stand up to their enemy, often troped as "faggots," the subjectivity Moha embodies seems to accept this association with the feminine, embrace it, transform it into a solidarity and a position of political agency. Like Silverman's male subjectivity at the margins, Moha's postcolonial subjectivity is emasculated and thrives on its emasculation.

Moha is, therefore, the embodiment of a subjectivity where postcolonial, feminist, and queer theories of the subject collide. He represents the political force of the deconstructed subject Judith Butler describes, whose political agency is in no way hampered by its deconstruction: "We may be tempted to think that to assume the subject in advance is necessary in order to safeguard the agency of the subject. But to claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency" ("Contingent Foundations," Feminists Theorize the Political 12). For Butler, determining what the subject will be in advance, assuming subjectivity, defining "Woman," "Lesbian," or "feminist" prior to political action will necessarily exclude potential allies who may not fit the definitions pre-set for them. In the context of the Nation, such definition are even more insidious. As Moha indicates, they are outright oppressive. The exclusions they operate deny people of a nation their rights as citizens. They serve an elite who use them to consolidate their power, wealth, and privilege.

Yet how does one be in a nation given its oppressive potential and even its oppressive tendency? Is the appropriate political solution to do away with the Nation? This is one of the tendencies of internationalism, even of queer nationalism ("The Queer Nation has no borders"). But this internationalism (to which I subscribe) also has its dangers, the danger of ignoring, even disabling, local possibilities of struggle. When the Algerian revolution

first broke out, members of the Algerian Communist Party (still a part of the French Communist Party), were told that the proper place for revolution in Algeria was the context of a world-wide workers' revolution. The Algerian struggle was to be put on hold. The Communist Party, which mimicked colonial structures in placing the Algerian CP under the bureaucratic auspices of the French CP, served the interests of colonialism in attempting to prolong French colonial control over Algeria. As Aijaz Ahmad writes:

Yet, to the extent that contemporary imperialism's political system takes the form of a hierarchically structured system of nation-states, it is only by organizing their struggles within the political space of their own nation-state, with the revolutionary transformation of that particular nation-state as the immediate practical objective, that the revolutionary forces of any given country can effectively struggle against the imperialism they face concretely in their own lives. In other words, the socialist project is essentially universalist in character, and socialism, even as a transitional mode, cannot exist except on a transnational basis; yet the struggle for even the prospect of that transition presumes a national basis, in so far as the already existing structures of the nation-state are a fundamental reality of the very terrain on which actual class conflicts take place. (In Theory 317–18)

As a Marxist committed to world socialism, to the idea "that we live in not three worlds but in one" (103), Ahmad is very critical of the political role of nations, nationhood, nationality, national identity, and nationalism. One of the goals of socialism being a world without borders, the socialist Ahmad even desires the ultimate destruction of these geopolitical notions. Yet, he also recognizes that in a world of nations, the socialist cannot simply wish nations away, or ignore their existence. To do so would be politically disabling, a complete separation of political theory from the context of its praxis. Even if nations are useful in the short term, what happens to them in the long term? In Ahmad's utopian vision of what one world should be, what is to be the fate of what Bhabha calls

"cultural difference," which "focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation," as opposed to "cultural diversity," which "is the recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs" and "gives rise to liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity" (The Location of Culture 34). Though Ahmad singles out Bhabha for criticism of what he characterizes as poststructuralist theory's depoliticizing effect (68-69), I suggest that what Bhabha calls "cultural difference" must be carefully guarded in any concept of international struggle. Cultural diversity, characterized by "the separation of totalized cultures" could be seen as the cultural equivalent of the geo-political entities of nations. Cultural difference involves border crossings between cultures, allows for heterogeneity, without separating differences or setting them against one another in inter-national struggles (of the sort occurring in the former Yugoslavia). If Ahmad's notion of the temporary use of nations involves the elimination of cultural difference at the sites where nations once stood, it merely repeats the homogenization of the insidious brand of nationalism Fanon, Kristeva, and Said decry. In the place of many nations defined through exclusion, there would only be one, no less exclusive, perhaps even more so.

Writing the Queer Nation

It is with Bhabha's concept of "writing the nation" that I want to associate the role Moha le fou, Moha le sage assigns to the postcolonial écrivain engagé. Given the Barthesian notion of reading as a rewriting of the text, I argue that Moha's paradigm of postcolonial writing also offers modes of reading postcolonial texts, in a writing of the Nation, a rewriting of the Nation, that involves the sort of resignification Butler describes. The fact that Moha might articulate the role of the postcolonial writer is indicated in his exchange with M. Milliard. In this exchange, M. Milliard characterizes Moha as a writer:

De toute façon, toi, tu t'es mis à l'écart et tu as le beau rôle: tu nous regardes et puis tu vas écrire des bouquins. La critique, c'est aisé, comme dit l'autre, mais la

vie, la lutte pour la vie, ce n'est pas à la portée de n'importe qui.... Vous vous réfugiez dans un buisson de mots et vous voulez refaire le monde, vous voulez faire la lutte des classes. Quelle illusion! Le pays n'a pas besoin de mots, surtout pas de poésie, il a besoin de progrès et de techniques nouvelles. (97)

The character the novel places in opposition to Moha's class politics condemns the function of postcolonial writers, situating it within class struggle. The critique such writers offer hinders economic progress as conceived by and for the benefit of the ruling class. M. Milliard, member of the national ruling class, uses the same logic of the psychiatrist when the latter says about his leftist intern, "Il est bon pour démolir. Il ne construit rien" (155). Both characters repeat the cliché of the idealist socialist who dreams up solutions to injustice that are unworkable in the "real" world, the cliché that figures socialism as an unworkable utopia. M. Milliard associates this "idealism" with the task of the writer, whom he describes as useless: "La poésie c'était bon du temps des Abassides, du temps de l'Andalousie, du temps de l'accalmie et des lauriers de l'histoire.... Tu t'es englué dans le magma des mots et des phrases obscures. Tu as fait vœu de pauvreté. Tu n'es pas pauvre; tu es raté! voilà la vérité. Que peux-tu avec des livres, surtout dans un pays où l'écrasante majorité des gens ne sait ni lire ni écrire" (97-98).

But as Moha says, "Mon pouvoir est dans les mots; et les mots sont traîtres" (25). Moha, like the écrivain engagé, uses words to betray the Nation. This treason is situated in the context of other types of treasons described above, especially sexual ones. Ben Jelloun places in the mouth of a millionaire an argument many nationalists, even leftist ones, have made. This criticism has particularly been levied against Maghrebian writers of French expression, like Ben Jelloun, and even more against those who live in metropolitan France, again like Ben Jelloun. Ben Jelloun, in his interviews and in his novel L'écrivain public, has argued against the logic exemplified here by M. Milliard. What function does the argument play here, coming from the mouth of the national bourgeoisie? Perhaps Ben Jelloun dismisses this nationalist argument as serving the ruling class. But perhaps he also

uses it as another way of qualifying his own critique of post-independence power relations in the Maghreb, another way of questioning the speaking subject of the novel, of deconstructing his own subject position.

Ben Jelloun's use of M. Milliard to criticize himself would then work in the same way as his use of the psychiatrist in his relation to Moha. The writer, in Moha le fou, Moha le sage, speaks as a madman. The writer Ben Jelloun has a doctorate in psychiatry and has written a psychiatric treatise (La plus haute des solitudes), where the authority of the author depends on the truth-value of psychiatric discourse. Here he denies that authority by rejecting its complicity with the ruling class and rejects the authority of the author (a rejection often referred to as the death of the author) at the same time. Thus, Moha is, in addition to a model of the role of postcolonial writers, a questioning of that same role, an acknowledgment that (in particular) the Francophone postcolonial writer's political efficacy is a matter of current (and often sharp) debate.

In his conversation with the bank director, Moha establishes what I would call his version of writing history:

La nostalgie est un voile, un masque de l'oubli, une digue levée parmi les vieilles pierres. Vous reste la nuit où vous croupissez, corps gras, corps pendants. Mais la nuit n'a point de ventre pour réchauffer vos mains. Elle a des trappes et des sanglots lourds. Pour votre égoïsme. Pour vos calculs. Vous dormez enlacés à vos biens, votre fortune moins le ciel. Le matin, il se dégage de vos corps las et froissés l'odeur de la banalité. C'est là votre honte discrète. C'est là l'amnésie impossible. C'est là l'impossible révolution... Révolution, ai-je dit?

Oui, tu as parlé de révolution. Tu n'as pas cessé d'injurier les honnêtes gens. Qu'est-ce que tu veux? Dis-le et ne te cache pas derrière les mots. Tu veux renvoyer tout le monde au chaos? Tu veux notre mort, tu veux notre disparition totale? Le million de martyrs ne te suffit pas? Qui te paye? Qui t'envoie? Pour

qui travailles-tu? Tu ne vas pas nous parler encore de tes histoires d'ogre et d'ogresse qui meurent d'amour.... (131)

His version of history negotiates between a nostalgia of the past and amnesia. He equates official versions of history, and its tales of heroism, its glorification of martyrs, with forgetting, and even his own erasure ("notre disparition totale"). He equates its continued association of the nation's margins with the former colonizer, and its demonification of democracy and socialism with tales of ogres and ogresses. If official history operates as a veil, as a mask, as a barrier ("digue") to protect national security, Moha describes his own task as an unveiling, an unmasking, like the speaking voice of Whitman's poem quoted in my epigraph. He denounces official deployments of revolution as false claims and inscribes his unveiling as a revolutionary act. In this sense, he continues the genre of combat literature, for this unveiling occurs through the words he utters.

Like a storyteller, Moha articulates a voice, which he hurls out onto the public square. Like a public writer, he speaks for many. Such is the task of the postcolonial writer: unveiling national and sexual secrets in public, reclaiming a past hidden by official history, rewriting the Nation of nationalist discourse as a queer nation.

CHAPTER 3

MARGINAL SEXUALITIES AND SEXUAL DISSIDENCE UNVEILED

On peut couvrir une bavure, répliquait-il, mais un cadavre ne se dissimule pas--même lorsqu'il est enterré.

—Tahar Djaout, L'invention du désert

closet...

c. skeleton in the closet (or cupboard): a private or concealed trouble in one's house or circumstances, ever present, and ever liable to come into view: see SKELETON.

d. to come out of the closet: to admit (something) openly, to cease to conceal, esp. one's homosexuality. Opp. to be in the closet....

skeleton...

b. a skeleton in the closet, cupboard, etc.: A secret source of shame or pain to a family or person....

c. a skeleton at the feast (or banquet), a reminder of serious or saddening things in the midst of enjoyment; a source of gloom or depression.

—The Oxford English Dictionary

In his discursive production on the public square, Moha unveils his political critique and his model of the postcolonial écrivain engagé. Sexuality, brought out of the private sphere into plain view, is but one part of his narrative. In many Maghrebien novels, however, one could argue that sexuality is central to the narrative economy. Rather than attempting to examine all such novels (an endeavor that could, alone, fill several volumes), I have selected four: Rachid Boudjedra's La répudiation, Tahar Djaout's Les chercheurs d'os and L'invention du désert (which I read together), and Tahar Ben Jelloun's La prière de l'absent, which offer paradigms for the political role of unveiling sexualities and sexual dissidence through narrative. More than representing sexualities otherwise hidden, this narrative act of unveiling constitutes an act of political dissidence. As Ben Jelloun points out in "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb," we remember, by articulating sexual transgressions through unveiling, that Maghrebien literature contests the status quo. Authors who put the Nation's dirty laundry on display are viewed as traitors. Boudjedra,

Djaout, and Ben Jelloun demonstrate, however, that such authors betray not their entire nation but merely the elite that rules it.

In Boudjedra's Les 1001 années de la nostalgie, revolution is only carried out through sexual liberation. Homosexuality implicitly plays the same political role in Boudjedra's La répudiation, where the narrator's homosexual brother represents a challenge to colonialism, the postcolonial ruling elite, patriarchy, and even compulsory heterosexuality. Tahar Djaout, in his reflections on the political function of writing history, further reflects on the consequences of unveiling sexual secrets. In Les chercheurs d'os, the narrator goes to dig up the bones of his brother, who died fighting against the French in the Algerian revolution. But these bones are also the past that haunts the present, the unofficial history that contests the rule of a new elite by revealing how this elite has betrayed the revolution; these bones are the skeleton Djaout drags out of the Nation's closet, the skeleton at the feast of the new elite's economic privileges. In L'invention du désert, the closet that holds the skeleton/national secrets turns out to be the same as the one hiding homosexuality. The narrator, charged with writing the history of the Almoravids, ends up revealing the repression of male homosexuality used by the dynasty replacing them to consolidate its power. Tahar Ben Jelloun's La prière de l'absent offers a paradigm of what a similar unveiling does to national identity. At first, the novel is a narrative of national identity, of taking a nameless baby to the source of national resistance to the French while granting it a national identity by narrating tales of anti-colonial heroism. The return to origins fails and the dirty secrets of the nation are revealed. But this unveiling of political oppression at the nation's origin coincides with another unveiling, that of a character's forgotten homoerotic passion for a schoolmate. This coming out complicates national identity, disrupts official versions of national history, and offers an alternative source of identity at the (sexual) margins of the Nation.

Homosexuality (Un)veiled: Rachid Boudjedra's Sexual Politics

Ben Jelloun's juxtaposition of "contesting the social order" and the "transgression of sexual taboos," formulated as an unveiling, is also at work in the novels of the Algerian writer Rachid Boudjedra. He makes explicit the connection between political agitation and sexual freedom in Les 1001 années de la nostalgie, whose sexual politics are also implicit in La répudiation, where the narrator uses his brother's homosexual identity to define his own national and sexual identity within a postcolonial Algerian context.

In Les 1001 années de la nostalgie, the inhabitants of an Algerian village revolt against foreign filmmakers, who come to film an Orientalist version of the Arabian Nights, and against the indigenous governor, Bender Chah, who invited the filmmakers. Because the revolt involves kicking out a foreign presence, at times the novel seems to allegorize the Algerian revolution; at other times it seems to allegorize a post-independence struggle against a national elite as personified by Bender Chah. At any rate, the revolt in the novel also involves a fight for sexual liberation. When the freedom fighters must go underground to continue their struggle, they take on false identities. This change so confuses Messaouda S.N.P. that, at one point, the men are afraid she will carry the reversal of sexual roles so far as to force them into seclusion every month for their menstrual periods (302–3). In one episode, women revolt against a decree by the Governor forcing them to shave their pubic hair, and this revolt becomes a means of opposing the regime in power, and therefore, colonialism. The leader of the revolt, Messaouda, incites dissension among the women by shouting, "Il n'a qu'à venir y mettre le nez lui-même, hurlait-elle pour provoquer la gardienne des lieux, car mon sexe qui a déjà craché dix-neuf enfants n'a plus rien à craindre des menaces d'un vieux fou." The women "réclamaient le droit d'entretenir leur sexe comme elles en avaient envie et proclamaient que si les exigences du Gouverneur devaient être respectées, il fallait que cette loi sur le pubis soit étendue aux hommes eux-mêmes." Finally, the Governor is forced to give in, and the women go back to shaving their hair, which they only stopped doing because it became the law. "Seule la meneuse refusa de se raser et tint bon, malgré les supplications de ses filles

qui avaient peur que sa toison ne débordât de sa culotte et n'envahît la maison comme une mauvaise broussaille pour s'en aller de proche en proche jusqu'à couvrir toutes les rues poudreuses, arriver sur la place et grimper comme un lierre tenace et entêté sur les murs extérieurs de la dizaine de cafés dont les propriétaires étaient, bien sûr, rançonnés sérieusement par Bender Chah" (46-47).

Is it a coincidence that it is precisely a woman without a patronymic name, that is, a woman unmarked by patriarchal law, by the father's name, who leads this movement? Later, in the revolution that will overthrow the powers that be, even the Governor's wife espouses the people's cause, attacking the aggressors who try to rape her, by protecting herself with a fan that cuts up their penises (305). However, one should be wary of a premature celebration of the above passage as a model of feminist struggle. At the end of the passage, one can see how, in the male imaginary, the political potential of female sexuality threatens to get out of control, invading everything (particularly the traditional spaces reserved for men, the streets, the public square, the cafés). In some respects, the image of pubic hair taking over an entire village resembles erotic literature's representation of the omnisexual woman, the archetype that embodies the danger of women's sexuality as described by Fatma Aït Sabbah in La femme dans l'inconscient musulman and a male representation of female subversion not necessarily incompatible with official discourse. This image also relies on the symbolism of hair as female impurity. In his allegory of revolution, Boudjedra unveils the danger of women's sexuality to use it a weapon in much the same way as Fanon does in "L'Algérie se dévoile." However, whereas Fanon uses this unveiling against the colonizer, Boudjedra uses it in a struggle that brings down an indigenous ruler (a personification of the national elite) in addition to driving out a colonial/neo-colonial invader. Whereas Fanon was unaware of the danger of recuperating this danger and containing it after the revolution, Boudjedra warns against a recuperation of women's struggle by recounting a past revolt of the village's women against its men: "En 1450, les femmes de Manama se révoltèrent contre les hommes et gagnèrent la guerre des

sexes, après une année de batailles, d'embuscades et de guet-apens. Par la suite, confiantes et généreuses, elles furent récupérées en douce et progressivement par les vaincus qui non seulement les frustrèrent d'une victoire éclatante mais aussi les privèrent de la vie tout court" (334–35).

As Aït Sabbah, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, Malek Chebel, and Tahar Ben Jelloun have associated the danger of homosexuality and other marginal sexualities with the danger hidden beneath veils, Boudjedra unveils the particular danger of homosexuality in La répudiation, where this danger, unveiled, is deployed in postcolonial political critique. The title of this section, "Homosexuality (Un)veiled," alludes to the title of Fanon's essay; "L'Algérie se dévoile," translated in the English version as "Algeria Unveiled." In my title, however, I have enclosed the prefix "un-" in parentheses to show how unveiling, in Fanon's and Boudjedra's imaginaries, is not a clear and simple operation.

Boudjedra's first novel, La répudiation, consists of two parallel narratives. The narrator, Rachid, is interned in a psychiatric hospital either for political reasons or because his is mentally ill, probably for both reasons. He also recounts his childhood and his mother's repudiation by his father to Céline, a French woman he desires, desires to veil and enclose (cloîtrer), and whose body (because it is a female body) disgusts him. In an effort to define his own (hetero)sexuality, the narrator also analyzes his brother Zahir's homosexuality. Whereas in Les 1001 années de la nostalgie, women's sexuality is seen as dangerous to male power, in La répudiation, homosexuality performs part of this function.¹ Although Zahir and his Jewish companion are the most visible homosexuals, they are not the only examples of homosexuality. In the character of Heimatlos—which means in German "apatride" (without a country) as well as "déraciné" (uprooted), "outcast"—homosexual and foreigner are combined into one. Heimatlos is impure, in this Muslim context because he is Jewish. But one might also associate his impurity with his sexuality: "La mère, sitôt le professeur parti, aérail les chambres, lavait les verres dans

¹Much of my analysis of La répudiation is revised from the portion of my article, "Approches de l'homosexualité et de l'homoérotisme chez Boudjedra, Mammeri et Sebbar," on Boudjedra (160–71).

lesquels le mécréant avait bu et récitait des formules incantatoires. Mon frère la laissait faire et restait impassible" (104). On the one hand, it is clear that the narrator dislikes Heimatlos and is intolerant of his homosexuality: "[J]e n'arrêtais plus de vider ma haine contre le professeur que j'accusait [sic] d'être un faux pédéraste; il n'avait alors d'autre recours que de me frapper et de me faire taire de force..." (155). His intolerance pops up in other passages: "Pour arriver à la maison de Ma, il faudrait éviter les impasses urineuses—rendez-vous d'homosexuels qui se caressent dans le noir des latrines—et les cafés à rengaines. Faire de longs détours pour ne pas tomber dans la facilité!..." (61). In this passage, homosexuality is that which must be avoided because it represents a threat, "une facilité," that is, a temptation.

In La sexualité en Islam, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba describes a similar view in classical Arabic literature whereby homosexual desire represents a similar temptation: "Al Hassan Ibn Dhakwân disait: Ne vous asseyez pas à côté des fils des nobles: ils ont des visages comme ceux des vierges et ils sont encore plus tentateurs que les femmes" (46). Much is often made in studies of sexuality from a Foucauldian point of view of the distinction between pre-industrial categories of sodomy and the more modern category of homosexuality. While, according to this view, thus strictly defined, homosexuality is an identity category more or less exclusive of heterosexuality, sodomy is in no such way exclusive; in contexts where the paradigm of sodomy is the dominant sexual discourse, all are susceptible to the dangers of sodomy; it is a temptation from which none is immune.²

²Some medievalists have begun to question Foucault's characterization of sodomy in pre-industrial societies and the radical change brought about by the paradigm shift he claimed to describe. Joan Cadden, for example, writes, "Foucault used the Middle Ages mainly as a foil, highlighting his characterization of Greek attitudes toward pleasure by contrasting them with later Christian attitudes, which he saw as legalistic, negative, and narrowly tied to procreation. This view contains no acknowledgment of the medieval opinion that intercourse could promote health or of scholastic interest in nonreproductive sexual behavior" (Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages (8)). In Sexualité et savoir médical au Moyen Âge, Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset examine the multiplicity of medieval voices on sexuality, especially the contradictions between medical discourses and theological discourses. Not being a medievalist, I am unqualified to judge the accuracy of Foucault's representation of the Middle Ages. Thus far, though complicating his generalizations, most published work on medieval "sexuality" accepts many of his basic premises. Cadden writes, for example, "[Foucault's] history has influenced the present work, which includes extensive consideration of medieval texts on the subject of sexual pleasure. However, like the words 'science' and 'gender,' the word 'sexuality' (and also the words 'homosexuality' and even 'orgasm') occurs infrequently here, in order to avoid any implication that those concepts were or correspond to

This aspect of a universal possibility of sodomy is often used to describe same-sex behavior (especially among men) in Arab or Muslim societies. And this temptation is inherent in what Boudjedra calls homosexuality. In this way, Boudjedra seems to concur with these studies. In other places, as will become evident below, he contradicts them.

The occurrence of homosexual activity in the presence of urine above contributes to the association of homosexuality and impurity. The impure nature of urine is pointed out in another passage: "Les bbs-singes... lâchent un pipi sur les pantalons arabes de leur pre sans aucun gard pour la religion qui interdit la prire  ceux qui portent des traces d'urine..." (48). In another passage the narrator says: "Ds que le marchand m'adresse la parole, je me crispe. Homosexualit latente. Tout le monde sait qu'il a des rapports malfiques avec mon frre" (107). It is interesting to note that, in the second sentence, latent homosexuality is, in fact, attributed to no one. In a context where the merchant maintains a relationship with Zahir, the reader would perhaps be justified in attributing this homosexuality to the merchant. But why not attribute it to the narrator, the closest grammatical antecedent? For the functioning of the narrative economy to succeed in this passage, the reader must share the narrator's prejudices and, as the narrator's accomplice, read them back into the text. The latent homosexuality of the passage is actually a floating signifier that could be attached to one character or the other, precisely the reason why it is so threatening.

medieval categories" (7). Notable exceptions to those who accept many of Foucault's premises are John Boswell, in Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality, and Simon Gaunt, in "Straight Minds/'Queer' Wishes in Old French Hagiography." Boswell writes in a later essay, "This is, for example, the assumption usually alleged to make Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality an essentialist work: the supposition that there have been in all Western societies 'gay people' and 'non-gay people.' This is not a false attribution: it was, in fact, the working hypothesis of the book" ("Categories, Experience, and Sexuality" 137). Gaunt writes, "...I am unable to agree with the so-called constructionist argument that the modern period invents sexuality, homo- or hetero- or that individuals in earlier periods are defined by their acts, rather than by an immanent orientation toward sexual object choice; or that sexual identity itself is a purely modern phenomenon" ("Straight Minds/'Queer' Wishes" 441). Neither the results of these studies, however, nor the texts they examine back up these working assumptions. (Each study, nevertheless, produces valid findings independent of their founding assumption.) What interests me is that the differences Foucault makes across historical periods are also useful in discussing conflicting paradigms of same-sex desire, love, and behavior in the present. Nevertheless, as the example that follow demonstrate, these distinction are often not quite as clean-cut as Foucault would have lead us to believe.

Rachid uses the word "homosexuality" in a more general or inclusive way than its stricter Foucauldian definition would allow. For him, in some passages, homosexuality also includes the notion of a homoeroticism everyone might be capable of: "Il y a autant de bateaux que de gargottes sordides; des pêcheurs y mangent du poisson, boivent du vin rouge et fument du kif. Certains soirs, ivres morts ils condescendent à faire l'amour à des marins étrangers et aux petits vendeurs de cigarettes" (81). In this passage, homosexuality is what one does when one has lost control of reason; homosexuality thus borders on the bestial. As with Heimatlos, here homosexuality is associated with the foreign. It is what one does with foreigners or boys, who are not (yet) men, who are seen by men as substitutes for women, but the fishermen do not do it among themselves. In that the boys are lower class, the passage perhaps associates homosexuality with lower-class activity. In Moha le fou, Moha le sage lower-class boys introduce rich city boys to same-sex pleasure in the fields, and the banker goes to the "popular" hammam to have fun with boys. Likewise, in the above passage, perhaps the fact the fishermen choose same-sex partners who are beneath them in class position as well as younger allows them to engage in act that would be unthinkable for them among equals. One can also see an association of homosexuality and alcohol, both forbidden in Islam.³ Another passage also suggests the link between Zahir's homosexuality and alcohol: "La mort de mon frère n'était que la conséquence normale des actes du clan qui se préparait déjà à une vengeance longtemps attendue; Zahir n'était que la victime expiatoire d'une violence obligatoire qui allait se déverser sur la contrée et n'épargner personne; l'alcool, comme le sang, était nécessaire à la terre exondée et bouleversée pendant un long répit insupportable" (152-53). Even though the brother's acts are not specified, one might especially think of his homosexuality, but also of the fact that he drinks a lot, since the word "alcohol" appears in the passage. Both

³In Encyclopédie de l'amour en Islam, Malek Chebel writes, "En terre arabe, en Iran et en Turquie, le vin a toujours été le compagnon de la ville basse et des équipées nocturnes, le liquide arrosant les soirées orgiaques que vantaient les chantes de la bonne chère et des amours interdits" (637).

alcohol and homosexuality are impurities, and the brother's death has an expiatory aspect: homosexuality and alcoholism are punished through death.

One of the principal arguments of Vito Russo's Celluloid Closet consists in showing how, in classical Hollywood films, cinematic convention required all homosexual characters to be killed off before the end of the film and in explaining the role of this convention in keeping homosexuality in the closet. Here, even the character's death is enigmatic. The fact that the homosexual is killed in the heterosexual imaginary expresses, perhaps, a desire for homosexuality not to exist, a desire to destroy it. In fact, although Zahir's homosexuality is not revealed until page 103, one learns that he will die on page 104. In this way, any possible danger represented by his homosexuality is managed, controlled, displaced within the narrative economy through the immediate articulation of its coming elimination. In reading this passage, one might also think of the "Membres Secrets du Clan," Boudjedra's allegorical figure for the post-independence oppressive regime. The father—who is part of the clan, who collaborates with colonial authorities before the revolution and (hypocritically, or maybe not so much so) supports the postcolonial regime represented as the Membres Secrets du Clan—combines patriarchal, colonial, post-colonial, and homophobic privileges and powers. In his desire to kill his father and by his mere presence as a homosexual who refuses to participate in a system of compulsory heterosexuality, Zahir marks the failure of a power that cannot control everything and his presence within the narrative must be eliminated.

Whereas the passages just cited indicate an intolerance of homosexuality on the narrator's part—although the articulation of this intolerance is replete with both textual and syntactical ambiguities—other passages more clearly show an ambivalence, a complicity, even a curiosity, on the narrator's part, for his brother's sexuality:

Zahir, lui, n'aimait pas les femmes. Il était amoureux de son professeur de physique, un juif aux yeux très bleus et très myopes qui venait souvent à la maison, malgré l'hostilité marquée de ma mère. Au début, je pensais qu'être

homosexuel était quelque chose de distingué, car le juif était très beau, avait une voix douce et pleurait très facilement. Chaque fois que j'essayais de comprendre les rapports entre mon frère et son professeur, Zahir se mettait en colère: "Va renifler tes cousines!" hurlait-il. Pour communiquer entre eux, en présence d'un tiers, ils avaient inventé un code très compliqué. Le Juif répétait souvent qu'il était un "heimatlos" et comme je ne comprenais pas, je m'énervais tellement que j'allais me masturber dans les toilettes. (103)

One can see in the brother's reply a rather strong scorn for the narrator's (hetero)sexuality. Though intolerant, the narrator does not describe his brother as submissive or weak. One also notices in the passage a certain inchoate attraction towards homosexuality, since the narrator began by believing it was distinguished. He wants to know it, understand it, and his frustration in not being able to satisfy his curiosity about a homosexuality that resists his penetrating and invading gaze, leads him to masturbate. As opposed to other examples of same-sex erotic behavior in the novel, Zahir seems to resemble the modern and "Western" form of homosexuality as Foucault describes it. The erotic attraction Heimatlos elicits from the narrator is mentioned several times: "...Heimatlos essayait en vain de nouer les cheveux mouillés des fillettes; l'érotisme nous perçait de part en part et nous rendait, à la fois, vivaces et fébriles..." (156). After Zahir's death, Heimatlos stays in the narrator's room where they bathe together: "Là, nous nous baignions..." (155). Even though the narrator finds Heimatlos's alterity repulsive in some ways, he finds it attractive in others. After the funeral, the narrator runs away with Heimatlos: "Je venais de comprendre à l'instant que Zahir était mort véritablement... je décidai de m'enfuir. Vite, je fus très loin, courant vers la ville, Heimatlos à mes côtés empêtré dans ses habits trop larges" (172). In fleeing with the foreigner, the narrator shares his exile, shares, in part, Heimatlos's foreign qualities associated with the otherness of homosexuality in other passages.

Though the narrator defines his sexuality through his heterosexual obsession in the present of the novel's narration, though he seems to define it in opposition to his brother's

homosexuality, the narrator recalls several episodes of pederasty from his childhood. One example occurred among the dock workers and the unemployed at the port:

En été, nous allions jusqu'à nous baigner dans l'eau fangeuse du port, parmi les dockers et les chômeurs venus au bord de l'eau fumer du kif et, par la même occasion, nous peloter les fesses sous prétexte de nous apprendre à nager. Après de telles escapades, nous n'échappions pas aux corrections des oncles. Les femmes, dans ces cas, étaient de connivence avec les hommes.... Généralement, elles nous protégeaient contre la sauvagerie des mâles, mais lorsqu'il s'agissait de baignades elles étaient intraitables. N'ayant jamais vu la mer, elles se fiaient aux hommes pour mesurer les dangers que nous courions. (57-58)

The child-narrator seems upset because his parents do not let him go swimming with the dock workers. It is less the case that he particularly enjoys what they do to him, but rather that being fondled by men is not such a great price to pay for a summer swim. He uses the expression "savage men" to refer not to the dock workers but to male family members who would forbid swimming and who punish violently. Like sodomy, the paradigm of cross-generational models of homosexuality (i.e. pederasty), most often associated with pre-modern Western societies such as ancient Greece, often filters into studies of Arab or Muslim sexuality. The model of pederasty shares with sodomy the fact that sexual identity is based not on a hetero/homo binary, but on an active/passive one. A man is masculine as long as he is the active partner. It is the passive partner who is more associated with the feminine. In the Greek model, this passive role was degrading to free adult citizens, leaving slaves, boys, foreigners, and of course women to fill the position.⁴ Within the sexual act one is thus forced to note the number of hierarchies coinciding, hierarchies concerning gender, class, age, and inclusion in the political formation of the city-state, which for my purposes might be considered a forerunner of the Nation. Boudjedra's example of dock workers and his earlier example of fishermen who make love to foreign

⁴The bibliography on this question is extensive. See Halperin, Dover, Greenberg 141-51, Winkler, and the later volumes of Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité*, for some examples.

sailors and lower-class boys indicate a similar coincidence of hierarchies. I have already discussed the tendency of a homophobic brand of nationalism to associate homosexuality with a foreign evil. Boudjedra's examples offer a slight variation on this theme: passive homosexuality soils national identity. It is a necessary function relegated to those at the Nation's margins or beyond its borders, in much the same way as the serving of alcohol has been relegated to Christians and Jews in the poetic universe of Abu Nuwas.⁵

In a second example of pederasty from the narrator's childhood, that of the Quranic school teacher, the parents actually collaborate:

En hiver, j'aime beaucoup somnoler et le maître n'y peut rien car je lui fais du chantage: l'année dernière il m'a fait des propositions malhonnêtes et je les ai acceptées afin qu'il me laisse en paix et me donne le loisir de rêver du corps somptueux de ma marâtre. Tout le monde accepte les propositions du maître coranique! Il nous caresse furtivement les cuisses et quelque chose de dur brûle le coccyx. C'est tout! Je sais que ce n'est pas grave. Mon frère aîné veille au grain. Les parents, généralement au courant de telles pratiques, ferment les yeux pour ne pas mettre en accusation un homme qui porte en son sein la parole de Dieu; superstitieux, ils préfèrent ne pas être en butte aux sortilèges du maître. Ma sœur dit que c'est là une séquelle de l'âge d'or arabe. Plus tard, j'ai compris que c'est la pauvreté qui incite le "taleb" à l'homosexualité, car dans notre ville il faut avoir beaucoup d'argent pour se marier. Les femmes se vendent sur la place publique, enchaînées aux vaches, et les bordels sont inaccessibles aux petites bourses! (94-95)

The narrator relates the incident in a rather nonchalant manner. Not that he enjoys pederasty, but being left alone is well worth committing acts of pederasty, which seem to have no serious consequences here. As we have already seen, the narrator looks for an

⁵See especially *The Diwan of Abu Nuwas* (156–57, 167), Vincent Mansour Monteuil's comments in the introduction to *Le vin, le vent, la vie* (33–36) as well as poems in the same volume (77, 81).

explanation for homosexuality, which for him, remains enigma. His sister's statement, suggests that, at the moment of enunciation, only a fragment or part remains of medieval practice, that pederasty is not as widespread as it once was. But the valorization implicit in the association of pederasty with a before, an age of splendor, is contradicted by the negative connotation of the word "séquelle," often associated with sickness. The narrator, however, rejects this explanation in favor of another, less troubling for his vision of sexuality: poverty. If the narrator is not heterosexual, he defines his own sexuality in opposition to his brother's homosexuality.⁶ But at the same time, his efforts to assert himself as not homosexual are not completely effective, because of his own ambivalent feelings and a somewhat "homosexual" past. Therein lies its danger; the impenetrable distinction between hetero and homo that is supposed to characterize modern sexual difference may not be as impermeable as Foucault would have claimed. Perhaps homosexuality, like sodomy, is something anyone might be capable of. The association of homosexuality with the *école* or *maître coranique* also recalls the following comment from Driss Chraïbi's *Le passé simple*: "Sans compter que les perversités des grands contaminent les petits et que presque toujours ces écoles servent de cours tacites de pédérastie appliquée avec ou sans le concours de l'honorable maître d'école" (39). Here again, pederasty is troped as contagion.

The final example of pederasty from the *narrator's* childhood is the episode at the community oven where an older man makes a pass at the narrator, who seems to be much younger than in the other two examples. I quote parts of this episode at length in part because it represents one of the most explicit descriptions of homosexual activity in Maghrebian literature:

Imperceptiblement, je sens sa main effleurer mes cuisses nues. Stupeur. Je ne sais que dire. Il continue à me parcourir les jambes et s'attarde de plus en plus. Il

⁶According to Foucauldian accounts of the birth of heterosexuality, heterosexuality becomes possible precisely when the world can be divided into those who desire members of the opposite sex and those who desire members of their own. In other words, heterosexuality is born only when there is a homosexual other in relation to which it can be defined.

regarde en face de lui et seule sa main tâtonne sur ma pauvre chair. J'ai très peur. L'homme n'a pourtant pas l'air de bouger. Je regarde de son côté. Sa tête est immobile. Seule sa main, comme une vipère aveugle, erre sur ma peau nue qui devient frileuse à ce contact visqueux et moite. Je suis pris de panique. Là encore, l'enfance vient d'être saccagée, trahie, violée à brûle-pourpoint par la faute d'un adulte monstrueux. Mais, j'ai surtout peur qu'il ne meure là, sur son banc, car je ne comprends rien à ses gestes ni à ses buts. Fuir.... L'homme, déjà, s'est agenouillé à mes pieds et a sorti son membre viril, tellement énorme que j'ai tout à coup la sensation d'avoir les dents très fraîches; il me force à le toucher et malgré la raideur de l'organe je pense à la cervelle de mouton... il a les yeux fermés et me supplie de lui caresser l'organe raide; une envie folle d'uriner me prend soudainement; il faut que je m'en aille... mais le cœur me bat si fort que je n'ouvre pas la bouche et que j'appréhende de tituber et de m'affaler dans les bras du satyre qui continue à balbutier et entre dans un état second. Je me lance dans le vide de la porte ouverte sur le brasier et le jaillissement lumineux, enfant pourchassé par la véhémence des grandes personnes, déchiqueté déjà par les futurs sarcasmes des tantes et des voisines, miné par le silence qu'il faudra observer pour ne pas déranger les certitudes d'une société ancrée dans ses mythes de pureté et d'abstinence. Comment dénoncer l'ignoble personnage que tout le monde a vu, le matin même, en train d'égrener son chapelet et de sacrifier son mouton? (209–10)

Expression such as "ma pauvre chair," "vipère aveugle," "visqueux," "saccagé, trahie, violée à brûle-pourpoint," and "adulte monstrueux" vehemently emphasize that the narrator experiences being fondled by a man at the community oven as a form of violence. The narrator's negative reaction contradicts his reaction to the teacher's and dock workers' advances, which may be accounted for by an age difference at the time of the various incidents (Rachid is probably quite a bit younger in the oven episode). The two distinct

physical sensations the event provokes are oral (cold teeth) and genital (the need to urinate), and in a novel where urine has been associated with homosexuality, the sexual advances of an older man provoke a need to urinate. These sensations, whose sites are erogenous zones, also render the narrator's characterizations of the older man's sexual approaches as a form of violence a bit more ambiguous. In addition, the narrator, failing to understand this incident, looks to explain it through another, which, as I shall explain below, is not that similar. In a long parenthesis, the narrator describes looking on with the entire family as his brother makes love with another boy:

Il faut se taire; seul Zahir pourrait expliquer l'épisode du four. (Lui que ma mère a surpris, un jour, dans une position scandaleuse, en compagnie d'un gamin du voisinage; elle ne comprenait pas et n'en croyait pas ses yeux; abominable, le spectacle de son enfant monté en grande pompe sur le dos légèrement duveteux de l'autre misérable avec sa sale figure de petit jouisseur; emportés tous les deux dans un monstrueux va-et-vient qui ébranlait leurs corps élancés, la tête ballottante, à la recherche d'un plaisir, somme toute, formel, entrevu à travers les fanfaronnades des grands, pressenti chez les femmes qui erraient, l'aine lourde, dans la maison comme si elles se rendaient compte tout à coup du plaisir que pourrait leur procurer ce fouillis de poils et de chairs vives, rouges et molles, annonciatrices, déjà, de l'ivresse du tréfonds; et Ma les regardait faire, et Ma ne savait que dire; et moi derrière elle, pris entre le fou rire et la violence, et les sœurs derrière moi fixant Saïda et attendant d'elle quelque explication à cette grotesque et haute pitrerie des deux garçons juchés là-haut sur la terrasse et dont on apercevait les têtes et les bustes qui gigotaient, se malmenaient et se violentaient tragiquement; nous tous, rivés à ce spectacle incroyable, debout dans cette grande pièce tout en baie... et Zahir qui ne se rendait pas compte! toujours amarré à son camarade rechignant, peut-être, contre la lenteur du partenaire qui venait juste de faire l'expérience de cette déflagration au bout de son membre, non

pas hideux, non pas crispé, mais simplement étonnant dans son érection sordide; et Ma qui ne pouvait interpellier son fils car elle n'était pas capable d'aller jusqu'au bout de l'explication à donner à cette agglomération de deux corps entrevus l'espace d'une douleur—d'autant plus âpre qu'elle n'allait pas pouvoir s'exprimer; et Ma finit par nous chasser de la pièce, ferma la porte à clef: "Ce n'est rien qu'un jeu brutal", dit elle). Seul Zahir peut donc expliquer ce qui vient de se passer dans l'ombre du four. (209-12)

If it is the case that both incidents involve sexual activity between two members of the same sex, in the oven scene, a man demands pederastic acts from an unconsenting boy, and in the other episode, two adolescents (therefore, approximately of the same age) make love for mutual pleasure. Nonetheless, for the narrator, the second episode contains the secret, the meaning of the first. In the narration of the episode enclosed in parentheses, homosexuality is a spectacle under the gaze of the narrator, who is both disgusted and attracted and restages the scene for the reader. The narrator says that he is "pris entre le fou rire et la violence." His mother attempts to hide, conceal the homosexual act, to deny it. She veils it by enclosing it, shutting the door and saying, "Ce n'est rien qu'un jeu brutal," just as the author encloses the whole episode within parentheses, encloses a representation of pleasure within a scene of violence. In this respect, the narrator has the same desire to veil, enclose his brother's threatening sexuality as to veil, enclose Céline, his companion. However, the narrator reveals a will to know the other that resembles the Orientalist's will to knowledge (with its colonialist implications), described by Edward Said. One may notice that a heterosexual presence in no way disturbs (mentally or physically) Zahir who ignores it. The gaze desiring to know all, focused on him, is not mutual. In another passage, female homosexuality is enclosed in parentheses in a dialogue between two other people: "Des millions de gouines veulent entrer dans mon ventre. J'ai peur. Il faudrait réintroduire la mer dans mon sexe afin qu'il puisse clapoter de nouveau" (138–39). Since this remark is placed in parentheses, it is possible that the narrator is inserting his own

thoughts. If such is the case, by mentioning homosexuality, his own remarks are projected onto a dialogue between two other people.

My remarks on the use of the parenthesis to marginalize is inspired by a comment of H  l  ne Cixous in her discussion, interestingly enough, of the role of women in the Algerian revolution:

"On" lutte ensemble, oui, mais qui: un homme, et    c  t   de lui, chose, quelqu'un—(une femme: toujours dans sa parenth  se, toujours refoul  e ou annul  e en tant que femme, tol  r  e en tant que non-femme, "accept  e"!—et vous n'en   tes pas conscients—,    condition qu'elle s'efface, qu'elle fasse l'homme, qu'elle parle l'homme et pense de m  me. C'est banal ce que je dis l  , pour une femme. On l'a dit souvent. C'est cette exp  rience-l   qui a d  clench   la pointe de la lutte f  ministe aux USA, en France: d  couvrir l   o     a ne devrait pas exister th  oriquement! la discrimination, le fondamental racisme masculin inconscient; ironie politique: se battre contre le racisme par exemple avec des militants qui sont racistes!) (La jeune n  e 137-38)

Cixous uses the parenthesis as a grammatical marker of oppression or the sexual repression that occurs when a sexuality is confined to the closet (refoulement as in "homosexuel refoul  "). Her rhetoric of annulment or self-effacement evokes what many oppressed groups have articulated as internalized homophobia, racism, and sexism, oppressions self-imposed in an act of Foucauldian self-policing. Cixous's rhetoric also evokes what lesbian and gay activists have described as the invisibility imposed by the closet, or by a society's refusal to acknowledge the existence of non-normative sexualities. The danger of what is in the parenthesis (both Cixous's and Boudjedra's) is that it might not be all that parenthetical. In fact, what is marginalized might actually be central to defining dominant identities, what is marginalized might not be totally separate from the marginalizing power. The narrator's brother's sexuality might not be as totally other as the narrator wants to make believe. The homosexual panic Eve Sedgwick describes in Epistemology results

from a similar realization. "Homosexual panic" is a heterosexual fear of the potential contagion of homosexuality. When the heterosexual encounters a homosexual and this fear reaches the level of panic, "homosexual panic" can actually serve as a legal excuse for acts of homophobic violence committed as a result of this panic.⁷ In some passages, the narrator might be considered as being in a similar state of panic.

One may see how, in La répudiation, in spite of a certain ambivalence on the narrator's part—or perhaps it is because of this ambivalence or on the condition that it exists—Boudjedra manages to represent a heterosexual will to knowledge directed at a homosexual character, a heterosexual gaze that reduces its Other to a spectacle, and the threat presented by the figure of the homosexual in a heterosexual imaginary. In this way, the unveiling of homosexuality as a narrative operation resembles in some respects Sedgwick's description of the closet in Epistemology of the Closet. Sedgwick's closet is not a locus of ignorance but of knowledge, knowledge of a secret qua secret, an open secret. The unveiling of homosexuality in La répudiation is not a revelation tout court, but the unveiling of a veiling where homosexuality can only be known as enigma, secret, site of continued resistance to a heterosexual will to knowledge. Boudjedra, through his panicky version of male heterosexuality and masculinity, points to a weakness in male supremacy, a potential bomb site of future political struggle. Nations sometimes experience similar periods of panic over dangers, threats, menaces to the Nation. (In the US, cold-war discourse would be an example of such panic.) Are there ways of provoking such panic that could result in the implosion of supremacy rather than the extermination of the perceived cause of the panic? What happens to the Nation when the perceived danger breaks out of its parenthesis, the margins it is confined to?

Like Moha, La répudiation's narrator is pursued for his political opposition to the post-independence regime. The place of his confinement is the psychiatric hospital. His political opposition is paralleled by his hate for his father, who collaborated with the

⁷Cf. Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet 19–21, 138–39, 182–212.

colonizers and who hypocritically supports the new regime figured as the Membres Secrets du Clan, the very ones who pursue the narrator and seem to be responsible for Zahir's death. The post-independence political system is thus represented as inextricably linked to patriarchy. Rachid's hatred of his father is therefore allegorical of his political opposition. In this hatred, he has an ally, Zahir, who is much more effective than Rachid. Is, then, Zahir's sexuality linked to Rachid's political opposition? Exactly how does it function in the political economy of the novel that would allow it to perform a similar function to that of sexuality in Les 1001 années de la nostalgie? Must the danger posed by such sexuality always be eliminated through extermination? Djaout and Ben Jelloun offer answers to these questions posed by La répudiation. Djaout formulates the model of postcolonial writing that drags skeletons out of the closet. Tahar Djaout, an Algerian Berber writer assassinated by Islamic fundamentalists in the summer of 1993, paid for the danger his writing posed with his life, as Zahir does in La répudiation.

Skeletons in the Closet: Tahar Djaout's Betrayal of National Secrets

If, as Bhabha has written, "Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time" (Nation and Narration 1), Djaout has gone back to find out what was lost. He uncovers the hidden secrets at the Nation's origins as Ernest Renan describes them, secrets that must be forgotten, what I call the Nation's closet. In Les chercheurs d'os (1984) and L'invention du désert (1987), Djaout insists on remembering, on revealing these secrets, in order to challenge not only the Algerian ruling elite, which some have begun to call the "mafia politico-financière," but also the fundamentalist opposition. In L'invention du désert, these secrets are also sexual secrets. Djaout reveals these secrets through novelistic rewritings of history, reclaiming what has been hidden from history, bringing skeletons out of the Nation's closet, bringing history itself out of the closet.

Les chercheurs d'os is about, quite literally, digging up bones. Sent by his parents, the young narrator of Les chercheurs d'os, sets out in search of the remains of his brother,

who died in the Algerian revolution fighting for national liberation, in order to repatriate the bones to the village of his birth. The quest succeeds, but his brother's bones are not the only skeleton he digs up over the course of this narrative itinerary. The bones of dead fighters also come to represent skeletons in the closets of national history. With the brother's bones, the narrator's family will be able to obtain the necessary papers in a new bureaucratic order (which has replaced the old colonial bureaucratic order), not the new order the brother and his revolutionary comrades spilt their blood for.

From the very beginning of Les chercheurs d'os, the young narrator questions the task he must fulfill. He even goes so far as to hope his mission fails:

Et, comble de dérision, même ceux qui sont allés mourir ailleurs, ...voici qu'on décide de ramener leurs restes et leur souvenir dans ce village tyrannique qui les avait empêchés, leur vie durant, de respirer sans contrainte et d'étendre leurs membres au grand soleil bienfaisant qui pourtant pressure les corps jusqu'à en faire jaillir les humeurs les plus secrètes. Le mieux que je puisse espérer pour mon frère est que ses os demeurent introuvables, enfouis dans quelque terre plus hospitalière que cette parcelle de monde dont les mœurs et le rigorisme sont façonnés à l'image de ses rocailles.

Mon frère ne peut être qu'à l'aise là où il repose. De toute manière il est impossible qu'il s'y sente plus mal que chez nous. (25-26)

His brother, in leaving to join the guerrillas, escapes from his village, which the narrator associates with constraint, oppression; in liberating his nation, he liberates himself. The narrator associates the struggle for national liberation with the quest for individual freedom, which is linked with the ability to leave, to travel. The narrator's mission, however, goes against this personal liberation and borders on disrespect for the dead. Instead of resting in peace in the free soil of a free country, his brother's bones are tossed about, disturbed: "Ils s'entrechoquent comme des pièces de monnaie à chaque fois que l'âne trébuche ou aborde les chemins encaissés" (147). The narrator describes this exhumation as a grave robbery:

"Nous faisons tout pour éviter nos semblables comme si de chercheurs d'os que nous avons été au départ nous étions devenus des voleurs d'os" (151). Like the Algerian land expropriated by the French, like desecrated Jewish cemeteries, his brother's skeleton is subjected to sacrilege at the hands of grave diggers who give themselves the right to disturb him:

Lorsqu'il était parti par cette nuit de grande décision, il savait—et j'en étais certain moi aussi—que c'était pour un voyage si important qu'on n'en revient jamais. Mais l'acharnement de la famille est plus malfaisant que toutes les légions de l'enfer! La famille vous harcèle de votre vivant, multiplie les entraves et les bâillons et, une fois qu'elle vous a poussé vers la tombe, elle s'arroge des droits draconiens sur votre squelette. Allez donc me chercher une contrée où l'on ne dispose même pas librement de ses os! On meurt en croyant laisser derrière soi des parents inconsolables et ce sont des vautours insatiables que pourchassent vos os comme pour en extraire un reste de moelle. (148-49)

Here the narrator reverses the usual relation between the living and the dead; the dead are no longer the ones who come back to haunt the living, but the living who make up a living hell that disturbs, haunts the dead, denied the possibility of resting in peace. The image of the "rapaces" says a great deal about this relationship, because they are the birds that feed on carcasses and profit from others' deaths. Without even waiting for the death of their prey, they circle over it in a deathwatch.

The search for skeletons seems to benefit the living more than honor the dead: "Mais voilà, chaque famille, chaque personne a besoin de sa petite poignée d'os bien à elle pour justifier l'arrogance et les airs importants qui vont caractériser son comportement à venir sur la place du village" (21). Fighters' bones carry a moral authority founded on the spilt blood of guerrillas martyred while fighting against the immoral colonial system. This authority lies in relics rather than being guided by ideals or principals. Whoever possesses these relics may channel their power, regardless of how the power is used: "Des gamins

qui ne connaissaient encore rien de la vie mais allaient 'farfouiller dans les registres de la mort' pour lui disputer des squelettes dont les vivants avaient besoin pour atténuer l'éclat trop insolent des richesses que le nouveau monde dispensait" (10).

Now, or even when the novel was published (1984), the reference to wealth that the new government had promised to distribute and the reference to a new economic order that merely led up to the Algerian government's renouncement of socialism can only be ironic. Describing the zerda at La-Source-de-la-Vache, the narrator states: "Les riches de toujours que l'Indépendance du pays avait épargnés et les nouveaux notables enrichis par l'Indépendance viennent assurer et faire bénir leurs biens" (67). Instead of a redistribution of wealth, the new nation witnesses a consolidation of the old bourgeoisie and the formation of a new elite. Yet, this consolidation does not prevent the promise of economic equity from having a powerful hold on the national consciousness:

Le mot a été connu: Le pays possède désormais un gouvernement qui est à tout le monde et qui a des richesses à distribuer à pleines poignées. Alors beaucoup de villageois ont déserté leurs maisons, ont vendu leur paire de bœufs et leur maigre troupeau de chèvres ou de moutons pour être moins encombrés. Ils se sont entassés devant les locaux administratifs dans l'attente de la manne, y passant parfois la nuit pour ne pas rater la première minute d'ouverture.

Au code d'honneur et aux coutumes des ancêtres ils ont substitué un autre code fait de papiers, d'extraits d'actes et d'attestations divers, de cartes de différentes couleurs. Les portefeuilles ont commencé à se gonfler de paperasses et les paysans ont dû solliciter à tout moment le concours de personnes lettrées pour leur faire distinguer un document d'un autre. (36-37)

In contrast with socialist principles, however, which emphasize work, the universal right to employment, and the importance of eliminating the class that, living like vultures off of others, does not work, here the awaited redistribution of wealth excludes work. This passage also juxtaposes the promise of a new economic order with the reality of a new

bureaucratic and administrative order. To be valid, membership in the new Nation must, from now on, be recognized officially.

Other Maghrebien writers have examined the significance of the identification card's relation to power. Tahar Ben Jelloun, for example, in La prière de l'absent, emphasizes two of the main characters' marginality by depriving them of an identification card. The eponymous character of Ben Jelloun's Moha le fou, Moha le sage also does not have an identification card. In his case, however, there is a connection between the national elite and the colonial power, which institutionalizes identity not (or not only) as an articulation of individual subjectivity, but as a thing, a piece of paper one must carry around, that may be inspected at any time. The protagonist of Rachid Mimouni's Le fleuve détourné testifies to the power of the bureaucracy that retains the prerogative to recognize or withhold an identity and to exclude a person from the Nation by refusing her citizenship. Waking up after a long amnesia—due to an explosion during his participation in the Algerian revolution—to discover his status as national hero and martyr, this hero cannot even get the bureaucracy to acknowledge that he is alive, so useful is his death to his family (which inherited his property), his wife (who receives a widow's pension), and the state (which is threatened by the hero's statements that he didn't fight for bureaucracy or corruption). As far as the bureaucracy is concerned, he doesn't exist. In Les chercheurs d'os as well, the bones of former fighters have a role to play in this reign of paperwork. With bones, one can obtain the necessary papers for an officially recognized identity within the new administrative order: "Ces os constituent un prélude plutôt cocasse à la débauche de papiers, certificats et attestations divers qui feront quelque temps après leur apparition et leur loi intransigeante. Malheur à qui n'aura ni os ni papiers à exhiber devant l'incrédulité de ses semblables! Malheur à qui n'aura pas compris que la parole ne vaut plus rien et que l'ère du serment oral est à jamais révolue!" (21). The old codes of honor, linked to orality, makes way for paperwork, devalorized here less by privileging the oral over the written than because of the degradation of the written represented by bureaucracy. If the narrator

seems to reject tradition (represented by his village) in favor of a so-called modernity, this rejection is far from being absolute even if, in one passage, he seems to reject all of Algeria: "Je les comprends maintenant ces fils de familles très pieuses, très respectables et très pauvres qui traversent une fois la mer et disent adieu à leur passé" (36). In other passages, as we shall see, he rejects the modern brought by colonialism or independence.

The guerrillas' remains, souvenirs of a struggle that is already a part of the past, souvenir of struggle against an old order, colonialism, are situated in this dialectic between "modernity" and "tradition."⁸ The ones who died in this struggle died in a period of transition between two orders. Symbols of the hope of an independent nation and of the opposition to colonialism, these bones can also testify that the distinction between the two orders is not as clear as promised. For this reason, the memory they signify, like a skeleton in the closet, constitutes a danger for power. The dead are exhumed only to be buried again, this time deeper than before: "D'un côté on respecte immodérément les morts comme pour justifier la vie impossible que l'on fait aux vivants, et de l'autre on les exhume pour vérifier si on ne peut leur soutirer encore quelque chose avant de les réenterrer plus profondément, là où même le souvenir ne pourra plus les retrouver" (149). Instead of constituting an act of remembering or honoring him, bringing the brother back to his village is a way of forgetting him. By burying the dead again, the living are sure of not being disturbed:

Pourquoi tient-on à déterrer à tout prix ces morts glorieux et les changer de sépulture? Veut-on s'assurer qu'ils sont bien morts et qu'ils ne viendront plus jamais exiger leur part de la fête et contester nos discours et nos démonstrations patriotiques, notre bonheur de rescapés d'une guerre pourtant aveugle et sans merci? Ou alors, tient-on, tout simplement, à ce qu'ils soient enterrés plus profondément que tous les autres morts? Allez donc comprendre les hommes! Ils

⁸For a discussion of this dialectic in other Maghrebien novels, see Hédi Abdel-Jaouad's "The Dialectics of the Archaic and the Postmodern in Maghrebien Literature Written in French" and Antoine Raybaud's "Nomadism between the Archaic and the Modern."

pleurent des êtres qu'ils prétendent plus chers que tout au monde puis s'empressent de déterrer leurs restes au monde pour les enfouir plus hermétiquement (47).

The presence of those who fought for freedom, points out how much it is lacking. Like a skeleton at the feast, the guerrillas' remains trouble and disturb celebrations of a newly-acquired freedom as well as political speeches and the recuperation of the revolution into dominant discourse, which uses the revolution already to justify the consolidation of power in the hands of a new elite. Mostefa Lacheraf describes this "exploitation pseudo-patriotique" of the Algerian revolution in the official vision of how literature should represent this revolution. Like Djaout, Lacheraf denounces this use of hero worship, this "héroïsme dans sa conception individualiste et fracassante et sa finalité souvent gratuite et romantique" and accuses the national bourgeoisie, which, he claims, "perpétue un nationalisme anachronique et détourne les gens des réalités nouvelles et du combat nécessaire en vue de transformer la société sur des bases concrètes," of using this heroism to maintain power. Like Lacheraf, Djaout refuses this vision of the revolution and seems, rather, to satisfy the role of the committed writer defined by Lacheraf in the following way:

Il ne faut pas que les romanciers se rendent complices d'une telle manœuvre, et, s'ils doivent parler de l'épopée collective et populaire de la libération nationale qui a réellement existé, qu'ils ne négligent surtout pas d'évoquer le rôle honteux de la bourgeoisie traître et rapace et de dire comment la révolution sociale pour laquelle sont morts un million de paysans, d'ouvriers, de petits employés et d'intellectuels, a été confisquée, dès l'indépendance, par les trafiquants, les attentistes et les collaborateurs mal repentis du régime colonial défunt....⁹

Like the parents who had the brother's skeleton brought back, this rapacious elite survives thanks to the death of others. The bourgeoisie Lacheraf describes kidnaps the revolution and uses it discursively to justify and maintain its privilege.

⁹Talk sent to the Colloque sur le roman maghrébin, Hammamet, Tunisia, 24–28 December 1968. Cited in Bonn, *La littérature algérienne* (227).

Reburied, the bones will no longer be able to point out this "rôle honteux de la bourgeoisie traître et rapace" or trouble the party:

Quel service avons-nous rendu à mon frère en le ramenant avec nous? Ce qui nous importe le plus, n'est-ce pas de l'enterrer une seconde fois—et plus profondément encore—afin qu'il ne s'avise plus jamais de venir troubler notre paix et notre bonne conscience? C'est comme si nous n'étions pas sûrs qu'il fût bien mort tant que nous n'avions pas à portée du regard cette nouvelle tombe sécurisante. (148)

If the narrator in Le fleuve détourné, like a ghost, threatens the status quo, the brother's skeleton in Les chercheurs d'os represents a similar danger for the family and the state. Burying him again sets this danger aside and controls it, and burying him "hermétiquement" protects him from the elements but also makes him impenetrable to knowledge. Since these bones resist a will to knowledge, they also resist being controlled by power, knowledge and power being accomplices, as in the Foucauldian sense used by Said in Orientalism. Those who dig up the former guerrillas control the possible meanings their bones might have in the national imaginary: "Tout ce que nous demandons désormais c'est d'en finir, d'exhumer ce squelette ubiquiste et farceur et de le ligoter solidement dans notre sac afin de nous en débarrasser une fois pour toutes" (144). The brother, who appreciated individual and collective freedom so much that he died for it, will soon find himself imprisoned: "Et voici que nous le ramenons, captif, les os solidement liés, dans ce village qu'il n'avait sans doute jamais aimé" (148). Buried at first by chance, wherever they fell, these bones, like floating signifiers, were available for whoever wanted to articulate the hope of freedom they represented. Dug up, reburied, their semiotic strength is "ligoté," channeled into official discourse. Otherwise, the danger they represent is apt to pop up at any moment and return to haunt.

On the one hand, "les changer de sépulture" is a way of displaying them better: "Le peuple aurait très bien pu élever une digue entre le passé et lui pour fortifier son nouveau

bonheur; il aurait pu jeter ses morts avec l'eau putride de la baignoire guerrière pour savourer en bonne conscience une quiétude chèrement acquise. Mais le peuple tenait à ses morts comme à une preuve irréfutable à exhiber un jour devant le parjure du temps et des hommes" (10-11). Buried in his village, the brother serves as proof of his family's heroic contribution to the revolution (even though those who live to reap the benefits of this heroic reputation were in no way heroic). On the other hand, this ostentatious remembering is also a way of forgetting the lack of heroism on the part of the survivors: "Ceux qui ont un fils ou petit-fils tombé sous les balles se sentent encore plus coupables: ils n'auraient pas pu, les pleutres, les égoïstes, les procréateurs indignes, aller eux-mêmes au-devant de la mort les premiers comme la nature l'exige?" (18). Pseudo-nationalist exhibitionism also hides by putting the skeleton back in the closet where it can no longer disturb the feast.

Djaout's purpose, however, is not to bury skeletons, but to dig them up. Instead of hiding, reburying the skeleton, he prefers to bear its burden: "C'est [l'âne] qui porte le fardeau mais le véritable poids du squelette est sur nos épaules et dans nos têtes" (152). And this burden is not only physical, but also psychological and even political. The brother's skeleton is not the only one to be dug up during Djaout's narrative. In that the narrative constitutes a rewriting of national history, Djaout, himself, is a chercheur d'os who brings skeletons out from their hiding place to bear their burden and digs up the secret described by Ernest Renan.

In L'invention du désert, Djaout also articulates a model of writing history that gives over the Nation's secrets and digs up its skeletons, and in this later novel, he also uncovers sexualities previously hidden from history and extends his critique to include both powers. L'invention du désert is precisely a narrative of writing history, for its narrator is given the task of writing the history of the Almoravid dynasty. But writing the history of the Nation, as Renan points out, can also endanger this very same nation. Again, Djaout uses writing history to dig up bones of the past. L'invention du désert's narrator/historian makes the comparison of bones to history that exists in Les chercheurs d'os: "Ma tête est semblable à

ces outres où les Indiens transportent, au gré de leurs migrations les os de leurs ancêtres. L'histoire almoravide clignote dans un lointain assoupissement, elle cliquette à l'intérieur de mon crâne..." (26). And this clinking strangely recalls that of the brother's bones, which knock together during the return to his village in Les chercheurs d'os. Just as the burden of the brother's skeleton, which is psychological as well as physical, the skeleton of Almoravid history disturbs the psychological state of the one who writes it. In another passage, the narrator uses the image of a skeleton to describe what he uncovers (digs up) during this itinerary of writing history: "On rencontre, tout au plus, les débris d'un frémissement venu d'au-delà des mémoires: squelettes pierreux, érigés comme stèles intemporelles, de ce qui fut un jour végétal gonflé de sève" (137). Given the task of writing the history of the Almoravids, L'invention du désert's narrator decides to do so from the point of view of the founder of the Almohad dynasty that overthrew it, Ibn Toumert. Instead of the dynasty at the height of its glory, he is interested in its fall.

In "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb," Tahar Ben Jelloun associates challenging the powers that be with novelistic transgressions of taboos, especially sexual taboos. In L'invention du désert, Djaout shows that sexual secrets are as dangerous for the Nation as the political secrets at the Nation's origin described by Renan. He gives Bhabha's minority discourse a special significance for sexual minorities. In L'invention du désert, the narrator unveils not only the origin of an Arabo-Berber dynasty, but also the sexual repression that went hand in hand with taking power. The narrator, in writing Ibn Toumert's history/story, states:

Il commença par s'attaquer frénétiquement à une pratique dont il remarqua qu'elle s'exerçait en plein jour et sans aucun couvert: l'homosexualité masculine.

A peine installé dans sa mosquée, l'imam descendit dans la ville et un spectacle l'arrêta puis porta son sang à ébullition: des garçons habillés en femmes, embellis et fardés comme elles, se promenaient avec coquetterie sur l'esplanade près de la mer. Les habitants, au lieu d'être outrés, passaient leur chemin sans broncher ou

alors, lorsqu'ils s'arrêtaient à proximité des garçons, c'était pour les considérer avec des airs amusés, les jaugeant avec convoitise comme on ferait d'une précieuse marchandise. (23)

In the era evoked by the narrator, male homosexuality did not need unveiling; there was nothing secretive about it. Ibn Toumert is the only one who attacks it, tries to eliminate it, or (since sexual repression has never managed to destroy what it targets but only to drive it underground) to force it into the closet. What is surprising is that Ibn Toumert, in his desire to annihilate homosexuality, is in the minority. When he attacks the éphèbes to drive them from the public square, he is the one who must flee for his life. The narrator also describes another attack by Ibn Toumert:

Mais l'intervention la plus fâcheuse de ce théologien illuminé eut lieu durant une fête qu'un riche citadin avait donnée à l'occasion d'une circoncision. Les mets furent nombreux et variés. Tout le monde eut droit au repas—même les pauvres et les mendiants. Gent mâle et gent femelle évoluaient dans le même espace, et les mêmes intraitables garçons circulaient entre les convives en faisant tinter leurs anneaux et en exhibant leurs lèvres peintes.

L'imam se précipita encore tel un forcené, usant de coups et d'imprécations, escomptant séparer les deux sexes et donner une nouvelle leçon aux jeunes hommes dépravés. (24)

Ibn Toumert opposes male homosexuality, but also its way of being blatant, its openness, its lack of discretion, which he associates with a lack of separation between the sexes. In A History of the Maghrib, Jamil M. Abun-Nasr describes a similar attack carried out by Ibn Toumert, this time against an unveiled woman, "Ibn Tumart had had the audacity of throwing the [Almoravid] amir's wife off her horse when he saw her in the street unveiled" (104). With this historical example, the parallels between the rise of the Almohads and the attempts of the fundamentalist movement to gain power become clear. For L'invention du désert's narrator/historian, writing history constitutes an unveiling of sexual secrets, an

unveiling that threatens. Unlike Ibn Toumert, who attempts to chase homosexuality from the public sphere, the narrator returns it precisely to that space. As the novel's back cover indicates, "ressusciter le passé est une entreprise qui peut lâcher sur le présent des hantises et des démons insoupçonnés." The history of the Almoravids, "l'histoire d'une hantise et d'un dépaysement" (107), also represents a haunting for the narrator/historian of the novel's present: "Je congédie les Almoravides pour m'engourdir sans témoins. Ils sortent lentement de ma tête, fantômes langés de bures de laine" (41). The skeletons dug up in writing history are like ghosts released into the collective consciousness of the present-day nation. Homosexuality, in Djaout's novel, comes out of the closet of history to haunt the Nation's present.

Djaout describes the effect of this haunting by bringing Ibn Toumert into the novel's present. The narrator imagines him as a flâneur in Paris, shocked by a lack of morals: "Dieu est sans doute décédé—à moins qu'il n'ait été lui aussi gagné à la mollesse des stupres. Mais n'a-t-il pas été plutôt détrôné par Satan qui cultive désormais en maître sur la planète des Sodome et Gomorrhe? Onan est réhabilité, il narre devant l'humanité ses ignominieuses prouesses" (51). His attempt to oppose this Western decadence with a so-called Muslim purity fails because, at la Goutte-d'Or he witnesses the same thing: "[O]ui, hommes et femmes mêlés, comme les impudiques Nazaréens..." (54). Not only is Ibn Toumert confronted with loose morals, but he also ends up being contaminated by them, by participating in them: "Ibn Toumert sort en titubant, bourré d'alcool, de ressentiment et de nostalgie.... Il rue comme un forcené pour quitter la prison de ma tête" (56). What happens to Ibn Toumert as he encounters the present represents the effect of rewriting history from the margins. The hidden secret at the Nation's origin is dangerous because, contagious, it threatens to infect the present. Like a traitor, Djaout gives over national secrets, gives over the historical character Ibn Toumert: "[J]e compte [le] livrer, pieds et poings liés, à la lecture irrespectueuse, à la fringale des analystes. Il ne restera rien de sa piété ni de sa folie fondatrice. Pauvre hère rêvant de prophétie, il sera offert au public avec

ses burnous crasseux, sa paranoïa débusquée, son Œdipe entortillé, tous ses incestes rentrés et ses dérivatifs d'impuissant" (76). Like the tied-up skeleton in Les chercheurs d'os, here, Ibn Toumert, dug up from the past, "pieds et poings liés," is brought back to the present, where, in the narrator's imagination, he occupies the same position as the enfant terrible, traveler and homosexual poet, Rimbaud: "[I]l convenait que j'arrive à déterminer qui m'habitait réellement: Ibn Toumert ou Rimbaud?" (71).

Ibn Toumert is brought into the present in another way as well. We learn that, whereas Ibn Toumert comes to power by attacking the preceding dynasty's moral decay, though he seems to represent innovation, he is in fact repeating history. The preceding dynasty was also based on a puritanism that disappeared as soon as it was no longer needed by the dynasty in power:

Le tribalisme puritain qui avait constitué la charpente de la dynastie fit place au ramollissement, au désir de mieux vivre: vins, riches tables et hétaires vinrent révéler et dénoncer le rigorisme mutilant; des affaires de mœurs, des bacchanales ne tardèrent pas à alimenter la chronique du royaume.

Comment en était arrivée là une dynastie dont le puritanisme avait été le motif fondateur? (16)

By resurrecting history repeating itself, Djaout draws attention to the fact that Algerian history is once again repeating itself and uses history as an allegory of the present. One dynasty (the religious right) is attempting to overthrow the one in place (a military ruling elite). The state Ibn Toumert is in the process of founding, like its predecessor, begins with a violence directed against sexuality, and this anti-sexual violence constitutes the Nation's secret described by Renan. According to Malek Chebel, "En somme, la marginalité constitue un bon indice d'appréciation de la morale en vigueur, de la tolérance et surtout de la créativité comportementale de la société" (L'esprit de sérail 17). He suggests

that in a repressive society, often marginal sexualities are the first targets.¹⁰ Djaout reveals that attacks on marginal sexualities have a political purpose in addition to attempting to legislate the Nation's family values; they are also a political weapon used to bring ruling elites to power.

However, one should not too quickly characterize this vision of writing history as purely iconoclastic. Though it is true that, like a traitor, the author gives over national secrets, at the same time, the narrator reclaims Ibn Toumert for the Nation's history: "J'ai une admiration sans retenue pour la vigilance d'Ibn Toumert. Il arrive souvent que le mahdi fondateur m'échappe, profitant de mon surmenage ou d'une distraction salutaire pour briser les verrous de ma tête et partir sillonner en découvreur les rapides traîtres du futur" (57). The narrator identifies with Ibn Toumert's historical importance as the founder of an Arabo-Berber dynasty as much as he destabilizes Ibn Toumert's puritanism. Djaout, a Berber himself, by digging through Maghrebian history to find Berber sources, contradicts the FLN's official policies of Arabization, which in fact, have also been taken up by the FIS. At a time when the FIS is almost in a position to take power, Kabylia is known for its opposition to Arabo-Muslim fundamentalism. At the same time, instead of reinforcing the Arab/Berber division exploited (and to a great extent created) by the colonizers in their divide-and-conquer tactics, Djaout chooses a historical figure in whom Arab and Berber cultures mix. In addition, Djaout situates the FIS's puritanism in a long tradition where sexual repression serves especially as a way of consolidating power. If this contextualization seems pessimistic in demonstrating that history repeats itself, it is also optimistic in envisioning for the FIS a death similar to that of previous fundamentalisms. Djaout, however, is far from rejecting Islam in favor of a secularism whose expression in French bourgeois philosophy coincided with the project of colonialism. One might even find Djaout's model for writing history within Islam. When he writes

¹⁰Chebel made this point more explicitly in an untitled talk given as part of the "Politique et ambiguïté: Sexualités marginales au Maghreb" session at the Congrès Mondial du Conseil International d'Etudes Francophones in Quebec City, 14 April 1994.

Révélation (63)

he emphasizes the political revolution that accompanied the revelation of a new religion. But in another sense, he alludes to the political role of history as he conceives it: the revelation of what the orthodoxy prefers to hide participates in the revolution begun by the brother in Les chercheurs d'os, but "détourné" (to use Mimouni's image) by a new elite. In this sense, Djaout shares Fanon's revolutionary project, where the struggle for national liberation leads directly to a social and political revolution.¹¹

Upon returning to the village with the skeleton in hand, the narrator of Les chercheurs d'os finds another source of resistance to the conformism he criticizes. This resistance occurs in the character of his uncle, within the same society the narrator characterizes as oppressive:

Mais mon oncle n'est pas malheureux. Je me rends même compte maintenant qu'il possède des privilèges, entre autres celui d'être dispensé de toutes ces corvées d'os. Il n'est importuné par aucun squelette empoisonnant qui hanterait son sommeil ou le ferait courir par monts et par vaux. Malgré sa rogne continuelle et la crainte qu'il inspire à ses vis-à-vis, c'est peut-être lui le vrai sage du village. Vu notre lien de parenté, il était tout désigné pour m'accompagner à la place de Rabah Ouali. Mais il n'a jamais eu l'air de prendre au sérieux toutes ces histoires de squelettes. (151)

And the uncle's revolt is also a sexual revolt; for he refuses to repudiate his barren wife (is she barren or is he sterile?) and defies reproductive conformism that inscribes pleasure in an economy of sexual production. His uncle is no more threatened by the haunting of historical secrets represented by skeletons than by the demands of sexual normativity. The discovery of his uncle's resistance complicates the binary oppositions between tradition and modernity, village and city, Islam and secularism, private and public, and personal and

¹¹Fanon writes, "Le nationalisme n'est pas une doctrine politique, n'est pas un programme. Si l'on veut vraiment éviter à son pays ces retours en arrière, ces arrêts, ces failles il faut rapidement passer de la conscience nationale à la conscience politique et sociale" (Les damnés de la terre 146).

political; it is inscribed in the dialectic between tradition and modernity, a fundamental dialectic in the role of history in relation to national identity in Djaout's work. Just as Djaout subverts the opposition between a so-called Muslim purity and a Western promiscuity by bringing Ibn Toumert into a night club at la Goutte-d'Or, he discovers a relative form of sexual liberty in the traditional space of his village. Finally, the narrator does not need to leave his country to find freedom. Like the narrator of L'invention du désert, for whom writing history is a journey, as the narrator of Les chercheurs d'os travels to dig up his brother's skeleton, he travels to unveil the Nation's secrets, and this journey leads him to the Nation's sexual and political margins where one finds sources of resistance. The freedom he finds is rooted in the source of national and subjective identity.

If we go digging around for Djaout's bones today, let us do so in a way that does not bury them again even more deeply than before. Let us make him the skeleton at the banquet for state power (present and potential) he was when alive, the reason why he was assassinated. Djaout's texts inscribe the writer in his political role in relation to national history. His death testifies to the menace to ruling powers or (in this case) to the pretenders to state power the committed writer can represent. His writings become, after his assassination, another skeleton in the closet we are left with digging up, with dragging out of its hiding place.

In the Nation's Closets: Sexual Marginality and the Itinerary of National Identity in Tahar Ben Jelloun's La prière de l'absent

In La prière de l'absent, Ben Jelloun's association of challenging the social order and unveiling sexual transgressions and secrets plays a particularly important role. This novel narrates the journey of three marginal characters—Yamna, Sindibad, and Bobby—who take a baby to Smara, a source of Moroccan resistance to the French invasion. Their journey thus constitutes a return to national origins, to the Nation's roots à la Alex Haley. Summoned by the Secret Empire, they must endow the child with both a national identity and a subjectivity in this return to the origins of the Nation, of Moroccan nationalism and

identity. Ben Jelloun thus allegorizes the coming to national identity and the birth of a nation through the life-story of an individual and his coming to subjectivity. In this allegory, subjectivity must be situated within a national identity in the way Alfred Arteaga describes in the introduction to his collection An Other Tongue: "The words in An Other Tongue describe the words by which we are marked subjects, particular subjects of particular states. The matter is one of interrogating the processes of subjectification that define selves and others as the subjects of nation and ethnicity" (1). Like a de Manian allegory of reading, however, La prière de l'absent is also an allegory of the failure of national allegory.¹² Ben Jelloun literalizes the failure of national allegory by cutting short the return to the source of national identity and of subjectivity rooted in the Nation. La prière de l'absent's journey is cut short when a man drags a sack of rotten meat across their path, leaving a trail of blood that forbids continuing the journey. This trail of blood, however, is not the only obstacle to the itinerary of coming to national identity.

Ben Jelloun challenges official versions of what constitutes national identity and who should be excluded from the definition of the Nation in three ways. His challenge to official discourses of nationality is also a challenge to the post-independence national elite Frantz Fanon warns against in Les damnés de la terre, an elite that consolidates its own power discursively by articulating restrictive definitions of the Nation that exclude marginalized citizens. La prière de l'absent first combines novel, Nation, and national and sexual identities, only to overturn linear narrative, thus disrupting the version of identity articulated through this narrative. Second, this narrative of national identity is told by marginal characters who would themselves be excluded from the Nation; the telling of the Nation's story is denied any grounding in the authority of its authors. Third, Sindibad's marginal sexuality or the forgotten memory of a former homoerotic friendship poses a particular threat to the official version of the Nation. After a brief consideration of the first

¹²Even Jameson points out that allegories are rarely consistent, "because the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogeneous representation of the symbol" (73).

two challenges to national identity in order to contextualize Sindibad's role, this section focuses on the way Sindibad's sexuality enters into the narrative allegory of the Nation's birth only to cause its failure. Sindibad's haunting secret, what I call his closet, represents a political danger inasmuch as the secret may be revealed or Sindibad may come out of the closet at any moment. Sindibad's closet corresponds to a national secret, that of the shameful, violent history of the hero it glorifies; Sindibad's coming out opens the doors to the Nation's closets.

The Breakdown of Narrative

In La prière de l'absent, after the journey fails, Yamna, emphasizing the narrative aspect of their journey, makes such a connection between this journey and the novel it occurs in: "Un voyage rêvé, un pèlerinage inachevé, un passé impossible. Emmener un enfant au Sud pour ressourcer sa mémoire et son être! Un beau sujet de roman ou de conte, mais une illusion dans le réel. Il fallait pour le faire beaucoup de foi et d'inconscience" (224). Her connection points out the similarities between Nation and fiction as well as individual identity, all combined here in a narrative of a book that might also be La prière de l'absent. And again, the novel's characters are aware that they are part of a narrative economy, of a story being told:

Nous avons été désignés par la source, par l'arbre et les mains de la sage-femme, Lalla Malika, pour écrire ce livre, pour remplir toutes ces pages.... Le livre avec des pages blanches, encore intactes, c'est cet enfant. Il est l'histoire que nous vivons déjà. Ce qui nous arrive est tellement extraordinaire qu'il faut qu'il parvienne—bien après notre mort—à un conteur, quelqu'un qui pourra l'écrire et le raconter aux générations futures! (56-57)

They are also aware that the writing of this book will constitute the child's being, its identity (national and otherwise), and its subjectivity. The child's subjectivity is authorized by the source/spring and by the tree ("Nous avons été désignés par la source, par

l'arbre..."), both images of allegorical significance; this subjectivity is rooted at the source/spring of national identity, to which the novel, however, denies any direct access.

The deconstruction of the Nation in La prière de l'absent begins by questioning the novel's narrativity. The first chapter relates the death of a philosophy teacher whose life retains only two important events, his birth (in Fès) and his death. The second chapter relates the birth of a boy (perhaps the same as the philosophy teacher, but one cannot be sure this is the case) in Fès at the time of the birth of the Moroccan nationalist movement. Again, "histoire" takes on its double meaning in French as both "history" and "story" since the story of an individual's birth coincides with the history of the Nation's birth. A prayer is said that grants the child both a name and an identity, "la prière de la naissance, la prière qui donne le nom et fixe les racines de l'être" (28). Identity, again, has roots, roots planted in the Nation's history. The coinciding of naming and granting identity remains important because the child taken to the South is nameless and the goal of the journey is to confer an identity on him. Yamna tells the child at the beginning of the trip, "Toi qui n'a pas de nom, tu es venu cette fois-ci au monde à l'insu du temps.... Je suis chargée de te transmettre tant et tant de paroles et de messages.... Toi, tu n'es le fils de personne! C'est un privilège que je suis chargée de confirmer en t'emmenant vers l'origine, vers les dunes du Sud, là où tu trouveras des racines et une histoire" (74–75). In the third chapter, Lalla Malika, the grandmother of the boy mentioned in the second and third chapters, tells him, "Va vers le Sud!" (46). Her direction and the fact that Lalla Malika appears before Yamna, Sindibad, and Bobby on several occasions during their journey and that she seems to belong to the Secret Empire seem to suggest that the protagonists of the second and third chapters are the same person as the child carried to the South in the novel's remaining chapters.

The novel's beginning three chapters thus have a precarious relationship with the narrative of the journey that constitutes the greater part of the novel, and the undecidability of the novel's beginning parallels the narrative's questioning of national origins (the beginning of the Nation as narration). If the teacher, the child of the second and third

chapters, and the baby of the rest of the novel are not the same person, the first three chapters have nothing to do with the rest of the novel, but one cannot be sure they are the same person. As Mustapha Marrouchi writes in "Breaking Up/Down/Out of the Boundaries," "[a]nother remarkable aspect of Ben Jelloun's narrative technique is a spatial (as opposed to chronological) structuring of events that gives his novels the appearance of symbolic itineraries" (73). This generalization is true in the case of *La prière de l'absent*, which replaces a chronological telling of events with an itinerary leading to a beginning. The purpose of the journey is to bestow an identity upon the baby and to narrate a history that places him in a linear series of events that begin with the origin of his nation, include his birth and the realization of his individual subjectivity, and end with his death. Yet, this series is told in reverse order, and the narrative is fragmented. The fact that one cannot be sure whether the subject in this narrative of subjectivity is the same throughout suggests that subjectivity and identity are elusive categories; the subject can never embody her identity without contradiction, can never be identical to her identity. If the Nation is a narrative construct, the challenge to traditional narrative forms operated by the novel (a novel of nationality) is also a challenge to the Nation. As we shall see, Ben Jelloun disrupts the spatial itinerary (described by Marrouchi as replacing chronology) as much as he does the novel's chronology. In addition, this novel of Moroccan identity is written in French. If subjectivity is articulated through language, Moroccan identity, here, is articulated in the language of the Other. In this allegory of national identity, coming to national identity requires crossing linguistic borders, leaving the Nation, going outside the very national identity one is trying to embody.

In the Nation's Margins

The marginality of the three characters, Yamna, Sindibad, and Bobby, is the source of the novel's second challenge to identity. In a cemetery in Fès, a baby appears before Bobby and Sindibad, two beggars who make a living reciting verses of the Qur'an over graves. Next appears Yamna, a former prostitute, housekeeper, and beggar who has already died.

During this pilgrimage to the South of Morocco, she is the one who tells the story/history of the mystic and military leader Ma -al-Aynayn, founder of the city of Smara, buried in Tiznit. This history/story, narrative within the narrative of the novel, bestows both national identity and subjectivity on the child, but those who are supposed to bestow this identity do not have an identity themselves. Indeed, neither Yamna nor Sindibad have identification cards (cartes d'identité), that is, an official identity recognized by the ruling bureaucracy; they thus have no place in the Nation as it is constructed in official discourse. When the garbage collectors find Yamna dead, an incident told before the journey begins (she comes back from the dead to undertake the journey, we remember), "[i]ls essayèrent d'avertir les autorités du quartier. Cette personne n'avait pas d'identité et avait par conséquent le privilège de ne pas exister, de n'avoir jamais vécu!" (70). As the protagonist of Le fleuve détourné discovers, a citizen whose identity is not officially recognized simply does not exist, is written out of existence. In La prière de l'absent, when Bobby asks Sindibad whether he has an identification card, the latter answers, "Une carte, et pour quoi faire? Je m'appelle Sindibad et tout le monde le sait. S'ils ont des doutes, ils n'ont qu'à interroger les marins qui étaient sous mes ordres" (90). Before Sindibad's bout with madness, his name was Ahmad. Afterwards, both his name and identity are based on a fictitious character in a fictitious story, that of Sindbad the Sailor (a well-known character of classical Arabic literature). The novel thus recognizes Sindibad's identity as a narrative construct. But is there an identity that is not a fiction, that is not always already narratively constructed? The novel seems to suggest that coming to identity (national and sexual) and coming to subjectivity always involve writing a fiction. On several occasions, the individual identities of Yamna, Sindibad, and Bobby, in the form of biographies, themselves narratives that mark the irruption of the personal into the political, interrupt the narrative of return to origins. Sindibad's story, in particular, disturbs the narrative of national identity, since the specter of the memory of his old friend Jamal haunts the journey throughout the

novel through the threat of its revelation. Finally, the revelation of this memory and Sindibad's reconciliation with it lead directly to the journey's failure.

Homi K. Bhabha's description of the role that minority discourse plays in the discursive articulation of the Nation also applies to the role of these characters' marginality. Bhabha's minority discourse, like the marginal characters (marginal in the context of the Nation, central within the novel) of La prière de l'absent, causes the failure of narratives of return to national origins, narratives Bhabha sees as playing a role in political domination. Yet this quest for a national origin fails, overturning any "claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority" (The Location of Culture 157). La prière de l'absent uses its characters' marginality, or "minority discourse," to use Bhabha's term, to prevent the articulation of a homogeneous nation based on exclusion, which would lay claims to consolidating power in the hands of a national elite. Rather, La prière de l'absent prefers a more heterogeneous nation inclusive of those at the margins of its borders/boundaries, including sexual non-conformists.

The itinerary of La prière de l'absent involves a search for the origin of the Nation: "Nous partons donc vers la source et l'origine, vers le commencement et l'arrêt du temps. Car ton corps est là et ton âme appelle: ta vie, ta naissance et ta mort ne sont plus qu'un grain de sable dans ce désert" (76). In fact, as the group approaches the South, the clear geographic referents of Fès, Meknès, Casablanca, and Marrakech are abandoned for the "village de l'oubli" and the "village de l'attente," which have no clear geographic referents. As they approach the site/source of national origins, the novel's topography becomes more fictitious: "A partir de Marrakech, les lieux, chemins et villages, devenaient mouvants, des images inventées, des tourbillons et des visions absolument incertaines. ...[I]ls apprirent qu'El Asnam venait d'être rayée de la carte.... Ils croyaient avoir inventé ou rêvé le village de l'attente, ils pensaient l'avoir imaginé à l'aide de quelques ingrédients..." (217–18). They also approach another uncertainty—and this is the great secret, the unsaid of the novel—they approach a territory over which Moroccan claims to possession are contested,

the Western Sahara, which Morocco only took complete possession of (though this possession is still contested) two years before the publication of the novel. Smara, the city founded by Ma -al-Aynayn, actually belongs to this territory. A successful inclusion of Smara in a narrative of Moroccan national origins would support Moroccan claims of territorial possession of the Western Sahara in official discourse. Ben Jelloun implicitly undermines those claims, even though "La marche verte," the Polisario, and the Sahraoui are never mentioned.¹³ The only hint of military conflict occurs in the sentence, "Des camions militaires recouverts de bâches se dirigeaient vers Tan Tan" (219), Tan Tan being a city just North of the contested territory. La marche verte ou la philosophie de Hassan II (1977), coffee-table book and perfect example of dominant discourse in its role of propaganda supporting official Moroccan policy, includes the reproduction of a letter from the cheïkh Ma -al-Aynayn to the sultan Abdelaziz Ibn El Hassan, predecessor to the present king of Morocco (50). In this letter, the cheïkh recognizes the sultan as his sovereign. In this official version of history, Ma -al-Aynayn serves to justify Moroccan claims to the Western Sahara.¹⁴ La prière de l'absent questions both Moroccan possession of the Western Sahara and this official version of Ma -al-Aynayn's role in Moroccan history.

The Sexual Margins of the Nation

¹³The Western Sahara was colonized by Spain, which decided to relinquish control of the territory in 1975. Polisario was the armed liberation movement in the region. In 1975, Hassan II organized a march of civilians armed only with Qur'ans and Moroccan flags to take control of the northern part of the region in spite of the presence of Polisario and its demands for a Sahraoui state independent from surrounding countries. The discursive target of this action was the Spanish, who were called on to immediately relinquish control of the area. Spain's decision to leave the area, however, had already been taken. Anti-colonial discourse thus masked Morocco's expansionist policies. In 1976, the Western Sahara was divided between Morocco and Mauritania. Algeria's support of Polisario led to border conflicts between Morocco and Algeria in 1976. Many analysts claim that Algeria also saw the possibility of access to the Atlantic in supporting Polisario. Morocco gained complete control of the entire former Spanish colony in 1979 with the withdrawal of Mauritania from the Southern part of the region. A cease-fire between Morocco and Polisario was negotiated in 1989, and negotiations are underway for a referendum on Sahraoui independence. In his February 1995 article for *Jeune Afrique*, "Sahara: Quand un Américain s'en prend au Maroc," François Soudan reports that, although the voter registration process is progressing, it is behind schedule. He also reports a number of irregularities carried out by the Moroccan government. He predicts the referendum will occur in mid-1996.

¹⁴Ma -al-Aynayn's historical role was a bit more ambiguous. When he thought the sultan was giving in too much to the French, he was about to march on Fès. Cf. Abdellatif Attafi's "La prière de l'absent de Tahar Ben Jelloun ou l'identité fragmentée."

Bhabha's concept of minority discourse and its subversive potential discovers a sexual significance in the character of Sindibad. Throughout the narrative, Sindibad's memory haunts him with the threat of returning:

Son regard était par moments fiévreux, traversé par de l'inquiétude, celle que peut faire naître le mystère, celle aussi qui naît de la crainte de voir des événements déjà vécus se dérouler de nouveau. Dans son cas, c'était un passé lointain, une partie de sa vie qu'il pensait avoir définitivement enterrée et oubliée qui revenait se présenter devant son regard, image par image, recréant des sensations étranges et des émotions plutôt pénibles provoquées par des situations dont le souvenir n'était pas totalement éteint. Quelque chose s'était ranimé en lui, et la manière déroutante avec laquelle il racontait à Bobby des histoires sans queue ni tête trahissait une perturbation importante qui s'était produite en lui, et qui ne devait pas avoir un lien avec le voyage. (78)

The secrets of his past, which he believed buried or hidden, threaten to appear again, to reveal themselves, to come out of the closet of his erotic past. Keeping the past hidden, invisible, "in the closet," contains the danger it represents. Remembering this past comes with a reversal in the narrative order of his stories ("des histoires sans queue ni tête"), paralleling the entire novel's disruption of narrative structure. The reader discovers Sindibad's biography in chapter seven, "Sindibad": His real name is Ahmad Suleiman, he studied at the Qaraouiyine University in Fès, where he was a contestataire, basing his revolt against religious/academic authority on classical Arabic texts, including Ma -al-Aynayn's mystical writings. He thus gives an alternative reading of Yamna's account of Ma -al-Aynayn's life, opposing her official version of the hero's story with his own reading, which is part of his revolt against dominant academic discourses. His teacher complained to his father that Ahmad's questioning of tradition was endangering the nationalist movement (81–82), explicitly marking him as dangerous to official accounts of Moroccan national identity. Even in his youth he was seen as a threat to the Nation. The

threat of his past—which "shouldn't have a connection with the journey" but haunts it—turns out to be his friendship with Jamal:

[C]ette amitié devint très vite un élément essentiel de leur vie et ne tarda pas à se transformer en passion, le jour où, après avoir lu un long poème de Jamal, Ahmad, ému ne dit rien, mais s'approcha de son ami et l'embrassa longuement en pleurant.

Leur amitié était ainsi scellée par ce long baiser silencieux. Jamal avait la peau très brune et les yeux presque verts. Ses cheveux frisés étaient très épais. Il y avait dans son regard une énigme difficile à cerner, quelque chose de troublant. Ahmad n'arrivait jamais à soutenir ce regard qui l'émouvait beaucoup. Toute l'ambiguïté de leur rencontre, toute la violence de leur passion étaient inscrites dans ce regard nostalgique d'un ciel lointain. Quand il mettait du kohl autour des yeux, il donnait une légère cruauté à ce regard. Il en jouait discrètement dans cette société d'hommes imbus de leur force mâle où les manifestations de virilité étaient grotesques. Jamal était l'élément féminin dans cette université où les seules jeunes filles qui étudiaient, venaient tout enveloppées dans leur haïk, comme des momies qui auraient effacé leur corps.

Ahmad l'aimait avec la passion du secret et du silence. (83–84)

Jamal's beauty is associated with the domain of the feminine and upsets the masculine order upon which the academy is founded. Their passion is described as a danger, as troubling, as upsetting. Sindibad has therefore managed or controlled this danger by confining it to a sort of closet, by forgetting his memory of it. Sindibad's love for Jamal, identified by its secretiveness, and his revolt against "une société conformiste et conventionnelle" (84) go hand in hand: "Il était possédé par cet amour fou qu'il assimilait à sa révolte. Seul Jamal le comprenait" (85). In a letter to Sindibad, Jamal reveals the danger of their love: "J'ai compris hélas que ce qui nous lie, toi et moi, c'est la maladie dans ce qu'elle a de plus noble et de plus beau. Notre amitié est un feu qui est en train de

nous consumer, je n'envisage pas une seconde de porter atteinte à cette flamme, mais j'ai peur et je te le dis" (86). Just after this letter, Jamal's father takes him away, separating the two friends. Sindibad goes insane, spends some time in a psychiatric hospital, and finally becomes a beggar.

In Marrakech, Sindibad begins to reconcile himself with his memory for the first time: "Pour la première fois, l'idée de rencontrer des images et des souvenirs venus du lointain ne l'inquiéta point. Il les laissait venir à lui, avec le sourire de celui qui venait d'abandonner en route un lourd fardeau" (150). Sindibad remembers Jamal again, paradoxically, in the village de l'oubli, and this time, he experiences remembering not as a haunting but as a reconciliation, a liberation:

Tout d'un coup il fut aveuglé par une lumière brutale éclairant un moment précis et lointain de sa vie, un moment retenu jusqu'à ce jour par la volonté des ténèbres. Tout se déroula très vite: en quelques secondes il revit une série d'images très vives, ayant la force du vécu. D'abord l'image d'un jeune homme, brun aux yeux clairs. Pas de doute. Ce visage avait un nom: Jamal. Sindibad le reconnut évidemment. Ce visage aimé puis retiré au souvenir revenait cette fois presque avec sérénité comme s'il n'avait jamais disparu. Le souvenir de cette passion s'inscrivait dans le corps de Sindibad non comme une trace mais comme une rencontre neuve avec lui-même.... Il était comme un morceau de terre fêlée par une longue sécheresse, et qui tout d'un coup inondée par des fontaines et des sources d'eau pure et fraîche.... Il avait peur de la lumière, peur de ce village où les mémoires se mutilaient, peur de perdre le goût et le parfum de cette terre imbibée par les sources du passé. (184–85)

Sindibad allows his past secrets to come back, and the revelation of erotic secrets from his past constitutes a liberation. As such, it resembles the act of coming out, whereby the refusal to keep one's sexuality (marginalized by discourses of sexual normativity) a secret constitutes a political act and a challenge to the discourses of sexual normativity that police

the invisibility of sexualities they exclude. During a journey whose purpose is to discover an identity in the source of the Nation, Sindibad finds a source—in the French sense of the word—for his identity in passion, in the domain of the erotic. Yamna immediately characterizes his remembering as a threat to their journey: "Je suis seule à tout décider dans cette traversée. Sindibad a retrouvé la mémoire, ou plus exactement le souvenir suprême qu'il avait perdu" (190). This remembering directly precedes the failure of the quest for national origins.

Unveiling Sexual Secrets

In La prière de l'absent, one finds the same association between the narrative articulation of sexual transgressions and unveiling secrets that Ben Jelloun makes in "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb." Sindibad, who bears the burden of an erotic secret, is also described as being veiled: "Son visage était voilé, moins pour se protéger de la poussière que pour dissimuler une réelle inquiétude" (186). The three main characters' secret is also articulated as being enclosed in a veil: "Nous sommes enveloppés par le même linceul—un voile—dans le même nuage" (56). And Ma -al-Aynayn, who is also veiled—"Etrange! Il apparaissait souvent voilé en public..." (97–98)—also has a secret. When Yamna reveals this secret at the end of the novel, one could say that she unveils the national hero: "Et puis les ancêtres ne donnèrent du cheikh Ma -al-Aynayn que l'image du héros national, celui qui résista à la pénétration coloniale. Ils oublièrent de dire qu'ils avaient fait de lui un mythe, un saint, une image, dissimulant le caractère féodal, autoritaire et même esclavagiste de ce chef de tribu qui rêvait d'être le chef de tout un Etat" (224). The story/history she narrated to the child glorified Ma -al-Aynayn. She undoes her own telling of the story by unveiling the hero, by displaying the Nation's dirty laundry, by revealing secrets she should have left untold. Given the role of Ma -al-Aynayn in La marche verte ou la philosophie de Hassan II, one might assimilate her story with the official version of history. The undoing of her story is also an undoing of official discourses of national

history. Both the unveiling of Sindibad's sexual history and that of the Nation's secrets coincide with the failure of the return to national origins.

Ben Jelloun uses the unveiling of Sindibad's dangerous memories as Fanon uses the unveiling of Woman—for the political force this unveiling unleashes. Though Fanon directs this force against the colonizer, Ben Jelloun directs it against the national elite Fanon warned might replace the colonizer after independence. His unveiling of sexual secrets thus performs a political function similar to Boudjedra's. Up until the point of Sindibad's remembering, the characters' secret has been well kept. The Secret Empire hovered over the characters, forbidding them to reveal the secret of their mission: "Écoutez-moi bien: cette histoire paraît compliquée et obscure. Si on la raconte à quelqu'un, il nous prendra pour des fous. Alors nous n'allons la raconter à personne. De toute façon, les gens ne comprendront pas. Il faut qu'on s'engage à ne rien divulguer du secret de cette histoire. Sinon les foudres de l'Empire du Secret s'abattront sur celui qui aura manqué à cette promesse" (55). Like the Membres Secrets du Clan who may participated in Zahir's assassination to keep the threat of his sexuality in the closet, the Empire du Secret strikes down Bobby when, as in Moha's model for postcolonial writing (and reading), he blurts out national secrets on the public square. My main question, then, is: What is the relation between the Nation's closet and Sindibad's? More particularly, how does Ben Jelloun politically use the articulation of a coming out, the revelation of a secret, the secret of the Nation's past and of Sindibad's?

According to Renan, every nation has a secret at its origin. The origin Renan describes could then be compared to the one Bhabha mentions in describing the Nation as a narrative construct and the one that he argues is contested by minority discourse. Renan's origin could also be compared to the origin whose cult leads to exclusion in Kristeva's description of a homogenizing discourse of national identity. For Ben Jelloun, sketching a return to this origin must end in a failure, because he refuses to veil anything that, hidden, would consolidate nationality for the benefit of a national elite. A traitor, he gives over

national secrets to the enemies of the national bourgeoisie. Just as Fanon associates unveiling and decolonization in "L'Algérie se dévoile," and calls for the national revolution to lead directly to a social and political revolution, for Ben Jelloun, this deconstruction of the Nation in no way detracts from resisting colonialism. In fact, at a certain moment in La prière de l'absent, an act of resistance to colonialism on the part of Lalla Malika is marked by an unveiling: "Quand je passais donc devant les Français, je baissais mon voile et les regardais droit dans les yeux. Tu comprends, une femme se voile quand elle est en face d'hommes. Les soldats français n'existaient pas" (40). Anti-colonial struggle and overthrowing the national bourgeoisie go hand in hand.

Nevertheless, Ben Jelloun stages an official journey of national identity even though he simultaneously stages its failure. Sindibad bases his revolt on the texts of the same Ma-al-Aynayn used by official discourses to justify La marche verte. One could say, therefore, that Ben Jelloun stages the official version of the Nation to rewrite it. When he narrates the Nation through the voices of citizens marginalized by the very same Nation, he takes advantage of the fact that their performance of national identity can never satisfy official prescriptions of nationality. These marginalized citizen, and especially Sindibad, a sexually marginalized citizen, are always breaking the Law of national identity. By unveiling Sindibad's sexual secrets, Ben Jelloun also brings national history out of the Nation's closet.

But rather than rejecting the cult of national origins proposed by nationalism, he performs a pilgrimage to the site of this cult while introducing a difference into well-known narratives. This difference, a sexual difference, opens up nationalist narratives to alternative deployments and makes the Nation inhabitable to those usually excluded. Yet once Sindibad serves his purpose, he dies; he is killed off like Zahir in La répudiation. Must this use of sexually marginal citizens to queer the Nation always be at the expense of the lives of those same citizens? Once the revolution is over, will they, like women who participated in the Algerian revolution, be asked/forced to return to veils/closets? Or can

there be a model of revolution wherein the liberation of women and sexual minorities does more than merely serve as a weapon in a "more important" struggle?

CHAPTER 4

SEX AND REVOLUTION

[L]a décolonisation est toujours un phénomène violent.

—Frantz Fanon, Les damnés de la terre

Un jour vient où la plume est contrainte de s'arrêter et il faut alors que l'écrivain prenne les armes.

—Jean-Paul Sartre, Qu'est-ce qu la littérature

A tu es beau comme un comité de gestion.

—Jean Sénac, Citoyens de beauté

In previous chapters, I discussed a number of hauntings: Moha's voice haunts from beyond the grave in Moha le fou, Moho le sage, Rachid's homosexual past returns to haunt him in La répudiation, homosexual history and the ghosts of the Algerian Revolution haunt the present in Djaout's work, and in La prière de l'absent, Sindibad's memory of a homoerotic friendship haunts not only his own sense of personal identity but also the narrative of the Nation. In this chapter I look at ways various personal, political, and historical hauntings have been inscribed in narratives of the Algerian Revolution within two novels more traditionally characterized as combat novels, Kateb Yacine's Nedjma and Mohammed Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer. My readings of Boudjedra, Djaout, and Ben Jelloun show how, in post-independence literature, sexual non-conformity functions politically as part of a struggle against national hegemonies of power and privilege. These readings prompt another set of rereadings of earlier combat novels, rereadings that reveal the combat as having been sexual all along.

The term "littérature de combat" is often used in dividing Maghrebien literature into various categories according to the subject matter, and often according to periods. Frantz Fanon describes a "période assimilationniste," a "littérature de pré-combat," which often involves childhood narratives, and "une troisième période, dite de combat," which includes a "[l]ittérature de combat, littérature révolutionnaire, littérature nationale" (Les damnés de la terre 162). Jean Déjeux, in Littérature maghrébine de langue française: Introduction générale et auteurs, uses six categories: "une littérature dite 'ethnographique' (ou

documentaire)," "une littérature esthétique," "une littérature de refus et de contestation" (from the colonial period), "une littérature de combat," "une littérature de témoignage," and "une littérature de contestation et de dévoilement" (37–39). Only the last category coincides with the post-independence era. He includes Kateb (especially Nedjma) in the third category, whereas I tend to associate it more with a littérature de combat. In Le roman maghrébin, Abdelkebir Khatibi gives another set of categories: "le roman ethnographique," "le roman historique," "le roman psychologique," "[l]e roman 'réaliste-social,'" and "le roman poétique" (43). While such categories can be useful in comparing large numbers of works and in compiling literary histories of the region, the works themselves could often be categorized into more than one group. In addition, some of the categories have taken on positive or negative political connotations. For example, a certain brand of nationalist criticism closely connected with the various independence movements has much maligned the "roman ethnographique." In response to such prescriptions of what constitutes the "politically correct" novel, many Maghrebian novels seem to take pleasure in confounding these categories. It is also possible to view "littérature de combat" less as a category opposed to other categories (which it excludes) such as the "roman ethnographique," than as a possibility in all Maghrebian literature. Even novels criticized by nationalists as pandering to a Western ethnographic gaze can be read in ways that reveal a political prise de conscience.

Kateb's Nedjma was published in 1956, two years after the insurrection began in Algeria on 1 November 1954. One of the novel's central events is the rebellion of 8 May 1945, the demonstrations in Sétif that, brutally repressed by French authorities, turned into riots and then into a massacre at the hands of the French. The rebellion at Sétif is often considered a moment of awakening for the national movement whose consciousness Nedjma is often seen to articulate. Tahar Djaout writes, "Nedjma est sans conteste le texte fondateur de la littérature algérienne de langue française" ("Un film sur Kateb" 17). Likewise, Bernard Aresu has described Nedjma as "the watershed that inspired a collective

Maghrebien production whose strength and quality has yet to abate" ("Introduction," SubStance 4). It is often said that Nedjma is Algeria, or represents Algerian identity; the quest for Nedjma, the desire for Nedjma, allegorizes the quest/desire for a nation/national identity no longer under French control. Yet Nedjma herself is not completely Algerian; her mother was a French Jew, her father could be one of two Algerian men. What does it mean to personify Algerian identity as a sexually liberated woman who is only partially Algerian and not fully Muslim? Does this problematizing or subversion of national identity weaken one's opposition to the colonizer? Like Tahar Ben Jelloun's La prière de l'absent, Nedjma involves a return to national origins that fails. What is the significance of the failure to rejoin Nedjma and the ancestral space, the place of origin? Nedjma's strategic deployment of nationalism, I argue, seeks to avoid exclusion linked with a cult of origins. When the ancestors abduct and veil Nedjma, does this enclosure of a woman mark the text's sensitivity to the relation between a nationalist cult of origins and patriarchy? Or, in symbolizing the Nation as a woman surrounded by the desiring gazes of four young men, is the text "guilty" of reproducing the patriarchal enclosure of women?

Qui se souvient de la mer was published in 1962, the year of the victory of the Algerian Revolution and of Algeria's independence. Qui se souvient de la mer depicts a revolution in full swing with its narrator's wife, Nafissa, as what Assia Djebar calls a "porteuse de feu" (Femmes d'Alger 60). Her explosions blow up, in addition to colonial targets, the traditional family in ways described more concretely by Frantz Fanon in Sociologie d'une révolution: L'an V de la révolution algérienne. Fanon belongs to a group of writers who suggest that the fundamental element of the new Nation would not be the traditional family, but a more "modern" version, the couple, established by choice and out of mutual respect and love. In contrast, many Maghrebien novels question this model of heterosexual monogamy.

In the spirit of rereading these two novels, I begin with the more recent one, and in fact, Qui se souvient de la mer also offers possibilities of rereading Nedjma, especially

since both novels propose models of writing (or rewriting) history, whereby history haunts the official narratives or inscriptions of revolution revealed and sharply criticized by Djaout. In Qui se souvient de la mer, Nafissa's new-found freedom to circulate, to come and go independently of her husband's wishes (a necessary freedom in light of her participation in the revolution) disturbs the narrator. Because the struggle for national freedom and independence involves Nafissa's freedom and independence, revolution—also a sexual revolution—disturbs and threatens the narrator, in short, becomes his obsession. In Nedjma, the novel's eponymous character performs this disruptive task.

Sex on Fire: Mohammed Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer

The narrator of Qui se souvient de la mer is threatened not only because his wife's liberation (which coincides with that of the Nation) challenges his privilege as a married man in a patriarchal society. He is also haunted because the bombs of national liberation threaten to explode inside the family and within his being, his subjectivity, his very notion of who he is. Dib uses a revolution in the Nation to decenter or marginalize male subjectivity and overturn power relations within the heterosexual couple. When Dib writes that, after underground explosions, "la ville fut remuée de fond en comble" (146), the colonial city is not the only thing shaken up from top to bottom; masculinity and male subjectivity also risk exploding along with the apparatus of colonial rule, and the narrator as speaking subject is shaken up as well.

The narrator of Qui se souvient de la mer witnesses, first of all, the construction of a new city (nouvelle cité). In this sense, the cityscape of the novel resembles the maps of many Maghrebian cities with their medinas (or original cities) and the villes nouvelles or European quarters, constructed by the French after their invasion. Eventually the population is denied entry into the new city—"Je venais de me rappeler qu'un arrêté interdit à la population de mettre les pieds dans la nouvelle cité" (83)—in a manner similar to that depicted in Gillo Pontecorvo's film La battaglia di Algeri, in which French soldiers set up

barricades and checkpoints to control movement between the European and Arab quarters.¹ The novel's landscape also resembles a science fiction: the narrator circulates through the labyrinth of the old city inhabited by minotaurs and moles beneath the ground, and "spyrovirs"— which "se mirent à hurler de tous les côtés comme des sirènes" (26)—and "iriaces"— which "volent en sections serrées au point de former par instants, dans le ciel, de grandes roues parfaites" (178)—attack from above. As Winifred Woodhull points out, "The text is structured partly by an opposition between the 'underground city' and the 'new constructions' that seem to correspond to the Algerian revolutionary movement on the one hand, and the colonial machinery on the other..." (*Transfigurations* 59). The moles, therefore, would represent Algerian fighters, and the minotaurs, French soldiers: "Il partit et un minotaure gris se découpa devant la porte, lance-flammes en avant, passa dans un sifflement, puis un deuxième minotaure, exactement à la même place, qui disparut dans un sifflement identique. Puis un troisième... La taupe. Renversée, elle avançait du même pas sous l'asphalte" (10–11). The spyrovirs and iriaces would then be weapons of the French. Yet Woodhull also observes that "the text provides no specific historical or geographical reference points that allow us to determine these correspondences with any certainty" (*Transfigurations* 59).

Fires begin to sweep across the novel's cityscape: "A l'angle, deux momies² en faction; elles fermaient les yeux mais présentaient un étrange sourire. Des rafales de feu commencèrent à balayer la rue. Que faire?" (100). But the narrator, throughout most of the course of the novel, only observes the upheaval. His major preoccupation seems to be with making sense of the turbulence occurring around him: "Pour chasser l'angoisse de ces journées, j'essaye de jeter les bases d'une nouvelle sorte de science que j'appellerais la théorie du comportement des iriaces. Je note la direction, le nombre, les heures de leurs sorties et de leurs retraites; j'évalue l'ampleur et la durée, ainsi que la hauteur de leurs vols;

¹The checkpoints are also described by Alistair Home (*A Savage War of Peace* 190), who devotes an entire chapter to the Battle of Algiers (183–207).

²Another word for the minotaurs; cf. p. 46.

je relève les temps où ils gardent le silence et ceux où il vocifèrent" (133). Like the philosophers Marx criticizes for merely seeking to understand the world, the narrator defines his purpose as being to understand his world, not to change it. His science consists in attempting to establish the causes of the effects around him and serves as a therapy to alleviate his anguish.

As Fanon demonstrates repeatedly, the destruction of the colonizer is also the destruction of the colonized. Likewise, the narrator realizes that "il est possible de... supprimer [les nouvelles constructions], mais à une condition: dynamiter toute la ville, nous dynamiter nous-mêmes" (132). At one level, as Albert Memmi writes, "Pour un colonisateur tué, des centaines, des milliers de colonisés ont été, ou seront exterminés" (Portrait du colonisé 114). In other words, the price paid by colonized peoples in their struggles of decolonization will always be higher in terms of human lives than that paid by the colonizers. At a second level, without a colonizer, the colonized cease to be colonized; colonization ends with the death of the colonizer. And at a third level, after colonization, it is no longer possible to create a clear and simple distinction between colonizer and colonized, no longer possible to return to a pre-colonial past when the two cultures were distinct entities: "La nouvelle cité, abomination de ce temps qui ne ressemble à nulle autre, est déjà partie de nous-mêmes" (Qui se souvient de la mer 133). Decolonization is also a "perilous transition in the national psyche" (Judith Roumani 10) or exacts what Louis Tremain calls "the terrible cost of this triumph to the human psyche" ("Psychic Deformity" 285). What Tremain assumes, however, is that the "demythification" of history Qui se souvient de la mer carries out is a "terrible cost" of the revolution and not one of its benefits. As I shall show, this assumption can only result from an identification with the narrator, an identification that shares his anguish, that trembles before what Tremain calls the "failure of language to render meaning" (296). As explosion after explosion is represented in the novel, realist history and referentiality also seem to go up in flames. Behind these explosions, however, is the narrator's wife. The de(con)struction of the

referent, of the subject, and of history that she sets off along with the explosion of colonialism does not disturb the narrator in an abstract or metaphysical way; this deconstruction affects his own position as male subject. His anguish is not merely about the "perilous transition in the national psyche"; it is male panic. To the extent that he reads the narrator's experience as a "terrible cost" of the Algerian revolution, Tremaine shares that panic.

When using the term "male panic," I have in mind something similar to Sedgwick's description of "homosexual panic" (*Epistemology* 19–21), which I used earlier to theorize Rachid's relation to his brother in *La répudiation*. "Homosexual panic," refers to a pathological insecurity concerning (especially male) heterosexual identity a point of crisis. The legal use of the term as a defense for queer bashing implies that only a minority of heterosexual men are insecure about their heterosexuality. Sedgwick, however, questions whether there could ever be a secure heterosexuality:

If the new common wisdom that hotly overt homophobes are men who are "insecure about their masculinity" supplements the implausible, necessary illusion that there could be a secure version of masculinity (known, presumably, by the coolness of its homophobic enforcement) and a stable, intelligible way for men to feel about other men in modern heterosexual capitalist patriarchy, what tighter turn could there be to the screw of an already off-center, always at fault, endlessly blackmailable male identity ready to be manipulated into any labor of channeled violence. (*Epistemology* 84)

The "blackmailable" aspect of masculinity mentioned here refers back to Sedgwick's work on the homosocial in *Between Men*, where she also describes "a structural residue of terrorist potential, of blackmailability, of Western maleness through the leverage of homophobia" (89). The homosocial Sedgwick describes, a category that includes what is commonly referred to as male bonding, is men's way of interacting with one another to show each other that they are indeed real men. But because of the instability of the break in

what would otherwise be a continuum between male homosocial and homosexual behavior, male bonding always runs the risk of being interpreted as homoerotic, hence the need for men to distinguish their homosocial behavior from homosexuality. This need to distinguish, to prove their heterosexuality and therefore their manliness gives rise to the "terrorist potential," the "blackmailability" that is always "ready to be manipulated into any labor of channeled violence." This violence could be verbal—gay baiting, homophobic insults, leering at women—or physical—gang rape, queer bashing, even murder. On the other hand, as Butler points out, heterosexuality is "both a compulsory system and an intrinsic comedy" (*Gender Trouble* 122). It maintains itself through the violence Sedgwick describes, but sometimes its inherent instabilities disarm the heterosexuals who are expected to perform their identity without flaws but end up staging a laughable, even pathetic, performance, in which inherent instabilities become manifest, magnified, and completely disabling—in short, a farce. I propose that Butler's description of a two-sided system of heterosexuality can also be applied to Sedgwick's description of "homosexual panic" and a more general "male panic" that takes "homosexual panic" as one of its manifestations. The laughable version of male panic would then verge on Silverman's description of "male subjectivity at the margins," which even goes so far as to delight in castration. The Freudian concept of castration anxiety would be another form of male panic. It is the more disarming version of male panic that the narrator of *Qui se souvient de la mer* exemplifies.

The narrator's observations of the political turmoil in the city (the *polis*, with its etymological association with politics) begins to coincide with "something... rotten in the state of"³ the household. His wife Nafissa leaves the house, without telling him where she's going, what she's doing, or how long she'll be gone: "Nafissa s'absente souvent; les heures d'attente sont autant d'heures d'agonie. Par sa force, le soulagement que son retour m'apporte s'accompagne d'une souffrance plus intense. Elle a une allure

³Shakespeare 1149; *Ham*. I.iv.90.

méconnaissable, prudente. Elle était dehors quand quelques-unes des constructions ont sauté, ce matin, et n'est revenue qu'une heure après" (157). Her absence provokes a panic on his part, and instead of alleviating his anguish, her return makes it worse. For him, her presence emphasizes the fact that he no longer has control over her comings and goings. As in the above citation, her outings correspond with explosions in the new city: "Nafissa est de retour. Entre-temps, une des nouvelles constructions a explosé" (163). His own panic is therefore accompanied by and associated with the explosions of urban guerrilla warfare. His panic is not channeled into male terrorist violence (as in homosexual panic) but is the result of an anti-colonial (female) terrorism, which ends up taking patriarchy, especially of the colonialist variety, as its target as well. The narrator finally gives up on trying to prevent her absences as well as trying to understand them:

Les choses ont l'air éternelles, chaque instant se révèle être exceptionnel comme s'il était détaché du temps ou le dernier que l'on eût à vivre. Les craintes que je nourrissais pour Nafissa, le tourment où elle-même me jetait, ont changé aussi, depuis; mais plus que moi, c'est le monde qui a changé. Y en a-t-il qui n'en aient pas encore pris conscience? J'en doute. Je ne lui pose plus de questions: au moment où elle sort comme au moment où elle rentre, je regarde ailleurs, je porte mon attention sur autre chose. Une victoire sur moi que j'ai obtenue non sans peine. (143)

While the narrator seeks to understand his world, it is changing around him. Nafissa throws her husband into a torment, as she reeks havoc on the colonial city. A change in the world brings about change in the narrator, in the narrator's moi ("[u]ne victoire sur moi"), self, or subjectivity. The narrator directs a will to knowledge at his wife, but Nafissa resists his gaze. The narrator may understand the comings and goings of the iriaces (that is, the colonialist's weapons), but he can understand (i.e. seize or penetrate) neither his wife nor the revolution. Knowing is thus associated with the weapons of the colonizer, and as the colonizer is defeated, the narrator must conquer his own curiosity and resign

himself to not knowing. His own "victory," a word with its own military implications, over himself, over his self, his moi, his subjectivity, foreshadows the coming victory over the colonizers. Thus, in Qui se souvient de la mer, victory over colonialism coincides with a victory over male subjectivity.

In other passages as well, Nafissa escapes the narrator's desire to know her: "A ce moment, ce qui subsistait de familier entre nous s'évanouit et c'est réellement une autre femme qui fut devant moi. J'eus presque envie de crier à cette vue. Cette autre Nafissa arborait un sourire assuré qui eût facilement passé pour cruel—mais ne l'était pas—parce que inconcevable" (117). She becomes double, the wife he has known and the woman, the militant he ceases to understand:

Le léger bruit répandu ainsi me renvoie à l'autre, qui se présente à moi chaque fois qu'elle s'absente. Forment-elles un couple antagoniste? Il ne m'est jamais arrivé de les voir ensemble, mais il est certain qu'elles composent une seule femme, l'une relayant l'autre au point où la distinction n'est guère possible, où il n'y a pas de distinction.... J'observe Nafissa à la dérobée. Elle ne me dit rien et je ne lui dis rien. Il me paraît l'apercevoir à une grande distance, alors que je pourrais la toucher en étendant la bras. Je m'abîme dans un tourment sans nom. Puis, comme il lui arrive de le faire certaines fois, elle vient, car elle, en toute occasion, peut se rapprocher de moi, cependant qu'il m'est interdit d'aller vers elle, me prend la tête entre ses mains. (69)

Whereas usually it is women's sexuality that must be concealed in this context because of the danger it represents, here the relation is reversed: even just to see her, he must hide. Man, usually associated with the public, is hidden, and Woman, usually confined to the private sphere, circulates in plain view. The narrator's torment is epistemological in nature, because his inability to control her comings and goings coincides with ignorance, power and knowledge—or the lack thereof—being linked in a Foucauldian sense.

In addition to Nafissa's absences' corresponding to explosions, Nafissa, for the narrator, becomes an explosion, and Woman becomes fire: "Sur les champs, dans l'atmosphère de feu, une seule femme dansait dont l'incandescence m'envahissait. J'étais sans défense contre l'illumination qui émanait d'elle" (34). As described earlier, in La femme dans l'inconscient musulman Fatna Aït Sabbah analyzes classical Arabic erotic texts to show how images of women's uncontrollable sexuality complement the move in dominant discourses (as well as in fundamentalist discourse) to control the danger women represent in the male imaginary by "returning" them to the veil, to the enclosed private sphere of the home. Her reading of Woman as danger contained by the veil could also be applied to Fanon's chapter "L'Algérie se dévoile" and to Qui se souvient de la mer. The veil hides a danger, be it woman or bomb, or as Dib writes, "tantôt flamme, tantôt femme" (177). Nafissa is described as circulating veiled: "Marchant et réfléchissant ainsi, je découvre devant moi Nafissa dont je reconnais l'allure rapide malgré le voile qui la dérobe aux yeux.... Elle entrouvre son voile d'un mouvement vif, me laisse voir son visage. Il ne règne plus autour de moi que l'éclat brûlant de ses yeux" (161). Because her flames are concealed by a veil, her unveiling releases this fire: "Elle ne parle ni ne bouge, ce soir, mais la flamme voilée qui frémit sur elle semble dire plus nettement qu'elle ne l'a fait jusqu'à présent: 'Je vais venir, je vais venir'" (176). And this fire, this femme-flamme, threatens to catch on, to spread, to burn him as well: "J'écoutais ces mots quand une chose me foudroya: la rose de Nafissa s'était plantée dans ma main. Je contemplais son rayonnement et un sentiment de sécurité ineffable me pénétrait.... Deux des nouvelles constructions explosèrent presque au même moment" (181). Nafissa's rose, the poetic image for the explosions she detonates, takes root in the narrator's own flesh. Here, for some reason, the fire provides a sense of security. In most other passages, however, this fire seems more dangerous, even spreading to the conjugal bed: "A mon retour, je découvre, allongé à ma place, un fleuve d'or et de flammes sous le ciel du matin, et non plus un corps. Je contemple ce ciel, le visage blanc de cette eau que le sommeil berce. Je

me recouche près d'elle, Nafissa se réveille" (105). The bed, place of marital coitus, of (hetero)sexual union, is engulfed in flames. Nothing in the married couple remains sacred, no part of heterosexuality cannot be sacrificed to the revolution. The conjugal bed is one more bombsite of the Algerian Revolution, which in fact, seems to sweep away the institution of heterosexual marriage along with colonialism.

At one point, the narrator is approached by a fireball. At first, he mistakes it for a spyrovir, and then he realizes it is Nafissa:

Quand la roue de feu m'aborda comme pour me dévisager, seulement alors, je pus me retourner contre le mur.... Dirigeant un regard en coulisse vers elle, je reconnus, dans un cri, Nafissa! Je fis volte-face: elle se rapprocha et m'enveloppa dans une sorte de vibration infuse et légère à la fois. Toutes les serres qui étaient plantées en moi me lâchèrent. On est toujours seul au plus fort de l'intimité: là, ce fut autre chose, un sang chaud, électrisé, irrigua mes veines. Sans fin... Je tentai de me ressouvenir de quelque chose d'analogue et n'y parvins pas, mais mon cœur tressaillait de joie. D'un geste lent, Nafissa m'alluma la cigarette que j'avais gardée à la bouche. (103)

His wife, Nafissa, is again described as a femme-flamme; she is equated with the fire of her bombs. The narrator's experiments, his scientific understanding of the spyrovirs seem not to be working; colonial knowledge no longer suffices to understand the workings of the revolution. The fire engulfs him ("m'enveloppa") and even lights his cigarette. Yet being consumed by fire seems to provoke a certain jouissance⁴ ("mon cœur tressaillait de joie"), even a jouissance in the most literal sense ("au plus fort de l'intimité," which might be read

⁴The French word "jouissance" may signify, in general, any intense pleasure (bliss), or more specifically, orgasm. The verb "jouir" can mean "to cum" or "to enjoy" (as one says "jouir d'une bonne santé"—"to enjoy good health"). The word has presented difficulties to translators, especially of Roland Barthes's *Le plaisir du texte*, in which he makes the distinction between "textes de plaisir" and "textes de jouissance." Richard Miller translates "jouissance" as "bliss," but as Richard Howard points out in his "Note on the Text," which prefaces Miller's translation, "we lack the terms acknowledged and allowed in polite French utterance: we lack jouissance and jouir, as Barthes uses them here" (v). Howard suggests that "coming" might better translate "jouissance." Because of the wider connotation of the French word and because, after Barthes, it has acquired the additional meaning of discursive pleasure, I shall use the French version throughout.

as orgasm). What he describes in other passages as his torment (i.e. his male panic) here causes him to tremble with joy. He takes sexual pleasure in the usurpation of his male privilege and delights in his increasingly marginal status and even in his specularity ("la roule de feu m'aborda comme pour me dévisager"), the delight in specularity Silverman lists as one of the characteristics of marginal male subjectivity. And in this sexual encounter, explosive as it is, the narrator, who cannot penetrate his wife in the epistemological sense, can only be penetrated by her in a physical sense ("les serres qui étaient plantées en moi"). Whereas Djaout uses the image of the bird of prey to represent the new elite that kidnaps the revolution, Dib uses the image to articulate a revolution that can't be kidnapped by male power, that instead threatens to destroy male power. The image of the narrator being penetrated by his wife occurs in another passage: "La douceur, la mobilité de Nafissa me pénétraient comme une flamme...." (129). And again, this penetration is described as a burning: "Mais à peine me suis-je allongé sous les couvertures qu'une autre femme se jette dans mes bras, cherche par tous les moyens une intimité étroite, violente, une autre femme qui me brûle jusqu'au fond de l'être" (85). This burning threatens his very being. Though the narrator seems, in some passages, to resist both this inversion of sexual roles and even perhaps a hostility on Nafissa's part—"Je chante avec force dans l'intention de ramener Nafissa des rives incertaines d'où elle me fait face" (136)—in other passages, where he seems to enjoy this inversion, it is hard to justify the assertion made by Louis Tremain, the English translator of the novel, that the narrator pays the "terrible cost" of the Algerian revolution.

Tremain, however, in his reading of the novel, "Psychic Deformity in Mohammed Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer," breaks with several previous interpretations of the ending of Qui se souvient, when the narrator seems to descend into the underground city. Since Nafissa disappears, seemingly for good, Charles Bonn (La littérature algérienne) assumes the narrator joins her in the underground. Thus, for Bonn, the revolution, once both spouses are participants, rejoins the heterosexual couple and cements their union.

Tremaine also takes odds with Judith Roumani, who thinks that the narrator, in descending into the underground city, becomes an active participant in the revolution: "[H]e is an utterly passive participant, ...he does not join the underground city but merely takes refuge in it" (Tremaine 294). Here Tremaine puts his finger on something quite important; the narrator's passivity, however, is more than (as Tremaine describes it) political. It is—as we have seen in other passages—sexual. Like Rachid Boudjedra's version of revolution in Les 1001 années de la nostalgie, where, during the revolution, the men fear being forced into seclusion one week per month to wait out their menstrual periods on chamber pots, Dib's version of the Algerian Revolution also threatens to inverse the sexual order, even at the most physically sexual level, toppling the man from his position as top, throwing him to the bottom, where he can only wait to be penetrated.⁵ Tremaine goes further than many critics in understanding what the revolution does to the married couple in Dib's vision. Yet I would disagree with Tremaine's argument that the narrator's torment is a "terrible cost." I suggest instead that this inversion might be one of revolution's most precious benefits.

In chapter three of Sociologie d'une révolution, "La famille algérienne," Frantz Fanon devotes an entire section to "Le Couple" (96–100), describing the changes in the traditional family brought on by the Algerian revolution. The husband must give up his jealousy and insistence on defending his honor in the person of his wife when she participates in the revolution. For Fanon, the value of national liberation supersedes traditional values: "Le couple algérien se dépouille de ses faiblesses traditionnelles dans le même temps où la cohésion du peuple s'inscrit dans l'histoire" (100). Yet Fanon expects the couple to come out of the struggle even stronger than before:

Le couple algérien s'est considérablement resserré au cours de cette Révolution. Les liens quelquefois fragiles, marqués du sceau du provisoire, du récusable dans l'instant, se renforcent, ou du moins changent de contenu. Ce qui se définissait par la seule cohabitation admet aujourd'hui une multiplicité de coordonnées. Et

⁵Here, in addition to the hierarchical implications in the words "top" and "bottom," I use these words as they are used in gay slang to denote the active and passive partners in anal intercourse.

d'abord le fait de courir ensemble des dangers, de se retourner dans le lit chacun de son côté, chacun avec son morceau de secret. C'est aussi la conscience de collaborer à l'immense travail de destruction du monde de l'oppression. Le couple n'est plus fermé sur lui-même. Il ne trouve plus sa fin en lui-même. Il n'est plus le résultat de l'instinct naturel de perpétuation de l'espèce, ni le moyen institutionnalisé de satisfaire sa sexualité. Le couple devient la cellule de base de la cité, le noyau fécond de la Nation. Le couple algérien, en devenant un maillon de l'organisation révolutionnaire, se transforme en unité d'existence. La confusion de l'expérience combattante et de la vie conjugale approfondit les rapports entre époux et cimente l'union. Il y a surgissement simultané et effervescent du citoyen, du patriote et d'un époux moderne. (99–100)

Bonn's interpretation of the ending of Qui se souvient would therefore uphold Fanon's hypothesis. If one considers that the notion of the couple as a basis of social organization is quite foreign to the traditional extended family in Maghrebian society, Fanon's song of praise to what seems to be a "modern," even Western, couple stands out indeed. For Fanon, though the revolution weakens the traditional family with its kinship networks, and though, like in Qui se souvient, the revolution even sneaks its way into the conjugal bed, it strengthens the heterosexual couple (here, "heterosexual" in the strict way Foucauldians define it). In Fanon's bed, however, the dangers of revolution remain as secrets that separate the spouses ("se retourner dans le lit chacun de son côté"). Fanon's bed is thus marked by an absence of coitus at the time of revolution. Sex and revolution do not mix. Though women are unveiled in his vision of revolution, political secrets remain veiled. By entering the conjugal bed, they become sexual secrets. Fanon's vision of revolution, then, maintains the marginalization of sexual secrets that many other authors seek to disclose. This marginalization, this keeping of secrets in the closet, points to a contradiction in Fanon's work.

If this confining of sexual secrets to the Nation's margins (i.e. the Nation's bedrooms) serves the national bourgeoisie that maintains power by excluding from the Nation, Fanon is not willing to go as far in transgressing taboos as he claims in "L'Algérie se dévoile." He exempts the Nation's bedrooms from revolutionary change. The national bourgeoisie he wishes to eliminate nevertheless finds itself strengthened in the very work that advocates its elimination as if the great advance of the revolution were the consolidation of compulsory heterosexuality, Western style. Yet Fanon does not acknowledge that the couple would be an innovation. He constructs a couple that supposedly already existed, one that used to be "fermé sur lui-même," a falsification in the context of the extended family. Before, his version of the traditional couple was merely the "résultat de l'instinct naturel de perpétuation de l'espèce" and the "moyen institutionnalisé de satisfaire sa sexualité." The only innovation he recognizes that, through participation in the national struggle, the couple has become the most basic building block of the independent Nation. By claiming that reproduction is a natural instinct, that this instinct was already a part of an Algerian "couple," Fanon conceals how his version of the couple is merely another form of social contract that institutionalizes, even constructs, sexuality and reproduction in new ways (or not really that new in the context of Western compulsory heterosexuality), of linking sexuality and power in ways that I would suggest actually reinforces the power of a national elite that he opposes in Les damnés de la terre.

Dib, on the other hand, seems to offer a different vision of what revolution should do to the couple. The narrator, like Fanon's abstract father in "Le Fils et le Père" (86–90) and "La Fille et le Père" (90–95), seems to lose authority over his children: "Dans la chambre, pas de Nafissa. Encore! Où peut-elle être allée? Je me sens inquiet; quelle habitude! Elle a laissé les enfants, que je découvre en train de jouer comme s'ils la croyaient près d'eux. Ils ne daignent pas m'accorder un regard. Avec une cruelle indifférence, une tranquillité qui semble s'amuser de mon désarroi, ils continuent à jouer" (139–40). Some critics have tried to hide, or at least to lessen the destruction of the couple Dib stages. Beïda Chikhi

writes that Nafissa "accomplit pourtant paisiblement les tâches ménagères" (59). The narrator does not think so in the above passage; in fact, he even thinks the children take pleasure in his panic over the crumbling couple. Tremaine writes of "Nafissa's role as a comforter and protector" (288) and Déjeux seems to hold a similar position: "La pensée de Dib est que la femme aide l'homme à se réaliser, car il demeure longtemps un enfant. Elle l'aide à sortir de son infantilisme, survalorisé dans sa masculinité" (*Mohammed Dib* 38). It is difficult to imagine how Nafissa can be read as comforter when the fire of her bombs spreads right into the conjugal bed. Instead, Dib seems to mine the couple, to portray it as one of the bomb sites of the novel. As Winifred Woodhull writes, "[f]ar from enshrining the married couple as a refuge of traditional values in the inviolable space of the home, Nafissa functions here to reconfigure the conjugal relation as rubble encumbering the public space of the streets..." (*Transfigurations* 61). In Dib's version, the couple and the patriarchal family explode along with the new city; patriarchy and the version of heterosexuality Fanon finds to be an improvement over it are destroyed along with colonialism.

Nafissa corresponds to the role of women in the Algerian revolution as porteuses de feu, visually portrayed in the film La battaglia di Algeri, described by Fanon and Alistair Horne, represented in the novels of Assia Djebar (who invented the term) and in theoretical works by other Arab feminists. Algerian history, however, is better known for the way it does not conform to the overturning of gender relations described by Dib. Though women were active participants in the Algerian Revolution up until a certain point and, in struggle, also advanced the women's struggle, the Algerian revolution is notorious for not only not furthering women's struggle, but also rolling back previous gains. John Ruedy writes, "Amidst the euphoria of liberation during the summer of 1962, FLN militants roamed the streets intimidating single women. A woman accompanied in public by a man other than a relative was liable to be hurried off to a forced marriage or jailed if she refused" (229). Here, the term "liberation" is in an oxymoronic relation to the description that follows. In

her collection of interviews with women from several Arab countries, Bouthaina Shaaban seems to imply that Algeria provides the perfect example of how not to do a feminist movement. One Lebanese interviewee, Fatima Fawaz, states, "I certainly don't think there is any danger that the Lebanese woman might face the same fate which the Algerian woman had to face after the independence of Algeria. It is true that the Algerian woman fought, carried arms and played a crucial role in the war for independence, but she didn't enjoy the same awareness and understanding of the nature of her role which the Lebanese woman now enjoys" (101–2). Randa Berri, another Lebanese woman interviewed by Shaaban, seems to share this view of Algeria: "I believe that the political system and situation of women in Lebanon is different from that which obtains in Algeria. During the Algerian revolution there were no societies for women and even now there is only one which is supervised and directed by the political party there" (104). In contrast, the Algerian women Shaaban interviews give more varied responses. While all agree that women played a great role in the revolution, the respondents who actually participated in the revolution tend to be more optimistic about how much the revolution brought in terms of women's liberation. Younger women are more pessimistic as is evidenced by the following exchange between Farida and her mother Mme Almnower, who fought in the revolution:

Here Farida turned to her mother, saying, "I feel that the Algerian men used the Algerian women in the revolution. They used you as they used their weapons. You didn't get anything from the revolution; you got absolutely nothing."

"No," said her mother. "I don't agree at all. Had we not fought the revolution you would not be here now doing an MA in English!" (186–87)

Farida goes so far as to say, "I think the Algerian male is going backwards rather than forwards. I believe my father is better than my husband and my husband is better than his son" (187). Even Mme Almnower negatively compares women's rights in Algeria to those in Morocco and Tunisia, where women did not fight in revolutions: "The time will soon come when Algerian women will achieve the same rights as Tunisian and Moroccan

women" (191). But Farida's notion of women being used as weapons is an interesting one, for it could also be applied to Fanon's veil, the veil concealing a danger—Woman/bomb—as well as to Dib's Nafissa/fire.

Rewriting History

Read retrospectively, Qui se souvient de la mer, in the sexual revolution it stages, seems more like an imaginative rewriting of the possibilities of revolutionary struggle than a representation of the gains of the Algerian Revolution. This rewriting of history is not, however, limited to the domain of the sexual; it is part of a more general violence levied against narrative style, a violence present also in Kateb's work. As I remarked in my discussion of Ben Jelloun's La prière de l'absent, given assertions (especially Bhabha's) concerning the narrative qualities of Nation, disruptions in narrative style may also disrupt nationality, national identity. In Qui se souvient de la mer, these disruptions are closely linked to the subject matter of revolution. Dib himself has stated that "pour moi la révolution algérienne ne saurait être qu'une tragédie avec, au centre de tout, l'explosion poétique" (quoted in Roumani [8] from L'Action 28 April 1958). Thus the explosions detonated by Nafissa do violence to literature itself. As Judith Roumani writes, "Qui se souvient de la mer, Dib's first completely non-realist novel, goes much further than Yacine's Nedjma in integrating the theme of violence into the texture of the novel" (8). In his postface to the novel (189–91), Dib compares Qui se souvient de la mer to Picasso's Guernica. He contrasts his novel, described as "onirique" and "apocalyptique," as resembling science fiction, with "la littérature dite 'réaliste,'" which, for him, could never capture the horror of the Algerian experience of colonialism. He finds that Guernica expresses this sort of horror better than any realism:

[P]as un élément réaliste dans ce tableau—ni sang, ni cadavres—et cependant il n'y a rien qui exprime autant l'horreur. Picasso a fixé seulement et ordonné des cauchemars sur sa toile; ça n'a sûrement pas été chez lui une simple méthode de composition valant une autre. Avant tout, il y a eu ce qu'il savait et présentait;

c'étaient des cauchemars qui le hantaient autant que les autres hommes, mais il a été le seul à savoir leur donner un visage que chacun reconnaît désormais. Et s'il a inventé cette périphrase pour nommer ce qui n'a strictement pas de nom, Guernica, qui appartient aujourd'hui à la sensibilité éveillée collective, appartenait déjà, avant de sortir de ses pinceaux, à l'inconscient collectif. C'est là l'aspect le plus important de cette démarche: celui d'accoucheur de rêves; tout le texte se situe au second plan. (190–91)

The image he uses to describe the images of Guernica is that of a haunting. As in Djaout's work, the past haunts the present. The goal of a novelistic rewriting of history is to capture this haunting along with all its challenges to official versions or narratives of the past, written as history. In the above passage, Dib explicitly connects the writing of his novel to the writing of history. Yet his novel deviates from accepted forms of academic historiography by explicitly rejecting realist historical narrative and any claims to historical referents supporting such a narrative, referents constituted by events that occurred before his recounting of them and that exist separately and independently of their narration.

In its rejection of history as a realist genre, Qui se souvient de la mer participates in a tendency within postcolonial literature that associates realist historical narrative with colonialist discourse. European historiography's claim to objectivity was often used to disguise the ways in which European versions of the history of colonized countries actually justified colonization. French histories of the Maghreb, for example, denied the reality of an Algerian nation by pointing out that there had never been a separate and united Algeria before the arrival of the French. The Arab conquest of the Maghreb was used in such a way as to exacerbate division between Arabs and Berbers in order to facilitate colonial rule. Thus European versions of historiography arrived with colonization and were part and parcel of colonial rule. In the Maghreb, French historiography would seem to imply that the Maghreb's history does not begin until the nineteenth century. That is, the Maghreb enters history thanks to colonization, which makes it possible for the Maghreb to have a

history. Abdallah Laouri writes, "Pour le lecteur profane, le Maghreb entre dans l'histoire moderne au début du XIX^e siècle, parce qu'à partir de cette date les sources d'une historiographie scientifique sont disponibles..." (*L'histoire du Maghreb* 2: 66). The postcolonial historian's task, then, is to "décoloniser l'histoire" (67). Interestingly enough, the image Laouri attaches to this decolonization is one of unveiling, "dévoiler l'histoire du Maghreb" (1: 10). For Laouri, therefore, history shares the task Ben Jelloun attributes to the novel, that of unveiling what has heretofore been kept hidden. As for Djaout's narrator/historian of *L'invention du désert*, writing history also operates by unveiling.⁶ In other parts of the colonized world, colonialism has made this task much more difficult; not content to cover up part of the past, colonialism eliminated or erased it. In the Caribbean, for example, this erasure coincided with the extermination of the indigenous population. Caribbean novels, therefore, cannot uncover the past; they must reinvent it. In doing so, many Caribbean novelists deconstruct the distinction between sacred or mythical explanations of events and historical explanations, paralleling what is called magical realism in Latin American literature. In the European realist tradition, "magical realism" would be an oxymoron.

My discussion of the rejection of realist history borrows heavily from Sandy Petrey's *Realism and Revolution*, where he uses Speech Act Theory to show how "[r]ealism can therefore be understood not as practicing but as exposing the reality effect, the process through which a collectivity pretends that its signs are the unmediated representation of referents" (75). This pretension parallels colonial history's pretension that its narratives of the past are "the unmediated representation" of real events. For Petrey, "the novelists of the nineteenth century are the children of the French Revolution" (50); that is, realism, like the speech acts of the nascent National Assembly he analyzes with such finesse, doesn't merely say things (i.e. describe reality), it does things (i.e. produces reality). Because the

⁶A similar move has become a tendency in US lesbian and gay historiography as is evidenced by the title of the anthology edited by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*.

French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution, the realist novel—even if, in Petrey's readings, it simultaneously reveals the referential fallacy and pretends that referentiality is not a fallacy—is a bourgeois genre par excellence. History, operating along the same assumptions as the realist novel, is also an understanding enabled by the bourgeois revolution. Though history seems to deconstruct itself for Petrey—"Realist history involves less the acts preceding language than the acts within it, acts that take effect as constituents of a precise social environment most succinctly designated through chronological coordinates that are themselves ideologically active" (80)—Dib's novelistic rewriting of the Algerian revolution, rejecting cause-and-effect, rejecting chronology, also rejects the conventions of historical narrative Petrey describes. If the realist novel comes out of a bourgeois revolution, Dib's version of writing history could be said to come out of a revolution that originally articulated itself as anti-bourgeois, as socialist (even if all references to socialism have been deleted from the Algerian constitution⁷). Dib's writing of revolution could also be said to engage in combat with genres—of history, of the novel—seen as bourgeois and to reject even the "socialist" counterpart of the nineteenth-century realist novel, social realism, as unrevolutionary in his vision of what the Algerian Revolution is to bring about culturally as well as politically and economically. In Moha le fou, Moha le sage, the bank director, in accusing Moha of being idealistic, claims that he also does not understand reality: "Tu trouves que les riches continuent de s'enrichir et les pauvres de s'appauvrir? Non, tu ne connais rien à la réalité profonde du pays, la réalité scientifique" (128). In the eyes of the bourgeoisie, class struggle is an un-realistic, i.e. un-realist, notion. Realism and the claims to reality Petrey describes as being part of realist genres, are used in the bank director's argument to combat class struggle and socialism. As Dib opposes his anti-realist version of history to colonial realist history, Moha

⁷Bouthaina Shaaban writes: "The National Charter adopted in 1976 replaced the secular socialist principles of the State with an official commitment to Islam as the State religion, and since then reforms in family law have been slowed down and indeed some have been reversed" (Both Right and Left Handed 182). Marnia Lazreg, in "Women, a Stumbling Block for Third-World Socialism," traces the gradual abandonment of socialism by the Algerian government and emphasizes the consequences of this shift for women's rights.

witnesses that the reigns of realist history have shifted to a new ruling elite, this time national. To the bank director's description of "reality" with its referential claims, Moha responds with madness. When the director makes claims to reason, to scientific understanding (the same scientificity Laouri characterizes as part of colonial history), Moha responds, "Pour cette lucidité meurtrière, très dur est mon cœur. Pour cette haine des pauvres, ma patience m'étrangle. En t'écoutant, tout dépérit en moi. Ni fou ni sage" (128), thereby unveiling realism as a tool of class oppression.

Dib's staging of the Algerian Revolution is also a sexual revolution, in much the same way as Boudjedra's revolution in Les 1001 années de la nostalgie. The Nation liberated in struggle is very much a queer nation. In this narration of a queer nation's liberation, the explosion of Nafissa's sexuality ignites the pages of the novel. Her challenge to the Nation is also a challenge to narrative. Whereas for Petrey, the bourgeois revolution ushers in the possibility of realism, for Dib, the anti-bourgeois revolution ushers it out. Reading Dib's version of history now allows us to better situate Kateb's. Both writers approached the Algerian revolution in the early '50s while close to the Algerian Communist Party, both wrote for the PCA's newspaper Alger républicain at the same time.

The Haunted House of the Nation: Kateb Yacine's Nedjma

Kateb Yacine's Nedjma has long been interpreted as a narrative of national identity. Its title, in fact, is often considered to be synonymous with Algeria itself, the Algerian nation that constituted the hopes of the fighters for Algeria's independence. To quote the back cover of the novel: "Nedjma, c'est l'objet d'un amour d'enfance, c'est la femme éternelle, c'est l'Algérie. Nedjma, c'est l'obsession du passé, la quête de l'inaccessible, la résurrection d'un peuple. Nedjma, c'est la femme-patrie." Yet, through the violence it does to narrative, it is as much a challenge to nationality as a confirmation of it. As Kateb once stated in a lecture, "Il ne faut pas pousser un symbole trop loin. Un symbole est toujours fragile; si on veut le littéraliser, il se détruit. Nedjma, oui, finit par symboliser l'Algérie. Cette fleur aussi peut symboliser l'Algérie si l'on se met à rêver sur le

phénomène de la fleur" (quoted in Gontard, "Nedjma" de Kateb Yacine 12). Kateb, therefore, while admitting the possibility of reading Nedjma as Algeria, warns against reading every element of the novel allegorically. As much as it is an allegory of the awakening of national identity, it is an allegory of the failure of any traditional narrative to enclose the heterogeneity within a nation's borders without excluding, marginalizing, homogenizing, or doing violence to a portion of the Nation's citizens. As a narrative, Nedjma follows no traditional sense of chronology. The novel both begins and ends with the same event. At the same time, however, the novel also seems to rely on a more traditional sense of chronology along with its implications of cause and effect, the same chronology often operating in historiographical narratives. Critics have attempted to reconstruct this implied chronology, but often actually disagree on the exact order. The editors include a plot summary at the beginning of the novel, Marc Gontard narrates his own version, complete with a graphic representation, which I have found very helpful in teaching the novel to students reading it for the first time ("Nedjma" de Kateb Yacine 38), and Jacqueline Arnaud challenges some aspects of Gontard's account (2: 320–26). The novel's event most contested in terms of its placement in a "real" order of events is the very event I shall argue is the most central to the novel as a national allegory: the return to the ancestral space of the Nadhor, which functions as a symbolic return to national origins in much the same way as the journey to national origins in La prière de l'absent.

In "The Absence of Itinerary in Kateb Yacine's Nedjma," Tremaine writes,

The more closely and frequently we examine the narrative, the closer we come to discovering the chronological configuration of the action. Few serious readers would consider such an exercise worthwhile (with the exception of Gontard...), and yet it is clear even on the first reading that such a configuration exists, that the author "knows" when and in what order these events take place. Chronological time exists in Nedjma—it's simply ignored. (27)

While I would agree with Tremaine that a sense of "real" chronology underlies the events of Nedjma, relying on a notion of chronology that equates the "real" order of events with the order intended by the author is not very helpful in determining that order. And while some sense of real order is probably necessary to understand the narrative, this real order, ultimately at least partially undecidable, could never be reconstituted in every detail once and for all. Any attempt to reconstitute the real order of events that the novel "messes up" also undoes what the novel makes it point to do, the violence to narrative and the challenge to nationality or national identity as narrative forms. Abdelkebir Khatibi has described Kateb's mixing of genres as a "technique terroriste qui brise la structure propre au roman et qui crée un langage éblouissant fusant de toutes parts et se surpassant indéfiniment" (Le roman maghrébin 103). And in his introduction to the English edition of Nedjma, Bernard Aresu writes, "As a fictional text, Nedjma poetically explodes a plot whose elements cohere only in synchrony and whose narrative finality Kateb may have never intended" (xl). Thus, as the diegetic explosions of Qui se souvient de la mer also blow apart narrative style, Kateb does violence to narrative, and this violence to narrative is also a violence to the concept of Nation as narrative. Ben Jelloun, we remember, similarly questions national identity by fragmenting his narrative of it.

Nedjma's eponymous character, whose name mean's "star" in Arabic, is desired by the novel's four protagonists, Rachid, Mourad, Lakhdar, and Mustapha. They all end up together around Nedjma in Bône immediately following the rebellion in Sétif on 8 May 1945, an event often cited as one of the early awakenings of Algerian national consciousness. Later, they work together in a quarry in Constantine, where Lakhdar is arrested after striking their boss Ernest in a dispute. At the wedding of Ernest's daughter, Suzy, and the bus driver, Ricard, which turns into an orgy, Rachid kills Ricard when the latter beats an Arab domestic servant. He is arrested, and the other three protagonists (Lakhdar has by now escaped) go their separate ways. The novel begins with these events at Constantine and ends with a retelling of their parting. At a certain point in the narrative,

Rachid and Si Mokhtar, a man of the generation of Rachid's father, set off on a pilgrimage to Mecca, a journey they never complete. Later (how much later is unclear), they kidnap Nedjma to take her on a journey of return to the land of their ancestor Keblout. Combining the story of the Nation with that of its citizens, the novel also tells the tales of the four protagonists' childhoods. The narrative of national identity thus coincides with the narrative of subjectivity (I use the expression "narrative" because it seems to me that psychoanalysis works by establishing just such a narrative). The novel also tells the stories of the protagonists' fathers. Operating with a complex genealogy, the novel presents a set of characters with a common ancestor, Keblout, whose resistance to the onslaught of French colonialism is also recounted.⁸ The story of Nedjma's conception, however, is shrouded in mystery, for her father is unknown. Like Nedjma, her mother, a French Jew, is surrounded by four men, two of whom could be Nedjma's father. Is it a coincidence that each woman has four "lovers," the exact number of wives allotted to men in Islam? Nedjma, like Nafissa, marks a reversal in the sexual order.

Taking Nedjma to the Nadhor, land of Keblout, would thus join the embodiment of national identity, the personification of the Nation itself, with the origin of the Nation in resistance to colonial rule. Nedjma would then be rooted in the source of national identity at the roots of the family tree:

[N]otre tribu mise en échec répugne à changer de couleur; nous nous sommes toujours mariés entre nous; l'inceste est notre lien, notre principe de cohésion depuis l'exil du premier ancêtre; le même sang nous porte irrésistiblement à l'embouchure du fleuve passionnel, auprès de la sirène chargée de noyer tous ses prétendants plutôt que de choisir entre les fils de sa tribu—Nedjma menant à bonne fin son jeu de reine fugace et sans espoir jusqu'à l'apparition de l'époux, le

⁸Gontard provides a chart of this genealogy in "Nedjima" de Kateb Yacine (40). The characters of Nedjima make up the basis of much of Kateb's later work: Le cadavre encerclé and Les ancêtres redoublent de férocité, which were published in Le cercle des représailles (1959), Le polygone étoilé (1966), and some of the works in L'œuvre en fragments (1986).

nègre prémuni contre l'inceste social, et ce sera enfin l'arbre de la nation s'enracinant dans la sépulture tribale, sous le nuage enfin crevé d'un sang trop de fois écumé.... (186–87, Kateb's ellipsis)

At work in this passage is a complex system of poetic associations used by many authors from the Maghreb. The first image is that of water, with all its life-sustaining qualities. Associated with the image of water is that of its source or spring, both "source" and "spring" being translated as "source" in French. Often associated with the spring as source of water is the source of national identity. At the end of La prière de l'absent, when Sindibad finds an alternative source of national identity in his marginal sexuality, it, too, gushes forth like a spring. In the above passage, the Nation's tree is planted near this source and drinks from the source of national identity. Also associated with water is the image of the sea ("mer") and its homonym, mother ("mère"). The mother as the source of life, associated with amniotic fluids, is also associated with the source of the Nation, the Nation's origin. A return to the Nation's origins, then, sometimes parallels a return to the womb, or at least to childhood. The sea in Dib's title, Qui se souvient de la mer, also carries these connotations. The narrator of Qui se souvient returns to his childhood in narrating his account of the birth of a nation. Likewise, Nedjma contains the childhood and adolescent narratives of its four protagonists. As an allegory of the birth of Algeria, it also narrates Nedjma's conception and birth. A return to national origins, a search for national identity, is often described as the search for one's roots, as in Alex Haley's epic Roots; hence the image of the Nation's tree in the above passage. The roots of national identity also recall the roots of another tree, the family tree.⁹ Alex Haley's search for his "roots" involves an uncovering of his genealogy in addition to a return to Africa, home of his ancestors and site of "national" origins. Nedjma involves a similar coincidence of

⁹Though the image of the family tree may imply an exclusively Western, written variety of genealogy, after colonization, the notion of an "arbre généalogique" cannot be unfamiliar to Maghrebian writers, if only through the French expression. When the French imposed their own system of bureaucracy in Algeria, they also imposed their own sense of genealogy. Algerians who were unable to provide a last name were registered as S.N.P. (sans nom patronymique), even if they knew their genealogies many generations back. The protagonists of Les 1001 années de la nostalgie bear this mark of French genealogy.

genealogy and quest for national origins. In the above passage, the image of tree and water are combined, as the family tree is planted at the source of the Nation.

Yet Nedjma represents a gap in the family tree, especially the patrilineal one. Because of her mixed origins, she could never embody an Algerian purity, free of all influence by the colonizer; for she is part French, part colonizer. In addition, the journey of return to national identity is a failure. Nedjma, kidnapped by Rachid and Si Mokhtar, is kidnapped in turn by those of the tribe still remaining on the ancestral lands. Calling Rachid and Si Mokhtar traitors for having abandoned the ancestral lands, they take away their object of desire, Nedjma, symbol of a free Algeria. This kidnapping of national identity parallels the kidnapping of the revolution described by Djaout. Kateb, like Djaout, also demonstrates the consequences of this kidnapping for women.

The event of the novel whose "real" chronological placement is most contested is this return to the Nadhor. Jacqueline Arnaud takes odds with Gontard, placing the trip to Nadhor a year after the "rencontre essentielle à Bône" (321). (According to Gontard's chronology, the return to the Nadhor occurred between 1947 and 1950 [38].) Arnaud also suggests that the entire episode of the return to the Nadhor may be the result of hallucinations from smoking hashish (322–23). Mansour M'Henni counters that whether this particular incident is "real" or not is beside the point, none of the novel is "real": "Mais en fait, qu'importe si l'épisode du Nadhor est un rêve ou une réalité de Rachid puisque le tout se réduit à un artifice, à une création qui se montre du doigt, qui met en scène son fonctionnement en se dé-roulant" ("L'épisode du Nadhor and Nedjma" 155). Thus, it is precisely at the central moment of a narrative of Nation, the return to national origins, that critics have challenged the category of the "real" and the notion of realist literature. As Dib, in his "postface" to Qui se souvient de la mer, rejects realist genres in his narration of revolution, Kateb has rejected realism in his narration of the coming to national consciousness that was to pave the way to revolution. And Kateb's rejection of realism, like Dib's, has important implications in terms of his rewriting of Maghrebian history.

As the past haunts the present in Djaout's work, as Dib fills Qui se souvient de la mer with the same sort of hauntings that characterize Picasso's Guernica, Nedjma is a haunted novel: "Surmontant un patio de maison hantée (on s'y suicida en famille avant la guerre), la villa Nedjma est entourée de résidences qui barrent la route du tramway..." (65). Here Nedjma's house, by metonymy, becomes Nedjma—Kateb writes "la villa Nedjma" instead of "la villa de Nedjma"—and Woman and house carry the same name. This house is associated with the haunted, and by extension, Nedjma as house/novel is also haunted. It is, like the novelistic present of Djaout's L'invention du désert, haunted with the ghosts of history:

[C]e sont des âmes d'ancêtres qui nous occupent, substituant leur drame éternisé à notre juvénile attente, à notre patience d'orphelins ligotés à leur ombre de plus en plus pâle, cette ombre impossible à boire ou à déraciner,—l'ombre des pères, des juges, des guides que nous suivons à la trace, en dépit de notre chemin, sans jamais savoir où ils sont, et s'ils ne vont pas brusquement déplacer la lumière, nous prendre par les flancs, ressusciter sans sortir de la terre ni revêtir leurs silhouettes oubliées, ressusciter rien qu'en soufflant sur les cendres chaudes, les vents de sable qui nous imposeront la marche et la soif, jusqu'à l'hécatombe où gît leur vieil échec chargé de gloire, celui qu'il faudra prendre à notre compte, alors que nous étions faits pour l'inconscience, la légèreté, la vie tout court... Ce sont nos pères, certes; des oueds mis à sec au profit de moindres ruiseaux, jusqu'à la confluence, la mer où nulle source ne reconnaît son murmure: l'horreur, la mêlée, le vide—l'océan—et qui d'entre nous n'a vu se brouiller son origine comme un cours d'eau ensablé, n'a fermé l'oreille au galop souterrain des ancêtres, n'a couru et folâtré sur le tombeau de son père... (97, Kateb's ellipses)

The protagonists are haunted by their ancestors' souls ("des âmes d'ancêtres qui nous occupent"), bound to their shadows or shades ("l'ombre des pères"). They must resurrect ("ressusciter") these ancestors, or their ancestors' ghosts or silhouettes ("leurs silhouettes

oubliées"). This task of resurrecting is also the task taken on by the novel. Like the protagonist of Les chercheurs d'os and the narrator/historian of L'invention du désert, Nedjma digs skeletons out of the closet of history. And as in L'invention du désert and La prière de l'absent, this task has the characteristic of a journey or itinerary ("nous suivons à la trace," "notre chemin," "la marche").

The above passage also shares the poetic associations of trees and water with the Nation's origins (represented by the ancestors): "cette ombre impossible à boire ou à déraciner," "la soif," "des oueds [rivers that run for only part of the year] mis à sec au profit de moindres ruisseaux, jusqu'à la confluence, la mer où nulle source ne reconnaît son murmure," "l'océan," and "un cours d'eau ensablé." Yet the Nation's origins are at least partially beyond reach, because the protagonists, though tied to their ancestors ("ligotés"), are orphans and therefore disconnected from their fathers in the patrilineal family tree. Their fathers, then, are shadows (i.e. ghosts), and nothing more. The paths, the route to national identity are clouded by wind-carried sand as the running water that "brouille son origine" is clouded by sand. The rivers of national identity mix with other rivers in the sea. Any attempt to narrate an Algerian identity separate from the neighboring nations, even the colonizer, France, will find that the (river) course of that identity also flows into the Mediterranean, into a common identity shared by the Maghreb, Mediterranean Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean countries: "Que le flux et le reflux se jouent de ce pays jusqu'à brouiller les origines par cette orageuse langueur de peuple à l'agonie, d'immémorial continent couché comme un molosse entre le monde ancien et le nouveau..." (183, Kateb's ellipsis). This confounding of sources, much exacerbated by colonialism's attempt to sever the Maghreb from its past, nonetheless has much earlier roots, even in the pre-colonial past of the Maghreb: "[M]ais la conquête [française] était un mal nécessaire, une greffe douloureuse apportant une promesse de progrès à l'arbre de la nation entamé par la hache; comme les Turcs, les Romains et les Arabes, les Français ne pouvaient que s'enraciner, otages de la patrie en gestation dont ils se disputaient les

faveurs..." (102). Nevertheless, this blurring of origins, these attempts to fell the tree of the Nation, only further root the sense of national identity in the conscience of the colonized.

This trip to national identity and origins (and given Arnaud's suggestion that the whole episode might be a trip in the narcotic sense, "trip," here, is a doubly loaded word) can only be followed as traces ("l'ombre des pères, des juges, des guides que nous suivons à la trace"). Here, the Derridean notion of traces is helpful in reading Kateb's complicated itinerary of return to the Nation's origins. One might search for a beginning, a prelapsarian origin, but it can only be present as an absence (above as an "âme," "ombre," or "silhouette"), in the traces it has left. Charles Bonn writes,

Or, ce plurivocalisme n'est pas seulement un mode de production du sens historique, il est le sens même. Car si j'ai vu en Nedjma un centre absent particulièrement fécond du roman, si Nedjma apparaît à ses amants comme toujours fuyante à leurs approches, c'est qu'aucun discours identifiant ne saurait la cerner tout entière. Nedjma qui donne son nom au roman, l'étoile symbolique de la patrie, ne peut se limiter à un seul sens. La leçon ultime de Nedjma, s'il pouvait y en avoir une, serait donc qu'il ne peut y avoir de sens un, réponse définitive. C'est pourquoi Kateb a conscience, selon sa formule célèbre, de faire sa révolution à l'intérieur de la révolution politique, d'être, "au sein de la perturbation, l'éternel perturbateur." (Le roman algérien 67)¹⁰

For Bonn, therefore, Nedjma represents a Derridean center of the novel and constitutes the "ungrounded ground" of Algerian identity.¹¹ Kateb, by being eternally disruptive within the disruption of the Algerian Revolution, guards Nedjma from any interpretive closure that would define Algerian national identity once and for all and therefore pave the way for homogenizing the Nation.

¹⁰Bonn quotes Kateb from an interview in L'Action 28 April 1958.

¹¹The expression is Judith Butler's: "I would argue that rifts among women over the content of the term ["women"] ought to be safeguarded and prized, indeed, that this constant rifling ought to be affirmed as the ungrounded ground of feminist theory" ("Contingent Foundations" 16).

The search for national origins is crucial to the narration of national identity and consciousness, which are indispensable in carrying out a national revolution or struggle against the colonizer. Yet as Fanon has pointed out, this national consciousness, necessary as it is, also has its dangers. Rather than being defined through exclusion, Kateb's Algeria is remarkably inclusive. It is embodied as a child of métissage, the daughter of a French Jewish woman and an Algerian man. Her exact relation to Islam is ambiguous at the very least, and she is only veiled by force. Kateb's Algeria is an unruly woman who can't be controlled by her husband. And likewise, in Kateb's narrative of national identity, the Nation's origins are like an absent center of the novel. No critic has been able to determine exactly when, in a "real" order of events, the return to this origin occurs. For John D. Erickson, Nedjma represents a similar multiplicity of meanings: "To push too far in trying to reduce Nedjma/Algeria to a unified meaning is to lose her completely. As Nedjma/Algeria remains irrecoverable by her lovers/conquerors, so Kateb's discourse remains irrecoverable by the terms of the magisterial discourse" (Kateb Yacine's "Nedjma" 39).

The Nation's origin is decentered in the novel, and in fact, may even be a hallucination (if Arnaud is right). Kateb, faithful to a Fanonian vision of a national liberation that leads to socialism, also confounds the cult of origins Kristeva associates with exclusion. Kateb confounds the cult of origins in another way: the narrative of the ancestor's story—what Gontard calls the "roman de Keblout" (38)—and the return to the Nadhor are directly preceded in the novel's order of events by the attempted pilgrimage to Mecca by Rachid and Si Mokhtar. The return to national origins in La prière de l'absent, we remember, was also described as a pilgrimage. The pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the five duties of Islam for those who can afford it, resembles the search for the source of national identity inasmuch as it is a return to the/an origin or source of a religion. Kateb's pilgrimage, like his return to national origins, ends in failure, along with any attempt to impose Islam as a requirement of Algerian identity, and as a basis for exclusion from the Nation. Kateb, once having said

in an interview, "Bien qu'athée, dit-il, je ne méconnaissais pas la grandeur de l'Islam dont je suis imprégné,"¹² does not reject the importance of Islam in an Algerian national identity. Part of colonizing the Kéblouti, one remembers, was destroying their mosque. Mourad is incited to kill Ricard (in what might be read as an allegory of anti-colonial armed struggle), when a maid is forced to drink rum against her religious beliefs. Mourad himself does not oppose alcohol (on the contrary, all four protagonists drink to their satisfaction throughout the novel); rather he associates the attack on Islam with French colonialism. Muslim identity thus plays a role in combating that colonialism.

The role of haunting national identity played by the ancestors' ghosts is also the role of history. As the ancestral source and origin is only present in traces, history scatters its traces across the novel's landscape, and these traces take the form of ruins. Reflecting on the failure of the attempt to rejoin Nedjma and the ancestral space, Rachid makes the following remarks:

...Pas les restes des Romains. Pas ce genre de ruine où l'âme des multitudes n'a eu que le temps de se morfondre, en gravant leur adieu dans le roc, mais les ruines en filigraine de tous les temps, celles que baigne le sang dans nos veines, celles que nous portons en secret sans jamais trouver le lien ni l'instant qui conviendrait pour les voir: les inestimables décombres du présent... J'ai habité tour à tour les deux sites, le rocher puis la plaine où Cirta et Hippone connurent la grossesse puis le déclin dont les cités et les femmes portent le deuil sempiternel, en leur cruelle longévité de villes-mères; les architectes n'y ont plus rien à faire, et les vagabonds n'ont pas le courage d'y chercher refuge plus d'une nuit; ainsi la gloire et la déchéance auront fondé l'éternité des ruines sur les bords des villes nouvelles, plus vivantes mais coupées de leur histoire, privées du charme de l'enfance au profit de leur spectre ennobli, comme les fiancées défuntes qu'on

¹²Jean Déjeux quotes this statement in Littérature maghrébine de langue française: Introduction générale et auteurs (222) from an interview in Mars (Bulletin Marocain de l'U.N.F.P.) 1 (March 1968).

fixe aux murs font pâlir leur vivantes répliques; ce qui a disparu fleurit au détriment de tout ce qui va naître... Constantine et Bône, les deux cités qui dominaient l'ancienne Numidie aujourd'hui réduite en département français... Deux âmes en lutte pour la puissance abdiquée des Numides. Constantine luttant pour Cirta et Bône pour Hippone comme si l'enjeu du passé, figé dans une patrie apparemment perdue, constituait l'unique épreuve pour les champions à venir: il suffit de remettre en avant les Ancêtres pour découvrir la phase triomphale, la clé de la victoire refusée à Jugurtha, le germe indestructible de la nation écartelée entre deux continents, de la Sublime Porte à l'Arc de Triomphe, la vieille Numidie où se succèdent les descendants Romains, la Numidie dont les cavaliers ne sont jamais revenus de l'abattoir, pas plus que ne sont revenus les corsaires qui barraient la route à Charles-Quint... Ni les Numides ni les Barbaresques n'ont enfanté en paix dans leur patrie. Ils nous la laissent vierge dans un désert ennemi, tandis que se succèdent les colonisateurs, les prétendants sans titre et sans amour.... (174–75, Kateb's ellipses)

Rachid, who has lived in Bône and Constantine, near the ruins of the Roman cities Hippo and Cirta, describes another kind of ruins, bathed in blood. This blood could be the blood spilt by North Africans during a long history of invasions. The marks or traces, left in turn by Romans, Arabs, Turks, and the French, are not just the constructions of their architects. A history of suffering is carried in the veins of North Africans and is a crucial part of North African identity. The racial connotations called up by the image of blood might give this identity an essential, even biological, quality. Yet this identity is not straightforward; North Africans do not experience it as presence but carry it as a hidden secret. Prosperity and decline are described as the "eternal" essences of cities constructed by invaders. The French, "descendants Romains," or Roumis as Maghrebians call them pejoratively, have built "new cities" on the ruins of the old, attempted to cut them off from their histories. But this history remains, secret, hidden, ghostly, waiting to be reclaimed, as Nedjma takes as

its task to "mettre en avant les Ancêtres" and uncover "le germe indestructible de la nation écartelée entre deux continents." This is the "enjeu du passé," which will grant Algeria the victory over the Roumis denied to Jugurtha, leader of the ill-fated Numidian rebellion against Rome.

The ruins of history are given the same maternal association as the source of national identity ("villes-mères"). The prosperity of the Roman cities is described as a pregnancy ("grossesse"). Both "les cités et les femmes portent le deuil sempiternel" of the decline of these cities. In another passage Nedjma, who marks a haunting ("la maison hantée... la villa Nedjma") as do the specters of the ruins of history, is associated with the rivers of history:

Car l'oued évadé qui coule au littoral n'est qu'un pseudo-Rhummel devenu le Grand Fleuve, l'Oued El Kebir, en souvenir de l'autre fleuve perdu: le Guadalquivir, que les Maures chassés d'Espagne ne pouvaient transporter avec eux; Guadalquivir, Oued El Kebir, le fleuve abandonné en Espagne se retrouvait au delà du Détroit, mais vaincu cette fois, traqué sous le Rocher comme les Maures chassés d'Andalousie, les pères de Rachid, et Rachid lui-même, revenu lui aussi d'une évasion sans issue au port où l'attendait l'adversité faite femme—Nedjma l'Andalouse—, la fille de la Française qui avait opposé entre eux quatre soupirants, dont trois de la même tribu, les trois descendants de Keblout, car c'était la mère de Nedjma, la Française, c'était elle qui avait fait exploser la tribu, en séduisant les trois mâles dont aucun n'était digne de survie à la ruine du Nadhor.... (178, Kateb's ellipsis)

Here, history flows like a river. History's course is the course of a river (un cours d'eau). This river is, like other bodies of water, a source of national identity. In her currents, Nedjma, like the Rhummel, carries the history of an Arab, or North African presence in Europe, marks a time when present-day Spain was part of the Maghreb. She thus represents the deconstruction of the distinction between Europe and Maghreb, Europe and

Orient, East and West. Though the Maghreb is troped as Oriental in French colonial discourse, it means the western part of the Arab world, the place where the sun sets. Most of the Maghreb is actually to the west of France. As in Qui se souvient de la mer, the image of Woman in the above passage is that of an explosion. Though Nedjma's mother marks the connection of the Nation with its past, of the living with their ancestors, she also explodes this link and marks the ruin of the ancestral space. In this passage, she is a contested object of desire, as is Nedjma throughout the novel. None of the four protagonists can have her, or even know her. When kidnapped to consolidate national identity, she disappears. Nedjma, in this passage, is a threat to masculinity ("l'adversité faite femme"). Her mother marks the ruin of three of her suitors who were members of the tribe of Keblout.

Like the ruins of the former colonizers, the current system of colonialism is about to be reduced to ruins. Though the consolidation of national identity involves a search for ancestral origins, this origin has already been reduced to ruins, to traces. As in Qui se souvient de la mer, where the explosion of the colonial city also destroys male subjectivity, Kateb's vision of national consciousness seems to sacrifice the same male subjectivity. When Nedjma is taken to the ancestral space, the male members of the tribe are excluded: "Keblout a dit de ne protéger que ses filles. Quant aux mâles vagabonds, dit l'ancêtre Keblout, qu'ils vivent en sauvages, par monts et par vaux, eux qui n'ont pas défendu leur terre..." (151, Kateb's ellipsis). When Lakhdar realizes Mustapha is alone with Nedjma, "[l]es images perçaient comme des clous" (246). Like Nafissa, Nedjma marks the penetration of the male, and her femininity marks the ruination of male subjectivity.

Like Djaout's young chercheur d'os, the subject searching for the national identity proposed by Nedjma finds herself in a conundrum. She needs to return to the past, to national origins, to the source of identity, but these manifestations of the traditional can be or have been kidnapped (as the traditional ancestors finally kidnap Nedjma) into the service of exclusion from the Nation, into the service of a national elite. And even if this tradition

had not been kidnapped, it has only survived the history of colonialism as traces. (In fact, the version of tradition kidnapped into the service of oppression has often been altered or invented for that very purpose instead of being uncovered by the excavations of historians.) Hédi Abdel-Jaouad, in "The Dialectics of the Archaic and the Post-modern in Maghrebian Literature Written in French," and Antoine Raybaud, in "Nomadism between the Archaic and the Modern," describe a similar conflict in dealing with the past. Raybaud describes a "nomadism of nostalgia" that is a desire not to return to the past, but to question the present:

Throughout the corpus of the postcolonial Maghrebian novel, there is the great danger of identifying the nomadism of the text with a return of the archaic, the way one speaks of the return of the repressed, after the rejection of the stagnant models inculcated by colonial education. However, it is more tempting to see this textual nomadism as an opening, an inventing of deployments of writing corresponding to a modern eruption of the world as "heteroclitic" (Borges, Foucault), of writing as "polyphonic" (Bakhtin), of the work as "open" (Eco).
(154–55)

Thus Raybaud suggests that, in Maghrebian literature, a return to the past has the purpose not of resurrecting pre-colonial traditions in a pure state, but of contesting colonialism by juxtaposing it with the past. This return, instead of operating a closure like fundamentalist returns to tradition (and "fundamentalist," here, need not be merely religious, many nationalist discourses could also be described as fundamentalist), operates an opening up to a resignification of the sort Judith Butler describes. Raybaud describes Algerian literature's "nomadic characteristics," defining it as

a space of traces, objects of the dispersal of tribes and the provoked disintegration of collective memories, which is, at the same time, a space of obsessions, to the extent that the visible traces are points of emergence, and of passage, and of pressure, of a zone of repressed memories, crushed strength, denigrated or

forbidden impulses—a territory of violent oblivion—from which a battered and innovative, insurrectionary secrecy reopens its roadways violently and surreptitiously.... (150)

The archaic is present as traces, traces of history, which I understand, like history in Nedjma, in the Derridean sense. Raybaud cites Nedjma as an example of "nomadism between the archaic and the modern," used to articulate a heterogeneous space that is not only the novel or narrative but also the Nation. He describes a number of elements that "only appear according to the double register of an ironized heroic memory." These include, among others "the Keblout obsession and the degraded 'imitation of the ancestors' which leads to an endless miming of the dispersion of the tribe," as narrated in the return to the Nadhor, and "the emergence of characters, places, gestures of magical dimensions, which are as much archaic survivors (the Black Man, the rite of the bath, the return to the Nadhor) as a present haunted by ancient memory (Nedjma in the haunted house, Rachid's fondouk)—these are the elements of the 'double' of the primal scene (four suitors around a young woman in Algeria after the riot of 1945)" (151). For Raybaud, therefore, the return to national origins contains an ironic element. Performed as a sort of parody, like Judith Butler's subversive performance of traditional gender roles, the return to Nadhor reclaims a history colonized by the French and at the same time questions that history with a view towards moving out of it.

Beginning with a citation of Bachir Hadj-Ali ("La nostalgie du passé/n'est pas une marche arrière"), Abdel-Jaouad describes a similar opposition. What Raybaud refers to as a "nomadism," however, Abdel-Jaouad calls a "dialectic"; the former speaks of the modern, the latter of the postmodern: "Since its inception the Maghrebien text written in French has been a synthesis of two creative impulses: the post-modern (acquired and visible) and the archaic (inherited, latent and somewhat invisible)" (59). In contrast with Raybaud, Abdel-Jaouad associates the modern with colonization and its narratives of development, progress, and civilizing mission: "Moreover, as a strategy of writing,

Maghrebian decolonization partakes through a Foucauldian type of archaeological investigation, in the undoing of modernity as an imperialistic and colonialist project, with the view of challenging its (mis)representation of the 'Native' and rectifying, as Meddeb does both in his fiction and essays, 'the Orientalist consensus'" (61). An attempt merely to criticize traditional culture and leave it behind would be to repeat the gesture of colonizers. It is not surprising that notions of progress, the modern, and secularism could carry the bitter taste of the colonialism that introduced them. Yet most Maghrebian literature does not repeat the gesture of some nationalist discourses in seeking a return to a pre-lapsarian, pre-colonial state. *Nedjma* works out this conflict by holding on to it, allowing it to continue indefinitely. Through its "ironic" return to ancestral origins, it reclaims the past, but decenters that very past in staging its return as a performance. Both sides of the opposition are deconstructed at once: "As a paradigm, decolonization posits the deconstruction, in the Derridean sense, not only of Western metaphysics but also of Islamic theology" (Abdel-Jaouad 61). For Abdel-Jaouad, it is precisely setting off the archaic and the postmodern, one against the other, that produces decolonization/deconstruction: "The problem of writing (*l'écriture*) in and of French, the *itinéraire* as form of a narrative in crisis and the return of the ancestral text are manifestations of the alliance of the post-modern and the archaic to bridge the abyss of modernity" (63). As in Bhabha's case, this deconstruction becomes possible because nationality can be read as a narrative. The interesting thing about Abdel-Jaouad's comments is that, whereas Bhabha sees the deconstruction of the Nation already within nationalist discourse, with all its contradictions, Abdel-Jaouad suggests that the postmodern deconstruction of the modern or of colonized cultures, discourse, and nations lies within the archaic:

As a genealogy symbolic and emblematic of the quest for identity and ontology, the archaic means (in the context of Maghrebian literature) not only the tapping and using of traditional and ancient materials and forms of expression, but also the resurgence of orality and/or oral literature. As often presumed, the archaic is

neither monolithic nor homogeneous.... This difference within the archaic is the blueprint for the post-modern discourse of plurality and alterity. (Abdel-Jaouad 59–60)

This potential for deconstruction within the archaic is made possible when the archaic returns with all its multiplicity.

Reopening the question of national origins for possible resignification in Nedjma brings us back to the connection between national and sexual identities as discussed in the introduction, especially in terms of a meeting of queer and postcolonial theories. Nedjma's origins—her place in the family tree (i.e. which father she is to be inscribed under) and, therefore, her exact link to the ancestor Keblout in a patrilineal tracing of descent (both possible fathers are, we remember, part of the Keblouti tribe)—are never clearly established. The lack of narrative closure in the novel thus corresponds to a lack of closure in the narrative of Nedjma's sexual origins—her conception resulting from a heterosexual sexual union—and serves as an allegory for uncertain national origins: origins covered over by colonial history and complicated by the presence of a series of invaders from foreign lands (and thus of different origins) on Maghrebian soil, origins now present only as traces, as the marks left by their absences. Maghrebian origins have been complicated over the course of history (and here Kateb's image of history as the flow of a river's currents clouded by sand seems appropriate) by the introduction of foreign origins inextricably mixed with a hypothetically pure Maghrebian identity (whatever that identity might have been had the Maghreb remained isolated from all "foreign" influence) mixed through cultural and (especially) sexual métissage. Using another of Kateb's images, one could also state that the river of Maghrebian identity flows into a sea of métissage, where the waters, once mingled, can never be separated.

CHAPTER 5

**BECOMING A WOMAN: THE ALLEGORY OF GENDER IN TAHAR BEN
JELLOUN'S L'ENFANT DE SABLE AND LA NUIT SACRÉE**

On ne naît pas femme; on le devient.
—Simone de Beauvoir, Le deuxième sexe

Lesbians are not women.
—Monique Wittig, The Straight Mind

If Nedjma tells the story of a Nation and of the coming of national identity, both allegorized in a woman's story, Tahar Ben Jelloun's L'enfant de sable and La nuit sacrée tell the story of a character who, raised as a boy, later becomes a woman. If one understands this act of becoming along the same lines Beauvoir described in The Second Sex, one may read Ben Jelloun's two-novel sequence as the telling not of one individual's becoming a woman, but rather the story of gender, the narration of the way gender is stamped onto the bodies and minds of those belonging to "the second sex." If as Anderson states, one has a nationality as one has a gender, what will Ben Jelloun's allegory of gender tell us about national identity? Ben Jelloun demonstrates that at the origin of gender, like at the origin of Renan's nation, there is a violence that must be forgotten for gender to be naturalized. By unveiling this violence, he also narrates the deconstruction of gender. Given the parallel between narratives of gender and of Nation, when read as national allegories, L'enfant de sable and La nuit sacrée rewrite the Nation as founded not on the subordination of one gender to another (as Nedjma is tamed at the Nation's origin) but on gender insubordination.

L'enfant de sable narrates the story of a man who, after his wife has given birth to seven daughters, decides that his eighth child will be a boy, no matter what. The eighth child, Ahmed, born female, is raised as a boy, trained to be a man through the apprenticeship of masculinity. Ahmed embodies the gender s/he was trained into until

his/her father's death, when s/he begins to deviate from manliness.¹ One possible interpretation of this turn of events would be a reading that qualifies Ahmed's upbringing as a covering over of his/her natural sex, which is repressed until it returns. After his/her father's death, Ahmed discovers his/her female body; this unveiling is a liberation. But Ahmed, not quite/not a man before his/her father's death, remains not quite/not a woman afterwards. On the one hand, s/he begins to "discover" his/her female body through masturbation and in two erotic encounters with women. On the other, s/he has a beard and a flat chest, which function as "biological" contradictions to his/her feminine hips.

In the two erotic encounters s/he has with (other) women, this contradiction becomes evident. The first encounter begins when a woman asks her in the street, "Que caches-tu sous ta djellaba, un homme ou une femme, un enfant ou un vieillard, une colombe ou une araignée?" (113). When Ahmed answers, "Je ne le sais pas moi-même," the woman throws herself at him/her:

Comme j'hésitai, elle se précipita sur moi et, de ses mains fortes, déchira ma djellaba, puis ma chemise. Apparurent alors mes deux petits seins. Quand elle les vit, son visage devint doux, illuminé par un éclair troublant où se mêlaient le désir et l'étonnement. Doucement, elle passa ses mains sur ma poitrine, approcha de moi sa tête et posa ses lèvres sur le bout du sein droit, l'embrassa, le suçà. Sa bouche n'avait pas de dents; elle avait la douceur des lèvres d'un bébé. Je me laissai faire puis réagis violemment, la repoussant de toutes mes forces. Elle tomba et je pris la fuite en essayant de refermer ma djellaba.

Cette rencontre n'eut pas de suite, du moins pas dans l'immédiat. Cependant, ce qui se passa après me troubla beaucoup. Dois-je en parler? J'ai du mal à l'écrire. Je veux dire, j'ai honte. Je sens mes joues rougir à l'idée de me

¹Throughout this section, I shall use the name Ahmed and the pronouns s/he, him/her, his/her when reading *L'enfant de sable*—even though Ahmed takes on the name Zahra by the end—to emphasize the fact that the name Zahra is taken on as a stage name. I reserve the name Zahra and the feminine pronouns for reading *La nuit sacrée*. Though my practice breaks with previous criticism, it has the advantage of marking the change that occurs between the novels and keeping in mind that even by the end of *L'enfant de sable*, some versions of the ending revert back to the name Ahmed.

souvenir de cette journée où tout se précipita dans mon esprit et où mes émotions furent secouées. La sensation physique que j'éprouvai aux caresses de cette bouche édentée sur mon sein fut, même si elle ne dura que quelques secondes, du plaisir. J'ai honte de l'avouer. (114–15)

To settle the doubt concerning Ahmed's gender, the woman proceeds to uncover/unveil his/her body. The answer to gender ambiguity lies in the sex of the body. Yet the erotics of this examination, of this search for proof to resolve the ambiguity of Ahmed's gender, leads to another ambiguity, the possibility of lesbian desire. The passage hints at the possibility of future long-term repercussions of the incident. Lesbian pleasure elicits shame, embarrassment; the word "honte" appears twice. Ahmed wonders whether s/he should confine the experience to silence. The "trouble" the encounter provokes can be managed by keeping it secret, the lesbian danger controlled by veiling. The second encounter has a purpose similar to the first, that of settling a doubt. It occurs between Ahmed and one of her future employers, Oum Abbas, mother of Abbas, her other employer:

Je compris vite qu'elle ne cherchait ni argent ni bijoux. Ses mains tâtaient mon corps comme pour vérifier une intuition. Ma poitrine minuscule ne la rassura point, elle glissa sa main dans mon sérual et la laissa un instant sur mon bas-ventre, puis introduisit son médium dans mon vagin. J'eus très mal. Je poussai un cri qu'elle étouffa en mettant l'autre main sur ma bouche, puis me dit:

—J'avais un doute.

—Moi aussi! dis-je entre les lèvres. (118)

On one level, this (homo)sexual encounter could be said to settle this doubt. When the Oum Abbas's finger finds Ahmed's vagina, there is no longer a doubt concerning Ahmed's womanhood. But for this interpretation to be valid, the vagina must be understood as the essence of womanhood; Oum Abbas puts her finger on exactly what makes Ahmed a woman. And yet, what exactly the doubt concerns is itself in doubt. Regardless of

whether Oum Abbas doubts Ahmed is a woman, what could be the subject of Ahmed's doubt? Perhaps his/her doubt refers back to the ambiguity of the first encounter; s/he doubts whether s/he enjoys/finds pleasure in the examination. One possible subject of his/her doubt is the subject itself, Ahmed's fe/male subjectivity, his/her *moi*, "moi" being the word s/he uses to mark her doubt. Since most accounts of subjectivity are accounts of gendered subjectivity² (and in French, the pronoun "je," through which subjectivity is articulated, must be gendered either masculine or feminine), to what extent will Ahmed be denied a subject position as long as s/he can't be assigned one or the other gender? At one point, the storyteller states, "Tantôt homme, tantôt femme, notre personnage avançait dans la reconquête de son être" (126). Here the search for being (could "being" be understood also as subjectivity?) is accompanied by a hesitation between two genders. Yet it remains unclear whether that being will (or even can) ever be found and whether finding being will also mean/require finding the "right" gender. Or maybe Ahmed, like Oum Abbas, simply doubts whether s/he is a woman. The new possibility of lesbian desire adds another dilemma to Ahmed's conundrum. If woman is a category defined in binary opposition to the category of man, to what extent is she definitionally heterosexual? If, for Monique Wittig, "[l]esbians are not women" (*The Straight Mind* 32), to what extent does the possibility of lesbian desire place the name of woman out of Ahmed's reach.

Oum Abbas and Abbas finally employ Ahmed in a circus sideshow. His/her feminine name, Zahra, is taken on as part of this employment. The image of a circus sideshow, with all the exploitation of the "freaks" it puts on display, provides an interesting turn to Butler's theories of gender performance. Whereas Butler describes the performance of heterosexual gender roles as an "intrinsic comedy" (*Gender Trouble* 122), *L'enfant de sable* offers the possibility that this comedy might sometimes only be fit for the stage of the sideshow. The sideshow implies titillation, satisfaction of a desire for the unusual that seems to exist at the

²As many feminists have pointed out, even when accounts of subjectivity claim to be universal, they usually do so by universalizing masculine subjectivity. Cf. Irigaray's "Toute théorie du « sujet » aura toujours été appropriée au « masculin »" (*Speculum* 165).

margins of any gender system, as Abbas implies when instructing Ahmed on how to perform his/her role:

[T]u te déguiseras en homme à la première partie du spectacle, tu disparaîtras cinq minutes pour réapparaître en femme fatale... Il y a de quoi rendre fou tous les hommes de l'assistance. Ça va être excitant..., je vois ça d'ici..., un vrai spectacle avec une mise en scène, du suspens et même un peu de nu, pas beaucoup, mais une jambe, une cuisse..., c'est dommage, tu n'as pas de gros seins... Ici les hommes adorent les grosses poitrines et les gros culs... Tu es trop mince... Ce n'est pas grave!... On va travailler les gestes et les sous-entendus! Tu commences demain. Il arrive parfois que les hommes s'excitent et jettent sur la danseuse des billets de banque. Tu les ramasses et tu me les donnes. Pas d'histoire! (121, Ben Jelloun's ellipses)

This particular spectacle of gender consists in a continued unmasking of cross-dressing. In a way, Ahmed's history of dressing and passing as a man is repeatedly unveiled on the stage of the freak show. Yet, in this unveiling, what is unveiled is less important than how it is unveiled; that Ahmed's anatomy is unwomanly by male standards will matter less than "les gestes and les sous-entendus." Ahmed performs the spectacle of womanliness for men, and this performance constitutes her employment. What constitutes a good performance of woman is decided by an audience of men; the good performance satisfies their desires. The requirement that s/he hand over his/her tips to his/her employer parallels the relation between a prostitute and her pimp. Performing woman, in this vision of gender, means doing so for the profit of a pimp.

The story of Ahmed's gender is narrated by a storyteller on a public square. This setting for his/her story is consistent with Ben Jelloun's stated desire to publicly unveil secrets. As in other works, the theme of the secret and its unveiling recurs in L'enfant de sable:

Le secret est là, dans ces pages, tissé par des syllabes et des images. Il me l'avait confié juste avant de mourir.... Je sus alors que j'étais en possession du livre rare, le livre du secret, enjambé par une vie brève et intense, écrit par la nuit de la longue épreuve, gardé sous de grosses pierres et protégé par l'ange de la malédiction. Ce livre, mes amis, ne peut circuler ni se donner. Il ne peut être lu par des esprits innocents. La lumière qui en émane éblouit et aveugle les yeux qui s'y posent par mégarde, sans être préparés. Ce livre, je l'ai lu, je l'ai déchiffré pour de tels esprits. Vous ne pouvez y accéder sans traverser mes nuits et mon corps. Je suis ce livre. Je suis devenu le livre du secret; j'ai payé de ma vie pour le lire. (12–13)

Here, the duty of the storyteller is to reveal a secret as it is contained in a written text. As in La prière de l'absent, here, the secret represents a danger. The storyteller seems to run the risk of falling upon a fate similar to Bobby's, who was struck deaf and mute for revealing the secret. The storyteller's images resemble the Platonic allegory of the cave, where the truth, the "light," is blinding for those unprepared for it. As Moha's subjectivity is constructed by the words he speaks in public, at the end of the passage, the storyteller becomes one with the text he reads/tells to his public. Unveiling the secret in the text is thus a self-unveiling; the secret contaminates whoever reveals it, which is perhaps at least partly the cause of its danger. Within Ahmed's story, the secret is also associated with his/her mother, who becomes its receptacle when Ahmed's father tells her, "Toi, bien entendu, tu seras le puits et la tombe de ce secret" (23). The danger of Woman, discussed above in connection with other texts, also resides in the secret she contains almost as if within her womb (for Ahmed's mother gives birth to Ahmed and his/her secret at the same time). At Ahmed's birth, his/her mother cries because she has given birth to a girl: "Sa femme s'était voilé le visage pour pleurer" (26). This veil hides more than tears; it hides the secret they would reveal.

The storyteller's function is one of unveiling, of removing this veil: "Il... sentait [la lumière] passer sur son corps comme une flamme qui brûlerait ses masques, une lame qui lui retirerait lentement le voile de chair qui maintenait entre lui et les autres la distance nécessaire" (7). As in the above passage, where the light emanating from Ahmed's journal is capable of blinding those unready for it, here, the light also represents a danger. The danger of light (i.e. truth or the secret revealed) is specified as the danger released through unveiling, similar to the danger hidden beneath Nafissa's and Nedjma's veils. In Nafissa's case, the unveiling of this danger also releases a fire. Likewise, revealing Ahmed's secret risks burning the storyteller and anyone who reads his/her story. If one thinks of the burning in Qui se souvient de la mer, which spreads into the heterosexual bedroom, the conjugal building block of the Nation, it is possible to make parallels between challenges to sexual normativity and challenges to official versions of national identity.

In discussing La prière de l'absent, I showed not only how the narrative of return to national origins is disrupted by the failure of that return within the narrative and by the alternative source found by Sindibad, but also how the very principle of narration is disrupted by overturning narrative order and how this challenge to narrative style also challenges the Nation as narration. Likewise, in L'enfant de sable, the narrative of sexual identity is disrupted by challenges to the very narration of that identity. At various moments of the telling of Ahmed's story, the storyteller's version is contested by his audience. At one point, he remarks, "C'est le vent de la rébellion qui souffle! Vous êtes libres de croire ou de ne pas croire cette histoire" (43). A man who claims to be Fatima's brother asserts, "Notre conteur prétend lire dans un livre qu'Ahmed aurait laissé. Or, c'est faux! Ce livre, certes, existe. Ce n'est pas ce vieux cahier jauni par le soleil que notre conteur a couvert avec ce foulard sale. D'ailleurs ce n'est pas un cahier, mais une édition très bon marché du Coran.... Le journal d'Ahmed, c'est moi qui l'ai..." (70). Before the story is finished, the storyteller disappears, and various would-be storytellers attempt to replace him by offering opposing versions of the story's ending. But the effect of this

multiplicity of endings, however, is one of a lack of narrative closure—in L'enfant de sable, the story of gender has no closure, cannot be interpreted once and for all. In that sense, Ahmed's gender resembles Nedjma as a personification of the Algerian nation and Algerian national identity in that both remain open to alternative narrative interpretations. The plotting of gender, like the plotting of Nation, renders multiple possibilities.

L'enfant de sable, however, has a sequel, La nuit sacrée, in which Ahmed—called Zahra from here on, hired by a woman referred to as the Assise to care for her blind brother, whom she calls the Consul—ends up in a sexual relationship with him. Though this relationship is unconventional in that it is not sanctified by marriage, it would be possible to read it as the closure L'enfant de sable lacks. La nuit sacrée is a first-person narrative told by Zahra herself and resembles a more traditional narrative; it is linear, has an ending, and does not contain competing versions of events. There is no audience to contest the storyteller's story. It would seem that Ahmed's search for being in L'enfant de sable is resolved in La nuit sacrée as s/he takes on a woman's name (and the name of woman) in a heterosexual relationship. In this case, heterosexuality and closure would be one in the same as it is in the films Vito Russo analyzes, where the narrative closure of the film depends on the elimination of all homosexual characters (The Celluloid Closet).

The French literary establishment seems to have placed its stamp of approval on the heterosexual closure La nuit sacrée might seem to provide. La nuit sacrée was awarded the Prix Goncourt and was the basis for the film version of both novels where the events of L'enfant de sable appear as flashbacks to the narrative in La nuit sacrée. This rereading of L'enfant de sable through the lens of La nuit sacrée uses the latter to answer questions left unresolved by the former and eliminates the challenges the former poses to the narrative of gender. My reading of the two novels does the opposite, reading La nuit sacrée through the lens of L'enfant de sable and reopening questions that La nuit sacrée, at first glance, might seem to close. In many ways, La nuit sacrée reads like the liberation of a woman repressed through the imposition of the "wrong" gender:

Ma surprise fut grande: je retrouvais une élégance innée! Mon corps se libérait de lui-même. Des cordes et des ficelles se dénouaient peu à peu. Je sentais physiquement que mes muscles perdaient de leur fermeté. La métamorphose se faisait en marchant. Je respirais mieux. Je passais ma main sur mes petits seins. Cela me faisait plaisir. Je les massais dans l'espoir de les voir grossir, sortir de leur trou, pointer avec fierté et exciter les passants.... Je touchai mes seins. Ils émergeaient lentement.... Je faisais mes premiers pas de femme libre. (44-45)

Woman's liberation, here, is a biological matter. The female body, bound (literally tied up with ropes and string) by the social conventions of the masculine gender, is released. Zahra becomes weaker, her breasts grow (even though she is already fully an adult at the time of the experience). This return of repressed biology has a heterosexual goal, "exciter les passants," gendered masculine, even though this goal never involves reproduction.³ The form this liberation takes is one of a journey, an itinerary ("La métamorphose se faisait en marchant," "Je faisais mes premiers pas de femme libre").

The first event in this journey is Zahra's rapture by a knight veiled in blue, who takes her on a journey to the south. In many ways, this journey parallels the one undertaken by Yamna, Sindibad, and Bobby in La prière de l'absent. The village the knight takes Zahra to has no name. One of its inhabitants says to her, "Nous sommes le secret, alors nous vivons sous terre. Le village n'a pas de nom. Il n'existe pas. Il est en chacun de nous. En partant d'ici, dis-toi que tu es une rescapée" (49). In its lack of geographical referent, this village is much like the village de l'attente and the village de l'oubli. Zahra's journey to a fictitious location, her journey within the story, is marked by its fictitiousness. The journey, in this context, becomes an allegory for the story she tells herself as she comes to a gendered identity.⁴

³By pointing out how Zahra's becoming a woman also means becoming heterosexual, I do not wish to imply that her approaching normativity is more normative than it actually is.

⁴This allegorical reading of the journey could also be applied to the journeys encountered up until this point: Djaout's search for bones in Les chercheurs d'os and itinerary of writing history in L'invention du désert, the return to national origins in La prière de l'absent and Nedjma.

Becoming a woman, for Zahra, in fact, involves the work of forgetting: "Le travail de l'oubli se faisait à mon insu et je m'installais de plus en plus dans l'histoire de l'Assise et du Consul" (113). In another passage she states, "Pour accélérer le processus de l'oubli, je ne discutais pas les lois et les ordres du destin" (122). Forgetting, here, is antithetical to the law and the law of destiny. To understand the meaning of the law in this sentence, I would suggest turning to Butler's understanding of compulsory heterosexuality as Law (in addition to "intrinsic comedy"). To become a woman, Zahra must forget how Woman is inscribed as Law in a system of compulsory heterosexual gender roles. Becoming a woman thus resembles the journey to national origins. Zahra could even be said to arrive at the source of womanhood in a way that resembles the source of national identity that awaits those who complete the return to the Nation's origin:

Avant d'arriver dans cette ville, j'ai eu la chance et le privilège de me baigner dans une source aux vertus exceptionnelles. L'une de ces vertus est vitale pour moi: l'oubli. L'eau de cette source m'a lavé le corps et l'âme. Elle les a nettoyés et surtout elle a remis de l'ordre dans mes souvenirs, c'est-à-dire qu'elle n'a gardé que très peu de chose de mon passé; seuls trois ou quatre souvenirs ont été maintenus. (104)

If La nuit sacrée is understood as a search for the roots of gendered identity paralleling the search for national identity, then this source can be read as the source of gender. Bathing in the source of gender is associated with forgetting, one of the stages along the journey to the roots of identity in La prière de l'absent. Is the source of gender to be understood as the more biological category of sex? By bathing in the source of gender as Nedjma bathes at the origin of the Nation, does Zahra wash off, remove what Wittig describes when she writes, "Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body stamping and violently shaping it" (The Straight Mind 43–44)? Does she cleanse herself of her father's imposition of manliness onto her body?

Given Ben Jelloun's subversion of the narrative return to national origins in La prière de l'absent, one must ask whether the same sort of subversion is possible in La nuit sacrée. What if, as Judith Butler (reading Wittig) suggests, sex as a biological category only came to have meaning through gender (Gender Trouble 112–13)? It is my contention that, instead of narrating the liberation of a female from the imposed gender of man, instead of narrating the return to the roots of womanhood, La nuit sacrée is about the impossible task of such a narrative. By positing that forgetting is an essential part of such a return, La nuit sacrée, when considered with Renan's description of the forgetting at the origin of the Nation, begs the question: What violence at the origin of gender must be forgotten for one to become a woman? In Zahra's case, it could be the violent imposition of the wrong gender, having her breasts bound, being punished as a child when s/he cried "like a girl." In short, it could be the violent stamping of the body by language as described by Wittig. But as a woman, Zahra faces another violence.

In one version of the conclusion to L'enfant de sable, Abbas rapes Ahmed. S/he ceases to be a woman who dresses as a man and repeatedly unveiling her "true" gender: "Zahra n'était plus 'princesse d'amour'; elle ne dansait plus; elle n'était plus un homme; elle n'était plus une femme, mais une bête de cirque que la vieille exhibait dans une cage. Les mains attachées, la robe déchirée juste au niveau du torse pour donner à voir ses petits seins, Zahra avait perdu l'usage de la parole" (142). Here, not having a gender is equated with imprisonment and being tied up. (Bathing at the source of gender, becoming a woman, we remember, is associated with an untying.) Not having a gender also means not having a voice. If subjectivity must be gendered, if to speak, a subject must use a gendered "je," this loss of voice becomes understandable. Abbas finally kills Ahmed (in this version) when he rapes him/her again after s/he places razor blades in his/her vagina to cut up his penis, and he dies from this experience as well. In La nuit sacrée, the knight who takes Zahra on her journey to the origin of gender also rapes her. At the origin of becoming a woman for Zahra, therefore, is a rape. Yet this violent past that she tries to

forget, like Sindibad's homoerotic past, is never completely forgotten; it seems to come back to haunt her: "[M]on histoire, celle qui fit de moi un enfant de sable et de vent, me poursuivrait toute ma vie" (*La nuit sacrée* 172). One of the memories that comes back is that of teasing the neighborhood girls: "Habillée en garçon je tacquais les petites filles autour de cette balançoire, jusqu'au jour où le frère d'une de ces filles me fit tomber. J'avais le visage en sang, je pleurais. Le frère qui était plus âgé que moi me dit avant de s'enfuir: 'Si tu avais été une fille, je t'aurais fait autre chose!'" (127). Here, a girl is defined as someone who can be raped.

In "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention," Sharon Marcus describes a tendency among feminist anti-rape writings to suggest that "rape has always already occurred and women are always either already raped or already rapable" (386). The boy in the above passage seems to hold such a view. Marcus counters this essentializing vision of woman as (potential) rape victim with the notion of a "rape script"... that social structures inscribe on men's and women's embodied selves and psyches the misogynist inequalities which enable rape to occur":

These generalized inequalities are not simply prescribed by a totalized oppressive masculine power and feminine powerlessness neither simply precede nor cause rape; rather, rape is one of culture's many modes of feminizing women. A rapist chooses his target because he recognizes her to be a woman, but a rapist also strives to imprint the gender identity of "feminine victim" on his target. A rape act thus imposes as well as presupposes misogynist inequalities; rape is not only scripted—it also scripts.

She argues that "we can see rape as a process of sexist gendering which we can attempt to disrupt" (391). Marcus's way of viewing the "rape script" as both preexisting and being written through individual incidents of rape parallels Butler's description of gender roles, which both exist as Law and are constantly rewritten through their repetition. In fact, Marcus conceives of rape as one of many ways in which gender is instituted, established,

and turned into Law on a continual basis. Her conception of rape as both scripted and scripting points out that Butler's notion of gender as performance can have violent consequences (as opposed to reducing gender to endless play as some of her critics suggest she has done). The "rape script" could also be viewed as a concrete example of the violent stamping and shaping of the body described by Wittig; it is one way gender is stamped onto bodies.

Marcus's notion of the "rape script" shows how rape is an integral part of gendering people in "rape culture," an integral part "of feminizing women," but also provides a strategy for disconnecting rape from the Law of gender, of engendering men who aren't rapists and women who are not rapable. This strategy is partially discursive, but it also involves self-defense, fighting back. *La nuit sacrée* doesn't suggest a similar strategy, but it does point out the importance of rape in the gender system of rape cultures. I would suggest that rape is one of the forms of violence that must be forgotten for gender to be naturalized. Or rather, what must be forgotten is its scripted nature and the way rape is scripted onto scripts of gender. What must be forgotten is that the scripts have been scripted, are constantly rescripted, and therefore can be rescripted in feminist ways. This forgetting constitutes a naturalization of bodies, sexes, and genders as fixed categories and immutable essences.

If, as Simone de Beauvoir stated, "[o]n ne naît pas femme: on le devient" (*Le deuxième sexe* 2: 13), part of the violence that must be forgotten, is the violence of that becoming. For the gender system to work, gender as performance must be forgotten, replaced by gender naturalized and joined to its source, biology. It is ironic that the joining of gender to its source, involving a narrative of return to this origin, involves forgetting the source and rewriting a new one. Gender connected to its source as a form of narration is thus a fictionalized category. *La nuit sacrée*, instead of naïvely assuming the source to which Zahra returns is firmly rooted in her biology, seems to leave showing the very narrative mechanisms by which this fictional return is naturalized as truth. In *La nuit*

sacrée, Zahra's naming is naturalized through an invocation of the supernatural: "Tu es une femme... Laisse ta beauté te guider. Il n'y a plus rien à craindre. La Nuit du Destin te nomme Zahra, fleur des fleurs, grâce, enfant de l'éternité, tu es le temps qui se maintient dans le versant du silence..." (32, Ben Jelloun's ellipses). Yet this very same name was given to her in L'enfant de sable in a freak show. In L'enfant de sable, taking on the name of woman⁵ means performing as a woman in a sideshow. To what extent does becoming woman, naturalizing the name of woman, require forgetting that the category is performed as part of a sideshow?

In the village the knight (or Cheikh) takes Zahra to, one of the children says to her, "Ne te laisse pas faire par le Cheikh; il est très beau et ensorceleur. Tu verras, avec le temps et l'expérience tu sauras à quoi t'en tenir avec les hommes" (43). For Zahra, becoming a woman thus involves an apprenticeship in heterosexuality, how to deal with the "bad" men. In addition, the word "expérience" also implies there will be at least some "good" ones. At one point in her relation with the Consul, Zahra pretends to be a woman, not herself, but a prostitute in the brothel. With the pretense of being able to help the blind Consul choose a prostitute, Zahra accompanies him to the brothel. Secretly, she dismisses all the prostitutes, describes herself to him as the prostitute who left without his knowing (thus creating a situation where she can make love with him while he thinks she is one of the prostitutes), and proceeds to play the role of the prostitute. Yet this "comédie du bordel" (130) is fully understood by the Consul. The "comédie du bordel," like the circus sideshow, can be understood as an allegory for the performance of heterosexuality. We have already seen how the relationship between Ahmed and his/her employer is like that between prostitute and pimp, how becoming a woman requires an apprenticeship in heterosexuality, and how Zahra's biology is liberated only to excite male passers-by. In some ways the "comédie du bordel" parallels the freak show; in others, however, the two

⁵Cf. the question asked by the title of Denise Riley's work, "Am I that Name?": Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History.

performances differ. When Ahmed performs Zahra at the sideshow, s/he disguises him/herself as a man and then unveils him/herself to be a woman. Yet, to say that Ahmed performs Zahra is also to say that the reverse is also true, that a man performs a woman. In the "comédie du bordel," Zahra disguises herself to perform as a prostitute. To what extent is performing as prostitute part of performing as woman? To what extent does the "comédie du bordel" have a script that, like Marcus's "rape script," genders its performers? Though *La nuit sacrée* perhaps does not establish once and for all that heterosexuality is or must be like prostitution, or is or must be based on rape, I would suggest that a careful reading of the novel at least raises questions as to whether heterosexuality as currently performed and instituted as a compulsory system in the Maghreb (or in the West, for that matter) can exist separately from these two practices. These same questions are also (and especially) raised by the women writers studied in the next chapter.

The final aspect of Zahra's becoming a woman I wish to discuss is what happens to her official identity in the process. In *La prière de l'absent*, we remember, neither Yamna nor Sindibad have official identification papers. This lack of officially recognized identity serves as a marker for Yamna's marginalized status, in part as a former prostitute, and for Sindibad's sexual marginality. Ahmed, in *L'enfant de sable*, is fully recognized as a male citizen. Zahra, in becoming a woman, must dispose of this identity; she does so as she buries a number of her personal belongings with her father:

Je vidai très vite le sac qui contenait presque tout ce que je possédais, une chemise d'homme, un pantalon, un extrait d'acte de naissance, une photo de la cérémonie de la circoncision, ma carte d'identité, l'acte de mariage avec la malheureuse Fatima...

Au moment de fermer la tombe, je m'accroupis pour bien tasser les objets et j'eus mal à la poitrine. Quelque chose me serrait les côtes et le thorax. Les bandelettes de tissu étaient encore autour de ma poitrine pour empêcher les seins de sortir et de grossir. Je retirai avec rage ce déguisement intérieur composé de

plusieurs mètres de tissu blanc. Je le déroulai et le passai autour du cou du mort. Ensuite je serrai très fort et fis un nœud. J'étais en sueur. Je me débarrassais de toute une vie, une époque de mensonges et de faux-semblants. (*La nuit sacrée* 56–57)

Changing gender identity, here, requires physically burying a number of papers and possessions, but even more, it requires putting the old identity to death, conducting a funeral, and placing it in a tomb. ("Burying" thus has two levels of meaning, the simple one of placing in the ground and covering with earth, and the more ritualistic one of placing the dead in a grave.) Ahmed dies as a man; Zahra is born as a woman. Becoming a woman therefore involves naturalizing this becoming as a birth: one is born a woman. The forgetting at the source of gender requires believing this fiction. This birth is marked, again, by the liberation, the unbinding of female biology that accompanies the burying of a sort of veil, the masculine clothes that covered Ahmed's body, that disguised it, that lied for him. This unbinding resembles the removal of strips of cloth from a mummy, as if Zahra weren't becoming a woman, but merely resurrecting the female within her who had been put to death. Again, the social is shed off, and biology finds its rightful place. But what if this new identity is no less of a disguise? It does involve a number of performances—the sideshow, the "comédie du bordel." Heterosexuality, like womanhood, isn't merely released: it must be learned. It is not learned once and for all, but must be repeated over and over. In the above passage, one could say that Zahra takes off the mask that was Ahmed. This unmasking might seem to imply that Zahra has now revealed her true face.

Yet as *La nuit sacrée* draws to its conclusion, Zahra is unmasked again... as Ahmed! The Assise finds his/her uncle who can testify to Ahmed's marriage to Fatima (the uncle's daughter), and Zahra kills the uncle and is sent to prison. Rather than finding a true self, free of disguise, Zahra changes one secret for another and takes on an even more blackmailable identity. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this change in identity is the

loss of official identity it requires: "Après tout je n'étais qu'une étrangère, une vagabonde, sans papiers, sans identité, sans bagages, venant du néant et allant vers l'inconnu" (94). For Zahra, becoming a woman means losing her status as citizen in the Nation, becoming like a foreigner, being marginalized into exile in her own country. Does this loss of citizenship necessarily accompany becoming a woman? La nuit sacrée seems to suggest that it does.

It is at this point that L'enfant de sable and La nuit sacrée become narratives of the performance of national as well as gendered identity. As long as Ahmed performs as man, s/he is given full rights as citizen in the Nation, but when the performance ceases, those rights go away. In L'enfant de sable, the exact connection between Ahmed's gender and national identity is rendered explicit by the ad his/her father places in the newspaper upon his/her birth:

Il acheta une demi-page du grand journal national, y publia sa photo avec en dessous ce texte:

Dieu est clément

Il vient d'illuminer la vie et le foyer de votre serviteur et dévoué potier Hadj Ahmed Souleïmane. Un garçon—que Dieu le protège et lui donne longue vie—est né jeudi à 10 h. Nous l'avons nommé Mohamed Ahmed. Cette naissance annonce fertilité pour la terre, paix et prospérité pour le pays. Vive Ahmed! Vive le Maroc!

Cette annonce dans le journal fit beaucoup jaser. On n'avait pas l'habitude d'étaler ainsi publiquement sa vie privée. Hadj Ahmed s'en moquait. L'important pour lui était de porter la nouvelle à la connaissance du plus grand nombre. La dernière phrase fit aussi du bruit. La police française n'aimait pas ce "Vive le Maroc!" Les militants nationalistes ne savaient pas que cet artisan riche était aussi un bon patriote. (30–31)

His/her father becomes a model citizen in the Nation being born as he furnishes a new male citizen to the Nation. Being a good citizen means performing gendered (i.e. private) identity on the public stage. Becoming a woman, however, means withdrawing from the Nation's stage to the domestic sphere. "Domestic," here, takes on new meaning when one considers that, as Zahra becomes a woman, she gains employment as a domestic servant, une domestique in French. Becoming a woman thus means changing from citizen to maid. When Fanon praises the role of the modern couple in the new Nation, he makes a slip that marks a similar change: "Le couple algérien, en devenant un maillon de l'organisation révolutionnaire, se transforme en unité d'existence. La confusion de l'expérience combattante et de la vie conjugale approfondit les rapports entre époux et cimente l'union. Il y a surgissement simultané et effervescent du citoyen, du patriote et d'un époux moderne" (*Sociologie* 100). In the first sentence, it is the couple that is the building block of the revolutionary organization. By the third sentence, however, it is a question of citizenship. That is, once the revolution has succeeded and the new Nation has become reality, one half of the couple is dropped and only the man, the "époux," gains status as citizen. Only the man is entitled to the blossoming and growth, to the fulfilling potential of revolution.

The possibility of reading L'enfant de sable as a national allegory has already been suggested by Lisa Lowe in "Literary Nomadics in Francophone Allegories of Postcolonialism: Pham Van Ky and Tahar Ben Jelloun." Lowe also points to the newspaper ad as a signal of L'enfant de sable's allegorical nature: "The French colonial subjugation of Morocco is allegorized in the figure of the girl-child raised as a male son. This correspondence between the child and the new nation is literalized at the point of the child's birth when the protagonist's father buys a half-page announcement in the national newspaper..." (54–55). Lowe's reading, however, might seem to imply the same notion of Zahra's becoming a woman as a liberation that I question above. Ahmed, cross-dressed as a man, thus allegorizes the travesty of Moroccan identity under the imposition of French

control. Yet Lowe does not see Zahra's becoming a woman as escaping transvestism, but as replacing one form of drag with another: "In this sense, Ahmed/Zahra devises an alternative transvestism, one which does not comply with the father's enforced transvestitism which expressed the power of men over women under patriarchy, but which is rather a representation of cross-dressing which both exhibits this logic of forced transvestitism, and ultimately makes use of further cross-dressing to deride the patriarchal logic" (56). And she uses the image of nomadism, of traveling in between two locations, to describe Ahmed/Zahra's search for gendered identity: "In this sense the protagonist's nomadic vacillation between the positions of male identity, female identity, male-as-female and female-as-male, suggests an analogous irresolution for the struggles of the Moroccan nation..." (56). And this search for gendered, even sexual, identity parallels and allegorizes the search for national identity narrated in Nedjma and other novels as a quest for the Nation's origin.

In Lowe's concept of "sexual allegories of postcolonialism" (60), which rely on a "dialectic between the subject and collective struggle" (61), the Nation's origin is not the end point of a journey but one of two poles between which postcolonial identity oscillates, "the opposed poles of colonialism and nativism" (57). The cult of origins could also be called what Lowe calls nativism. By traveling as nomads between these two poles, Lowe's postcolonial subject both resists colonialism and avoids the nationalism that empowers national bourgeoisies:

[C]olonialist and nativist nationalisms are constituted as opposed sites which are visited and revisited; however, the notion that either of these topoi is fixed or authoritative is ultimately undermined both by the protagonists' fictionalized travel between and beyond them, and by narrative displacements of the categories themselves. By means of fictionalized travel and narrative techniques, each novel posits allegories of Fanon's third alternative: a strategic practice which neither reinforces the structure of colonial domination, nor appeals to an essentialized

precolonial order, but which—in the nomadic unsettling of the model of colonialism and nativism as polar opposites—troubles the very logic of the binarism, and queries the notion of structured rule itself. (44–45)

Lowe's concept of "literary nomadics" involves one way of disrupting narratives of return to national origins. In *Nedjma*, one might suggest that the pole of nativism is represented by the Nadhor and that Nedjma, as a daughter of a French woman, oscillates between colonial and nativist identities. But I am especially interested in what Lowe describes as "narrative displacements of the categories themselves." This is perhaps related to what she describes as "an alternative transvestism." In Lowe's nomadics, the journeying to the nativist pole, or what I would call national origins, would then involve a performance of national identity that both uses the origin of official nationalist discourse and disrupts the centrality of that origin. National identity, still useful in this concept, becomes a sort of drag. When Ben Jelloun unveils Ahmed's secret, he disrupts the version of Nation implied in the newspaper ad. The Nation becomes one composed of sand children, whose identities, like Kateb's rivers of national identity, are clouded with sand. In "Age, Gender, and Narrative Transformation in *L'enfant de sable* by Tahar Ben Jelloun," Odile Cazenave recounts the anecdote of a reader who wrote to *Le Monde* to claim that Ben Jelloun had made a French mistake⁶ in titling his novel *L'enfant de sable*:

[A] letter to the editor of *Le Monde* sought to point out a mistake in the spelling of the title. According to the reader, it should have been *L'Enfant du sable*. Obviously, the reader has interpreted the novel as referring to a child from the desert, thus associating the character with the usual images of North Africa, the desert and the nomads. He thereby completely missed the pun on the preposition "de," which implies that the child is made of sand, and that, just like sand, one

⁶For a discussion of the implications of pointing out French mistakes to non-native speakers of French, see Nancy K. Miller's "The French Mistake" (*Getting Personal* 48–55). Cazenave's anecdote points to another implication of policing language, this time a colonial implication, whereby the grammar cop, in the ruins of French colonialism, still takes upon himself the duties of the colonizing mission. Her example also testifies that even when a mistake has not been made, the language cop can invent one to shore up his own authority.

cannot grasp it and hold it firmly. In other words, the protagonist is a evanescent character with no firm substance. (448)

The English translation of the novel, The Sand Child, renders the meaning suggested by Cazenave.

Ben Jelloun's model of the performance of gendered identity is thus simultaneously a model of national identity, where the Nation involved is inescapably queer. For this reason, I propose it as a complement to Kateb's vision of Nedjma as Nation. In Ben Jelloun's vision of becoming/performing woman, the relation between Nation and Woman is one of exclusion. The more Zahra becomes woman, the more she is denied an officially recognized identity. In Qui se souvient de la mer, Nafissa is a powerful weapon against the colonizer because she embodies the explosive danger of a bomb. What happens to this danger in the new Nation she is responsible for creating? Will, she, like Nedjma, be forced back under the veil, kidnapped, and cloistered? Ben Jelloun's narrative of becoming (in Beauvoir's sense) a woman, read as national allegory, points to another question: What happens to woman (que devient la femme)⁷ in nationalist discourse? If for Dib, woman is dangerous to the colonizer and male subjectivity, for Kateb, she is dangerous to the Nation. This danger can be controlled, or it can be liberated. What is the menace feminism poses to the Nation?

⁷As opposed to Beauvoir's notion of becoming a woman: "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient" (Le deuxième sexe 2: 13).

CHAPTER 6

THE FEMINIST MENACE

Qu'ils tremblent, les prêtres, on va leur
monter nos sextes.

—Hélène Cixous, *La jeune née*

American cold-war discourse of the 1950s warned Americans against the communist menace. Communists constantly threatened to invade, to take over America, to brainwash Americans, and to destroy the American way of life. The communist menace was a threat to the American nation, and American nationalist discourse took communism as its Other, that against which it could define itself. In the early seventies, Betty Friedan, a leader of the National Organization for Women, "complain[ed] about the 'lavender menace,' the lesbian feminists who, she thought, were giving mainstream feminism a bad name" (Katz, *Invention* 139). I have chosen these tropes of the communist and lavender menaces to label and describe the danger feminism and the possibility of women's liberation pose to official Maghrebian nationalist discourses. This chapter considers the specific contribution of feminism to sexual challenges to the Nation, nationalism, and national identity.¹

Women Come Out into the Nation: Assia Djébar

For a feminist analysis of the relation of women's struggles to the Nation, I first turn to the work of the Algerian novelist, Assia Djébar. Trained as a historian,² Djébar was severely criticized by nationalists for her first two novels, *La soif* (1957) and *Les impatients* (1958), because these novels supposedly focused on the concerns of a middle-class *évoluée* and totally ignored the political realities of Algeria at the time³ (Zimra, "Writing Woman" 68). Djébar tried to join the *macquis*⁴ on the Tunisian border in 1958 but was told that women were no longer allowed in combat (Zimra, "When the Past

¹Cf. the title of the panel "Feminist Challenges to Political Theory and the Nation State," sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, City University of New York, 7 March 1994.

²Clarisse Zimra, "When the Past Answers the Present" 124.

³Indeed, the novels were published after the Algerian revolution was well under way and yet contain no reference to the war and very little acknowledgment of a colonial presence. Clarisse Zimra, however, has argued for a rereading of these earlier novels in a way that makes them consistent with her whole opus ("Writing Women") and thereby challenges early nationalist criticism of Djébar's work.

⁴Or the ALN, Armée de Libération Nationale, the armed wing of the FLN.

Answers the Present" 119). After criticism of her early novels, her work became more political with Les enfants du nouveau monde (1962) and Les alouettes naïves (1967). A ten-year silence then followed. Her more recent works include Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement (1980), L'amour, la fantasia (1985), Ombre sultane (1987), Loin de Médine (1991), and Vaste est la prison (1995). I shall concentrate on L'amour, la fantasia for its vision of the role of women's struggles within national or anti-colonial struggles and Ombre sultane for the resistance it articulates against compulsory heterosexuality.

L'amour, la fantasia: Personalizing the Political, Politicizing the Personal

L'amour, la fantasia consists of three parallel and often simultaneous narratives: the invasion of Algeria by the French in 1830 and subsequent resistance to both this invasion and early French colonial rule, the Algerian revolution, and a girl's childhood narrative. In the first two narratives, Djébar carries out the work of a historian. Like other novelists examined earlier, she uses the novel to rewrite history. Whereas writers such as Djaout and Ben Jelloun use history to unveil sexual secrets, Djébar rewrites history to unveil the role of women in history, a role often left out of official (both colonial and Algerian nationalist) versions of history. Fatima Mernissi has written:

Man-written history is what constitutes our "national" or "cultural" heritage, in spite of the claim by the theocracies that it is of divine origin. We know that it is very difficult for a woman to design for herself a past. Ironically, any other task, including designing a future, seems more feasible, and definitely more rewarding. Writing the past is a highly coded and serious act, thought of, up to now, as an exclusively male endeavor, burden, and privilege. (Beyond the Veil xii)

"[D]esign[ing] for herself a past" is the task Djébar takes on in her recent novel, Loin de Médine, where she writes the history of early Islam from the point of view of the women who participated in spreading Islam as well as that of the women who opposed the spread of Islam, women who, in both cases, often took up arms. "[D]esign[ing] for herself a past" is also the task Djébar takes on in L'amour, la fantasia, where history and

autobiography are intermeshed. When writing the history of colonial invasion, she only has recourse to the writings of French men who participated in or followed the military expeditions in Algeria. Writing the history of Algerian women during this period happens through inferring, questioning, and perhaps fictionalizing. To construct a history of the role of women during the Algerian revolution, Djébar has recourse to women participants who are still alive. Since many of these women are illiterate and can leave no written history, Djébar must convert and translate their oral histories in dialectal Arabic and Berber into written histories in French.

The third form of narrative Djébar includes is that of a girl's childhood, which resembles Djébar's in many ways, and for this reason, it is often read as autobiographical. The childhood narrative tells the story of an Algerian girl who, through education in a French school, escapes veiling and sequestering. Like the other two narratives, the childhood narrative is a tale of resistance and liberation. Its presence in the novel marks the irruption of the personal into the political and offers an example of a narrative of revolution where women's liberation is consistent with that of the Nation (whereas Kateb's and Dib's narratives of national struggle only point out the friction between the two struggles, even though from a possibly feminist perspective). In this way, she could be read as responding to nationalist criticism of her earlier work. On the one hand, unlike Fanon, Djébar does not suggest that women's liberation flows naturally from that of the Nation, which would imply making women's struggles secondary to the national struggle. Instead, she articulates a heterogeneous field of struggle where the struggles are many and multi-pronged. On the other hand, she does not cover up the potential friction between various struggles. It is, after all, through her French education that the girl escapes the veil and the harem.⁵ This ambiguous relation to the French language, which both serves as a channel

⁵The harem and harem fantasies are clichés of European Orientalist fiction and painting. In most European versions, the harem resembles a seraglio. Every house, however, has a harem, that is, a women's space where male non-relatives are traditionally not allowed to enter, especially if the women are unveiled. I use the word here in its strictest meaning, without the connotations European discourses often associated with the harem. For a study of European fantasies of the harem as represented on colonial postcards, see Malek Alloula, *Le harem colonial*. For a narrative of a girl's childhood in a harem and a detailed description

of the girl's liberation and marks her colonization, is also present in the narratives of colonial invasion, of resistance to it, and of the Algerian revolution.

In writing the history of the colonial conquest of Algeria, Djébar reveals the acts of violence that accompanied the arrival of the French. She details, for example, the French practice of *enfumade*, or setting fire to caves sheltering Algerians who were fleeing French atrocities. In one passage, she describes 1500 Algerians being burned alive in a cave by the French. Through such revelations, Djébar participates in the unveiling of Maghrebian history Laouri calls for. Djébar, however, gives to this unveiling of history its fullest feminist possibilities. In writing the history of the French invasions, Djébar cites many eye-witness accounts, often those written by French men—the enemy from both nationalist and feminist perspectives. One such citation is of the Baron Barchou de Penhoën's impressions of the invasion of Algeria:

Des femmes, qui se trouvent toujours en grand nombre à la suite des tribus arabes, avaient montré le plus d'ardeur à ces mutilations. L'une d'elle gisait à côté d'un cadavre français dont elle avait arraché le cœur! Une autre s'enfuyait, tenant un enfant dans ses bras: blessée d'un coup de feu, elle écrasa avec une pierre la tête de l'enfant, pour l'empêcher de tomber vivant dans nos mains; les soldats l'achevèrent elle-même à coups de baïonnette. (28–29)

In the writings of a male colonizer, she finds traces of Algerian women's resistance and suffering. As Kateb Yacine is forced to look for traces of national roots or origins in the present landscape of Algeria, marked as it is by the cultures of so many invaders, Djébar,

of harem life, see Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. Assia Djébar also examines the meanings of the harem and its implications for women (*Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*, *L'amour, la fantasia*, and *Ombre sultane*). Though Djébar describes her escape from the harem in the autobiographical mode, she also often describes the harem as a women's space, a safe space similar to that many American feminists sought to establish in the 1970s. In "Female Trouble in the Colonial Harem," Emily Apter warns against European misreadings or misuses of the harem. Drawing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "French Feminism in an International Frame," Apter takes up what she calls Spivak's warnings against "the 'misfiring' of theoretical signifiers in an internationalist context, particularly when those terms blind the reader to cultural and class difference even as they open up to view the history of phallogocentric injustice" ("Female Trouble" 206). Apter also points out, "A harem, strictly speaking, is a gynaeceum, a space where women gather and speak to each other, and not necessarily a site of feminine aphasia. Harems can protect and nurture women as well as imprison them..." ("Female Trouble" 206).

when seeking a feminist account of national origins in resistance to the colonizer,⁶ must also look for traces of roots in colonial writings. Djébar, in an interview, has described the use of history in *L'amour, la fantasia*: "[L]'histoire est utilisée dans ce roman comme quête de l'identité. Identité non seulement des femmes mais de tout le pays" (Mortimer, "Entretien" 201). She ventures into enemy territory like a spy to unveil hidden history and "design for herself a past": "Barchou la rapporte d'un ton glâcé, mais son regard, qui semble se concentrer sur la poésie terrible ainsi dévoilée, se révolte d'horreur: deux femmes algériennes sont entrevues au détour d'une mêlée" (*L'amour, la fantasia* 28). In this passage, Djébar uses the notion of unveiling to describe Barchou's writing. But in addition to reading his version of history, she also reads the historian. She steals his account from the camp of the colonizer to use it in the service of anti-colonialism. The importance of uncovering traces of women's resistance to colonial invasion in relation to the struggle for national independence is made clear in the third portion of the novel where Djébar relates the role of women in the Algerian revolution. The national struggle, in the novel, is situated within a history of anti-colonial struggle uncovered by the nationalist historian. The Algerian revolution, in this narrative, has roots in a history of struggle.

Joan Nestle has stressed the importance of steering clear of two opposing dangers in the writing of lesbian history. The first would involve reducing lesbians of the past to their oppression, seeing their oppression as governing their lives at the expense of neglecting their resistance to it, the ways they innovatively managed to live often fruitful lives in the face of their oppression. The second danger would consist of stressing their resistance at the expense of romanticizing or belittling their oppression ("I Lift Up My Eyes to the Hill"). In writing Algerian women's history, Djébar seems to negotiate this double task, at once revealing atrocities committed by French soldiers against Algerian women and

⁶Sites of early resistance to the French often serve as sources of national identity in narratives of Nation. Smara, in *La prière de l'absent*, is one such site, as is the Nadhor in *Nedjma*.

uncovering Algerian women's heroic resistance to colonization in spite of the capitulation by the Algerian male political elite.

Djebar also reveals the sexist mode of colonial invasion. In describing the letters of French captains, she writes, "[C]es lettres parlent, dans le fond, d'une Algérie-femme impossible à apprivoiser. Fantôme d'une Algérie domptée: chaque combat éloigne encore plus l'épuisement de la révolte" (69). She interprets their letters as viewing colonization as rape: "Ce monde étranger, qu'ils pénétraient quasiment sur le mode sexuel.... Y pénètrent comme en une défloration. L'Afrique est prise malgré le refus qu'elle ne peut étouffer" (70). The description of the colonial invasion of Algeria as the rape of an Algerian woman is far from being unique to feminist writers; it is a trope of many male nationalist writings. Among male writers, however, there is a tendency to equate this "violation" of Algeria with a "violation" of male honor. It is then up to men to defend this honor as it is embodied by Algerian women as if the worst effects of colonial violence to women were suffered by colonized men. Djebar, however, recounts the suffering of women not merely as a metaphor for that of the entire country. She uncovers the consequences of colonization to individual woman and to women as a group. She points to the rape or suffering of women whose names will never be known.⁷

In the third section of the novel, "Les voix ensevelies," Djebar uncovers or exhumes the voices of women who participated in the Algerian revolution, voices buried by official accounts of the revolution and also buried because these women could leave no written account by themselves. One of her informants says, "Hélas! nous sommes des analphabètes. Nous ne laissons pas de récits de ce que nous avons enduré et vécu!" (168). Again, Djebar relates both their suffering (being tortured by the French, for example) and their heroic participation in the revolution. She combines the roles of novelist and historian by collecting oral histories through interviews with women fighters (Mortimer, "Entretien" 204; Woodhull, *Transfigurations* 80). These accounts, attributed only to anonymous

⁷The title of one section is "Le viol ou la souffrance des anonymes" (69).

voices, thus seem to give voices to the anonymous women Djebbar discovers in histories of the French invasion, women whose names have been erased by history.

In some cases, the experiences of women in the maquis involved not only combat with the colonizer, but also resistance to sexism among male nationalists. One woman describes how her male comrades attempted to force her to get married. A single woman in the maquis ran the risk of being dishonored and therefore of becoming unsuitable for marriage and was also a temptation to the men. Djebbar interviews a woman who successfully resisted forced marriage (150). Djebbar's account of women's resistance to colonial invasion and their participation in the Algerian revolution offers a counter-discourse on the compatibility of women's struggles with the national one. Many male nationalists urged feminists to concentrate on liberating the Nation and promised that women's liberation would follow, a promise history has shown to be rarely if ever kept. Other nationalists accused feminists of being traitors, of adopting the ideals of the colonizers against Muslim traditions. Still other nationalists supported women's liberation as a prerequisite for national liberation. But even among this last group, women's liberation was good mainly as a means, not in and of itself.⁸ In contrast, Djebbar narrates a vision of national struggle that coexists with women's struggles, a vision of the Nation that has room for feminists.

Djebbar's unveiling of women's history is paralleled by the childhood narrative of a girl who goes to a French school and thereby escapes being veiled and secluded at puberty. The girl "comes out" into the public space traditionally reserved for men: "[U]ne fillette 'sort' pour apprendre l'alphabet" (11). Escaping the veil is related to writing:

Voilez le corps de la fille nubile. Rendez-la invisible. Transformez-la en être plus aveugle que l'aveugle, tuez en elle tout souvenir du dehors. Si elle sait écrire? Le géôlier d'un corps sans mots—et les mots écrits sont mobiles—peut finir, lui, par dormir tranquille: il lui suffira de supprimer les fenêtres, de cadenasser l'unique portail, d'élever jusqu'au ciel un mur orbe.

⁸One of the earliest examples of male nationalist feminists was the Egyptian Qacem Amin, whose The Liberation of Women (1899) was a bestseller (see Badran and Cooke xvi).

Si la jeune fille écrit? Sa voix, en dépit du silence, circule. (11)

Even veiled, the girl who writes projects words beyond the veil or the walls of the harem into the public sphere. Djébar, in fact, describes "[t]rois jeunes fille cloîtrées..." who write love letters to escape the harem (18–23). In this tale of an Algerian girl's coming to writing,⁹ the notion of the postcolonial Maghrebian writer as a sort of public story-teller who blurts out or unveils secrets on the public square (as Moha does in *Moha le fou, Moha le sage*) is deployed in the service of feminism. Writing thus becomes a way of bringing women out into the public space of the Nation: "L'écriture est dévoilement, en public, devant des voyeurs qui ricanent" (204). Whereas Ben Jelloun associates writing with the unveiling of sexual secrets in "Défendre la diversité culturelle au Maghreb," Djébar finds in writing—writing history, writing autobiography—a way of unveiling women: "Le murmure des compagnes cloîtrées redevient mon feuillage. Comment trouver la force de m'arracher le voile, sinon parce qu'il me faut en couvrir la plaie inguérissable, suant les mots tout à côté?" (245). And as with Ben Jelloun, Djébar's unveiling also involves transgressing taboos: "Ecrire devant l'amour. Eclairer le corps, pour aider à lever l'interdit, pour dévoiler... Dévoiler et simultanément tenir secret ce qui doit le rester, tant que n'intervient pas la fulgurance de la révélation" (75). Unveiling, here as with Ben Jelloun, has something to do with secrets. Djébar, however, keeps some secrets (the secret of a love affair, for example), while revealing others. The association of the veil and the closet is thus strengthened by this understanding of Djébar's feminist writing as a form of unveiling. Narratives queer the Maghrebian Nation and make the Nation feminist through similar tactics: disclosure, uncovering, digging up, revelation, and unveiling both secrets and transgressions.

One of the modes of this unveiling is history; the other is autobiography:

Tenter l'autobiographie par les seuls mots français, c'est, sous le lent scalpel de l'autopsie à vif, montrer plus que sa peau.... Parler de soi-même hors de la

⁹The notion of "coming to writing" was articulated by Hélène Cixous in "La venue à l'écriture," which is translated into English as "Coming to Writing."

langue des aïeules, c'est se dévoiler certes, mais pas seulement pour sortir de l'enfance, pour s'en exiler définitivement. Le dévoilement, aussi contingent, devient, comme le souligne mon arabe dialectal du quotidien, vraiment "se mettre à nu."

Or cette mise à nu, déployée dans la langue de l'ancien conquérant, lui qui, plus d'un siècle durant, a pu s'emparer de tout, sauf précisément des corps féminins, cette mise à nu renvoie étrangement à la mise à sac du siècle précédent.

(178)

Here, writing autobiography, the story of one's life, in a language other than one's native tongue, is described as a form of exile. But it is also through this crossing of linguistic borders that unveiling becomes possible, through sharing secrets with "outsiders," washing the Nation's dirty laundry outside the Nation. Writing autobiography in French, for an Algerian woman, also links her life story with the history of her Nation, because her writing in the language of her colonizers bears the mark, the traces of her colonization. On the one hand, autobiography represents an exile from the past in the form of one's childhood. On the other, autobiography represents a return to the past, what Mildred Mortimer calls "the autobiographical journey" ("Language and Space" 302). By returning to the Nation's roots at the site of resistance to colonial invasion, autobiography represents the story of the Nation told allegorically through the story of a woman's life.¹⁰ As Kateb

¹⁰In "Women's Autobiographical Selves," Susan Stanford Friedman also identifies the female subjectivity of women's autobiographical writings as being articulated in conjunction with another consciousness. In Friedman's case, however, this other consciousness is collective in nature:

However, the individualistic concept of the autobiographical self that pervades [George] Gusdorf's work ["Conditions and Limits of Autobiography"] raises serious theoretical problems for critics who recognize that the self, self-creation, and self-consciousness are profoundly different for women, minorities, and many non-Western peoples. The model of separation and unique selfhood that is highlighted in his work and shared by many other critics establishes a critical bias that leads to the (mis)reading and marginalization of autobiographical texts by women and minorities in the processes of canon formation. (34)

According to Friedman, the articulation of the self as situated within a collectivity is a characteristic shared by women's autobiography, "minority," and "non-Western" autobiography. It certainly is a characteristic shared by Djébar's notion of writing autobiography and by many other Maghrebian autobiographical writings.

returns to the roots of the Nation to articulate a national struggle, Djebbar seeks roots of a feminist consciousness that can be deployed in women's struggles:

Ecrire en langue étrangère, hors de l'oralité des deux langues de ma région natale—le berbère des montagnes du Dahra et l'arabe de ma ville—, écrire m'a ramenée aux cris des femmes sourdement révoltées de mon enfance, à ma seule origine.

Ecrire ne tue pas la voix, mais la réveille, surtout pour ressusciter tant de sœurs disparues. (229)

For Djebbar, women's writing carries out a return to origins, and writing autobiography resurrects past struggles of women and brings them back to haunt the present. A return to origins in Djebbar's case is a return to women's resistance that brings back women's history to haunt the present Nation of official (and therefore male) discourse.

Autobiography, thus written by a woman, is the story of a feminine "je," which in itself is a story that should remain unspoken: "Comment une femme pourrait parler haut, même en langue arabe, autrement que dans l'attente du grand âge? Comment dire 'je,' puisque ce serait dédaigner les formules-couvertures qui maintiennent le trajet individuel dans la résignation collective?" (177). Djebbar is referring to the difficulty of asserting a female self or subjectivity before contributing male children.¹¹ Yet, finding the roots of women's history in a woman's autobiography also means articulating a female subjectivity. Saying "I" means lifting a linguistic cover ("couverture") from women's bodies. Adlai H. Murdoch, "Rewriting Writing: Identity, Exile, and Renewal in Assia Djebbar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*," describes Djebbar's narrative of subjectivity in the context of other postcolonial writers who articulate or attempt to articulate models of postcolonial subjectivity: "The primary issue faced by postcolonial novelists, that of writing the subject into being through fictive discourse, makes the colonial subject doubly subject to the writing act, since the

¹¹Cf. Aïcha Lemsine: "Après un certain âge, la femme était sûre néanmoins de trouver une réelle puissance. Surtout si elle avait eu des fils. Enfin, au crépuscule de sa vie, elle avait alors droit de veto sur les décisions des hommes. Son autorité était acceptée avec respect en vrai patriarcat du clan" (*La Chrysalide* 72–73).

erasure of identity which is the primary product of subjection to the colonizer's discourse is eventually countered by the effort to rewrite and to recodify historical experience on its own terms" (Murdoch 72–73). And, again, this narrative of subjectivity is rooted in the narrative history of the Nation. Like Bhabha's Nation, Djébar's autobiography involves the writing of a fiction: "Ma fiction est cette autobiographie qui s'esquisse, alourdie par l'héritage qui m'encombre" (*L'amour, la fantasia* 244). Through the following questions, Paul de Man as well has associated autobiography with fiction:

But are we so certain that autobiography depends on reference, as a photograph depends on its subject or a (realist) picture on its model? We assume that life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium? And since the mimesis here assumed to be operative is one made of figuration among others, does the referent determine the figure, or is it the other way around: is the illusion of reference not a correlation of the structure of the figure, that is to say no longer clearly and simply a referent at all but something more akin to a fiction which then, however, in its own turn, acquires a degree of referential productivity? ("Autobiography as De-facement" 20–21)

Djébar's autobiography, written as fiction, seems to produce subjectivity as de Man claims autobiography produces the life it is supposed to describe referentially. Writing this fiction in French, however, is also another form of veiling: "L'autobiographie pratiquée dans la langue adverse se tisse comme fiction, du moins tant que l'oubli des morts charriés par l'écriture n'opère pas son anesthésie. Croyant 'me parcourir,' je ne fais que choisir un autre voile" (243). Coming to writing through autobiography as a form of unveiling, for Djébar, is thus not a simple operation of writing the body into the public sphere, is not a

pure and simple liberation or breaking a silence.¹² In other places, Djebbar has even stated, in direct contradiction with Ben Jelloun's notion of novelistic writing as a form of unveiling, that writing is a form of veiling: "[C]ertains écrivent pour dévoiler, j'écris pour me cacher."¹³

For Djebbar, women's liberation does not involve breaking out of the social, cultural, and linguistic constraints that bind a woman's body (like a veil supposedly would). There is no natural body waiting beneath the veil waiting to come out, no body outside of language. In *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler articulates a way of understanding the body as it is constructed through language. Yet, as she also writes, "This is not to say that... the body is simply linguistic stuff." There is simply no access to bodies and their materiality, a materiality that is itself posited through language, except through language (68). As Ahmed/Zahra, unbinding his/her body in *L'enfant de sable* to free it of the imposed gender of man, learns that becoming a woman is not merely a matter of liberating a female body from its social binds but must also involve the learning of new scripts, new roles, and new performances, Djebbar's autobiographical subject is not simply unveiled through writing but, instead, consists of writing new fictions, or more precisely, rewriting old fictions to create new ones out of them. In Djebbar's writing, unveiling involves taking on another veil. There is no woman that can shed the veil of cultural meanings scripted onto her body. Writing means "rewriting writing"—to use Murdoch's phrase—rewriting the script of gender, rewriting older fictions.

This rewriting also involves negotiating between cultures. As Murdoch writes, "negotiating the cultural codes of *métissage* is what ultimately lies at the heart of the postcolonial paradigm. Given her position as a bicultural, postcolonial subject, Djebbar undoes centuries of overdetermination, while at the same time putting into place a self which draws on the complicitous dialectic of the colonial encounter in order to express the

¹²The title of Jan Goodwin's *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Muslim World* would suggest such a simple liberation from imposed silence.

¹³Clarisse Zimra quotes this statement from her 1976 interview with Djebbar ("Writing Women" 76).

multivalency of its subjective codes" (72). Writing postcolonial female subjectivity in the Algerian context requires dealing with at least two or three languages, and this crossing of linguistic borders even takes on sexual connotations. In "Du français comme butin," Djébar writes, "Ecrire en la langue étrangère devient presque faire l'amour hors la foi ancestrale: le tabou, en Islam, épargne, en ce cas, les mâles, bien plus, les valorise" (25). The "métissage" Murdoch refers to is more than cultural or linguistic; it is also sexual. For a woman writer, sexual crossings of linguistic borders is more taboo than for men. Men can increase their standing in homosocial networks through sex with European women. In Algeria, even the law regulates interfaith sex for women: "A Muslim woman is prohibited from marrying a non-Muslim man, while a man is indirectly allowed to do so, since Article 49 states that a child must be brought up 'in the religion of his father'" (Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence* 152). This "love in two languages" (to cite the English translation of Abdelkebir Khatibi's *L'amour bilingue*) is literalized in *L'amour, la fantasia* as the narrator recounts a love affair from her adolescence:

Les mois, les années suivantes, je me suis engloutie dans l'histoire d'amour, ou plutôt dans l'interdiction d'amour; l'intrigue s'est épanouie du fait même de la censure paternelle. Dans cette amorce d'éducation sentimentale, la correspondance secrète se fait en français: ainsi, cette langue que m'a donnée le père me devient entremetteuse et mon initiation, dès lors, se place sous un signe double, contradictoire.... (12)

Here, writing in French (writing love letters in French) marks the transgression of paternal interdiction, an interdiction that heightens the pleasure of what it is supposed to forbid. Rather than revealing secrets, love letters were supposed to keep a secret, which Djébar nonetheless reveals in the pages of her novel. The unveiling that her novel carries out depends on a previous veiling with ambiguous and contradictory implications: on the one hand, writing in French is the catalyst for a love affair, and on the other, "[elle] renvoie

étrangement à la mise à sac du siècle précédent," that is, writing in French recalls the French invasion of Algeria.

Djebar's autobiographical subject thus resembles Nedjma, a figure of national identity represented as a product of métissage. This resemblance goes much further than the coincidence of métissage: Kateb's Nedjma shows that if the Nation and national identity are narratives (as Bhabha claims), they are also necessary narratives in the context of anti-colonial struggle. Nedjma rewrites official versions of these narratives to make them less available to the national elites that would use them in justifying oppression and exclusion. Djebar's autobiographical subject, rooted in the Nation's history and a history of women's resistance to both colonialism and patriarchal oppression, is also a fiction. Often considered the novel of nationalist consciousness, Nedjma has also provoked a debate on the implications of its version of national identity for feminism, a rather substantial debate in the context of the criticism on Maghrebian literature. Nationalist discourse, in this context as well as many others, is an overtly masculinist space. Not that women or feminists can't be nationalists; their inclusion in the political sphere of the Nation, however, has often been a matter of discussion, of debate, and even of controversy in ways that it never is for men as a category.

In previous chapters, I examined a number of tropes surrounding the symbolization of the Nation as Woman in the works of Kateb and Dib, where the patrilinear family tree and root of the Nation are planted near the source/mer/mère. In Algérie, femme et écritures, Ahlem Mosteghanemi points out that this sort of symbolization of Woman in Maghrebian literature, whether as Nation, femme fatale, or mother earth, is unique to male writers of the region: "Par ailleurs, il faut bien noter que la femme-symbole n'existe que dans la littérature masculine. Seul l'homme, dans la littérature de combat, particulièrement, peut établir un lien entre la femme et la patrie auxquelles sont rattachés son honneur et son existence" (181). In its symbolization of Algeria in the figure a woman character, Nedjma parallels official discourse of Algerian nationalism as described by Mosteghanemi: "Le rôle

de la femme algérienne comme gardienne du patrimoine commun a fait d'elle le symbole le plus vivant de la patrie et de l'identité algérienne. A chaque étape de la lutte ce symbole prenait les traits de la situation prévalant dans le pays" (173). Bruno Etienne, in L'Algérie, cultures et révolution, describes a similar role played by Woman in Algerian nationalist discourse, which deployed three main embodiments of nationalist values: the moudjahid or freedom fighter as symbol of historic legitimacy, the fellah or peasant as symbol of authenticity and keepers of the land, and women, guardians of tradition, honor, and national virtue (144–68). Nedjma, however, would hardly satisfy this role: she is portrayed as a liberated woman, veiled only by force, Jewish by official definitions (because her mother was), and a bastard, and in addition to her husband, she could have up to four lovers.

In his choice of a woman to represent Algeria, Kateb contradicts official nationalist discourse on feminine virtue, even though he resorts to an exclusively male technique in his practice of symbolization. Whereas Mosteghanemi points out the exclusively male nature of this technique, she lauds rather than criticizes Kateb for using it: "Nedjma de Kateb Yacine est venu renforcer cette nouvelle tendance. En recourant à une femme-symbole, l'auteur s'est dressé non seulement contre l'ordre politique prévalant à l'époque, mais aussi contre les clichés littéraires. Il a contesté la séparation des genres et a eu recours à un style lui permettant de transmettre toute la force de destruction dont un écrivain est capable" (43). She also credits him with opposing nationalist discourses that dismiss feminist demands with the argument that women's liberation flows naturally from that of the Nation: "Kateb eut le mérite de précepter la femme dans le combat—une femme déjà libre de ses décisions—alors que les autres écrivains comptaient sur la révolution pour la libérer..." (112).

Jacqueline Arnaud also seems to defend Kateb's symbolization of women, suggesting that Nedjma puts on the veil to participate in the national struggle: "La dévoilée du roman, la libertine, se revoile et retourne au rôle traditionnel, sa mue se subordonne à celle du

pays. En faisant de la femme une figure mythique du pays enchaîné, par son caractère de vierge vendue autant que par celui de mère virtuelle, la fécondité biologique étant ici le symbole d'une métamorphose globale, l'auteur postule la libération de la femme et l'inscrit dans celle du pays" (2: 312). This reveiling, however, is not chosen by Nedjma, but forced on her. Arnaud adds, "Nedjma revoilée abandonne une fausse liberté pour se replonger dans son peuple, et participer à son combat" (312). I find Arnaud's conception of women's struggle very problematic. In it, she repeats the role assigned to women in the struggle for national liberation and Frantz Fanon's description of that role in the chapter "L'Algérie se dévoile" of Sociologie d'une révolution.

Many critics have questioned Fanon's assumption that women's liberation naturally coincides with national liberation. In addition, Winifred Woodhull has criticized Kateb for repeating Fanon's assumption: "For Fanon as for Kateb, the monolithic group 'women' stands for the nation as a whole, and for both writers the possibility of imagining a cohesive (though not unitary) national group relies on reducing the multiplicity and heterogeneity of women to a single figure, woman. This strategy is evident in the titles of their texts: Nedjma and 'L'Algérie se dévoile' (where Algeria is personified as one woman)" ("Nedjma" 58). In Fanon's description of the unveiling of Algeria, as in Boudjedra's representation of women's sexuality and Dib's portrayal of Nafissa engaged in the national revolutionary struggle, the unveiling of Woman is quite explosive, for the veil hides a danger: women are as volatile as bombs. Woodhull attributes a similar danger to Nedjma: "Already evident in these scenes, however, is an element that threatens to contain Nedjma's whirling revolutionary force, namely her terrifying power over the young men, particularly Lakhdar, who is alternately paralyzed by Nedjma and moved to paralyze her as a way of neutralizing the power he attributes to her" ("Nedjma" 55). The sexual danger posed to men by Nedjma as a "liberated" woman thus parallels the revolutionary force needed to kick out the colonizers. The nationalist struggle can harness that force to liberate the Nation.

Anne-Marie Nisbet in "Function of the Female Character in Maghrebian Literature," describes the "use of the [female] character to disrupt social structures which are thought to be antiquated, thus using the women as a mirror of historical progression" (31). But one might see how "using women" in such ways could have anti-feminist implications. Harnessing women's force precludes women's liberation in favor of that of the Nation. As pointed out by Farida, the young woman Shaaban interviews (Both Right and Left Handed 186–87), men use women as they use their weapons. When Kateb veils Nedjma at the source of the Algerian nation, on the surface he may seem to submit women's liberation to the national struggle in the same way Fanon does when he describes women putting on the veil back on to hide weapons and thus makes women's liberation contingent on the liberation of the Nation.

Yet Woodhull's critique is not without qualification; she also suggests that it is possible to read Kateb as a critique of that same use of women: "It is possible, of course, to place the 'woman question' at the center of a reading of Nedjma and still come up with a fairly sunny account of the way the text's (and Nedjma's) unceasing mobility guards against a totalizing fixation upon a single, 'pure' national origin in order to forestall the designation of a scapegoat—woman—as the single origin 'of all the social ills from which Algeria is suffering'" ("Nedjma" 51). She suggests that Nedjma, instead, "exposes the risk of using women in this way, underlining the costs to women" (48). Read in this way, Nedjma plays an important role in Kateb's rewriting of the Nation through the rewriting of narratives of return to national origins. When the return to the Nadhor is staged in Nedjma, the national ideal is performed with a difference. When she bathes at the source of national identity, she is kidnapped from her second kidnappers. The coming to national identity, narrated as a return to ancestral traditions, requires enclosing a woman and controlling the danger (both political and sexual) that she represents. As Woodhull remarks, rather than advocating such a unquestioning return to origins, "Nedjma constitutes a powerful articulation of the promise and the perils of [Algeria's] search [for identity as a modern

nation] with respect to women" ("Nedjma" 57). In this way, unveiling women's threat to national identity parallels unveiling sexual dissidence within the Nation. Nedjma, instead of doing what occurs in the narrative (veiling a woman to carry out a narrative return to national origins), does the opposite by unveiling feminism as a danger to the Nation constructed by official discourse. Yet, like Ben Jelloun who maintains the return to origins he disrupts, Kateb nonetheless performs the same return to national origins official discourse uses to kidnap women. In his rewriting, however, there remains the possibility of a feminist Nation. When the ancestors kidnap Nedjma—like the ruling elite Djaout describes in Les chercheurs d'os and the one Mimouni describes in Le fleuve détourné—they also kidnap the Nation. Kateb, by unveiling this kidnapping, envisions the possibility of feminist roots of the Nation, roots that the novelists Assia Djébar and Leïla Sebbar find.

If Kateb points to the problems of using women as symbols of Nation, as vessels of national honor, if Kateb points to the stakes for women in uncomplicated returns to national origins, Djébar envisions ways of writing women in the Nation in feminist ways. She rewrites male writing of national identity, not by rejecting the Nation, but by making it feminist. Like Kateb, Djébar offers a model of narrative return to the Nation's origins that digs up history. Kateb has also described his writing of the Nation as an "autobiographie au pluriel."¹⁴ This expression could have several meanings. Critics often stress that Nedjma represents a cousin Kateb was in love with in his youth, a cousin that was married to someone else. From this point of view, Kateb splits the autobiographical subject into four voices, the four protagonists of the novel, Rachid, Mourad, Lakhdar, and Mustapha. Each is Nedjma's cousin, each desires her, and each occupies the position of narrating subject as various points of the novel (to the extent that it is often difficult to decipher who is speaking). Nedjma is an "autobiographie au pluriel" in another way. Each of the four protagonists is a descendant of the ancestor Keblout. The return to the Nadhor is therefore

¹⁴Jacqueline Arnaud (2: 284) quotes the expression from an interview in Jeune Afrique 118 (21–27 Jan. 1963), but the expression is quoted in many other studies so that it has become common knowledge in criticism of Kateb's work.

a return to individual roots as well as national ones; it is also a return to Kateb's own ancestors. Jacqueline Arnaud devotes the entire second volume of her two-volume study of Maghrebian literature to Kateb's work. In this volume, which also contains the most extensive biography of Kateb (2: 65–142), Arnaud repeats the return to the Nadhor in Nedjma and visits the descendants of the Keblouti, who are also Kateb's ancestors. Kateb has thus written a novel of national identity where his own roots are extended to be the origin of the entire Nation. Arnaud even reestablishes Kateb's family tree with Keblout at the top (78).¹⁵ Djébar, in a similar way, links a return to her childhood with the birth of a Nation. In Kateb's version of national identity, at the Nation's origin a woman (Nedjma) is kidnapped, sequestered, veiled. In Djébar's version, at the Nation's origin, a woman escapes seclusion and veiling, and women resist male visions of Woman's place in the Nation and nationalist struggles.

Ombre sultane

If, in L'amour, la fantasia, feminist writing of both history and autobiography consists of a narrative form of unveiling, in Ombre sultane, Djébar narrates a more literal unveiling, that of one of the protagonists, Hajila. Ombre sultane is the story of a woman, Isma, who convinces her husband to take a second wife, Hajila. Isma manipulates the institution of polygamy, criticized by many Arab feminists, to obtain her own freedom by escaping from marriage. It could be argued, in fact, that Isma obtains her own freedom at Hajila's expense. Hajila, in turn, escapes from marriage by going out, leaving the harem when the husband is not at home and removing her veil in the streets. Ombre sultane thus offers a point of comparison for the various types of unveiling discussed thus far. When used figuratively, especially by male writers, unveiling could tend to become separated from

¹⁵Arnaud occupies somewhat of a privileged position in relation to Kateb and his work. She dedicates her study of his work "Pour Kateb, mon frère" (2: 7). In his contribution to the colloquium in memory of her after her death, Kateb referred to her as "Jacqueline, ma sœur," thus reciprocating her gesture (Littératures Maghrebines: Colloque Jacqueline Arnaud 1: 39–41). Arnaud collected his unpublished writings in French into L'œuvre en fragments, which might not have been published without her efforts. Though above, I take odds with her reading of the feminist implications of Nedjma, I do recognize her importance in the body of criticism of his work. Along with Charles Bonn and Jean Déjeux, she is one of the pioneers of the study of Maghrebian Francophone literature in France.

women's issues. Ombre sultane offers a way of reading unveiling that, though not inconsistent with earlier readings, is perhaps more nuanced and reveals more of their feminist potential. I shall argue that the marriage described in Ombre sultane is an allegory of marriage as an institution and of the position of women within the Nation. Ombre sultane, therefore, articulates women's resistance to compulsory heterosexuality in the form of patriarchal marriage and challenges the status accorded to women within the Nation of official discourse. By coming out into the Nation, Isma and Hajila challenge the family as a building block of the Nation, articulate ways for women to be in the Nation separately and independently of men, and envision a feminist nation that is also a queer nation. Resistance to compulsory heterosexuality comes with finding a healing space for women within the traditional space of the hammam, a traditional space whose homoerotic potential Djébar seems to explore, even if not explicitly. To understand better the relation between women's resistance to compulsory heterosexuality and this homoerotic space, I shall briefly turn to Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" and consider its applicability to Djébar's novels.

Like L'amour, la fantasia, Ombre sultane contains a number of narratives: Hajila's "coming out" and unveiling, the story of her marriage, Isma's memories of her own marriage, her accounts of her experiences after marriage, and the narrative of her childhood. The childhood narrative in Ombre sultane is very similar to that of L'amour, la fantasia. The two novels, in fact, are part of a quartet.¹⁶ The childhood narrative links the two novels and therefore links the autobiographical narrative of escape in both novels to the narrative of anti-colonial struggle in L'amour, la fantasia. Many readers of Ombre sultane concentrate on what is often read as a critique of marriage as it exists in the Maghreb. Many critics are willing to read Ombre sultane as a critique of polygamy, but few would

¹⁶In an interview with Mildred Mortimer, Assia Djébar describes L'amour, la fantasia as "la première d'une série romanesque" and Ombre sultane as the "deuxième volet" ("Entretien avec Assia Djébar" 201, 204). Djébar interrupted work on the quartet to write Loin de Médine after the riots in Algiers in 1988 (Zimra, "When the Past Answers Our Present" 118, 122–23). The third "volet," Vaste est la prison, has just been released.

point out that Ombre sultane does not envision replacing polygamy with monogamy or replacing a non-Western family structure with a Western one. I would suggest that the observations Djebbar makes of marital power structures might also apply to heterosexual monogamy as it is institutionalized in the West, and as other Arab feminists have called for.¹⁷

The picture Ombre sultane paints of Hajila's marriage is not a pretty one. The husband is never referred to by name but only as "the man." The husband's anonymity reinforces his abstract nature as the manifestation of power within a social structure. The novel describes him beating his wife, and in the end Isma takes her daughter out of this household, away from what she calls "le spectacle des cris, des coups, de l'in vraisemblable bêtise sexuelle" (79). The following passage describes their marital coitus:

Le viol, est-ce le viol? Les gens affirment qu'il est ton époux, la mère dit "ton maître, ton seigneur"... Toi, tu t'es battue dans le lit en te découvrant une vigueur insoupçonnée. Sa poitrine t'écrase. Tu te glisse, tu tentes d'échapper au poids, tes bras serrés spasmodiquement contre tes flancs, tu te fais de plus en plus raide à l'intérieur de l'étreinte. Les bras de l'homme enserrant, se desserrent, tu plies les jambes sans oser frapper, sans tenter de fuir. La lutte est circonscrite au matelas, aux draps froissés qui s'encroulent... L'homme a éteint, profitant d'un suspens, d'une accalmie. Tu fermes déjà les yeux. La conclusion approche, tu reprends la résistance. (66)

Whether intercourse is rape remains a question in the above passage. The question is answered, however, when the following day is referred to as the "l'endemain du viol" (71). Here, marriage appears as giving the husband the right to rape his wife. The above description of marital coitus resembles a struggle, a "lutte... circonscrite au matelas," a man trying to force intercourse, a woman fighting back, resisting; rather than a harmonious

¹⁷Fatima Mernissi, in Beyond the Veil, criticizes Moroccan gender roles because they are an obstacle to heterosexual relations: "It appears to me that the Muslim system is not so much opposed to women as to the heterosexual unit. What is feared is the growth of the involvement between a man and a woman into an all-encompassing love satisfying the sexual, emotional and intellectual needs of both partners" (8).

union, marriage resembles war. Djebbar's telling of women's resistance to colonialism takes on new meaning here as marriage becomes a form of sexual expropriation. Hajila even wonders, "Le coït, est-ce vraiment cela, cette douleur de la chair, pour toute femme? Aucune ne s'est révoltée?" (71–72). Marital coitus, for Hajila, like the sexual mode of colonial penetration in *L'amour, la fantasia*, calls for resistance. When Djebbar writes, "L'homme est vraiment sorti; l'homme, tous les hommes!" (*Ombre sultane* 17), she suggests that the marriage in *Ombre sultane* may not be a unique case; it may, in fact, be an allegory of marriage in general. *Ombre sultane* seems to ask whether marriage as an institution is nothing but an "invraisemblable bêtise sexuelle." Isma's descriptions of her marriage with the same man,¹⁸ however, contradict any generalization of this sort. Her memories of marital coitus involve more pleasant, more caring descriptions of heterosexual intercourse.

In my discussion of Ben Jelloun's *L'enfant de sable* and *La nuit sacrée*, I suggested that Ben Jelloun's allegory of becoming a woman seems to ask how much the role of woman comes to have meaning in connection to rape scripts and the "comédie du bordel." Likewise, *Ombre sultane* seems to suggest that marital coitus has political and structural functions in the compulsory institution of heterosexual marriage. Andrea Dworkin, in *Intercourse*, describes a similar function: "Sexual intercourse is not intrinsically banal, though popular culture magazines like *Esquire* and *Cosmopolitan* would suggest that it is. It is intense, often desperate" (21). She describes how sexual intercourse can function as a tool in the exploitation and oppression of women and challenges the notion that men have a right to heterosexual intercourse. In contrast, it has become a commonplace in the early nineties to "trash" what has been labeled as seventies feminism.¹⁹ Essays such as Joan

¹⁸We only gradually discover that they share the same husband.

¹⁹In their introduction to *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips write, "In considering the relative strengths of 1970s and 1990s feminism, we do not put forward a single shared perspective, but would warn against two of the possible responses. We should certainly reject the simplistic teleology of assuming that later theory is therefore better theory, and that the best theory of all is the position from which we happen at the moment to be speaking.... On the other hand, we should also resist the strong view from the other side, which argues that nothing new is ever said

Nestle's "My Mother Liked to Fuck," Gayle Rubin's "Thinking Sex," and others challenged what has become known as anti-sex and anti-porn feminism. With what has been seen as the discrediting of the work of Dworkin and other so-called "anti-sex, anti-porn" feminists, there has also been a complete dismissal of the questions they raised about the way sexuality is institutionalized in normative structures. While not sharing the anti-sex implications of Dworkin's studies, Ombre sultane, like some of Ben Jelloun's as well as Leïla Sebbar's works, suggests that Dworkin's descriptions of the institutional purpose of heterosexual coitus may not have been that far off mark. This does not mean that women have not resisted the institutional effects of heterosexual sex, that they have not found ways to have heterosexual sex against the grain of sexual institutions and to rewrite the compulsory roles of heterosexual sex; this does not mean that having sex with men must always equal submitting to patriarchal law. Isma's sexual experience of marriage, for example, is quite different from Hajila's, and as I shall show below, Isma uses heterosexual pleasure to ground both her sexual and national identity. While I think it is important for feminism and anti-homophobic theory to challenge obstacles to pleasure, to sex, and even to perversion in order to envision and seek sexual freedoms, I also feel that it is important not to lose sight of how pleasure is and can be institutionalized in ways that buttress the oppression of women and sexual dissidents. After all, the pleasure described in "My Mother Liked to Fuck" is no pretty picture of a liberated sexual pleasure with no restraints; the biographical mother in Nestle's essay pays for the joy of sex by often being the target of violence. Ombre sultane seems to suggest that marital coitus can have certain institutional effects and purposes while, at the same time, women, through rewriting these well-known narratives, can resist the institutionalized violence of marriage, and this resistance can take many forms. Nevertheless, in spite of her pleasant memories of marital coitus, Isma leaves, escapes; she leaves her husband in favor of her own freedom: "[J]e l'ai quitté pour moi-même" (95).

and that what may look like a paradigm shift is in the end no more of a recycling of old debates in new terms" (7).

Hajila, as well, begins to find ways of escaping marriage. Isma narrates these escapes as if she, too, experienced freedom through Hajila's escapes. Hajila, instead of staying at home while her husband is at work and the children at school, begins to go out, "sortir," come out into the streets, and in her daily outings she also begins to unveil. In Arabic, the word for unveiled is the same as the word for naked; Hajila is, as the title of one section suggests, "[a]u-dehors, nue" (35). Again, the veil is more complicated than a single encumbrance to remove, it also comes to represent the freedom obtained by removing it: "C'était comme si, avec ce tissu, tu te préparais à concocter le mensonge. Comme si le voile emmagasinait dans ses plis ta future journée. Ton échappée" (27). As Djebbar writes in *Femmes d'Alger*, the veil "permet à celle qui le revêt et qui circule au-dehors sous son couvert, d'être à son tour voleuse possible dans l'espace masculin" (174). Putting on a veil first means seizing the freedom to circulate in the streets, and removing the veil then represents a second liberation. As for Fanon and Dib, Djebbar's unveiling unleashes woman's danger and represents an explosion: "Là, tu décides avec violence: 'enlever le voile!' Comme si tu voulais disparaître... ou exploser" (*Ombre sultane* 39). Hajila even wants to burn her veil: "Frissonnante dans ta robe, tu te promettais de brûler dès le lendemain le voile de laine; la tentation" (49).²⁰

Hajila's outings provide her with the courage to resist marital coitus. In the following passage, Isma describes to Hajila the effects of Hajila's own remembering of these outings during sexual intercourse:

Faut-t-il céder? Non, rappelle-toi les rues, elles s'allongent en toi dans un soleil qui a dissous les nuées; les murs s'ouvrent; arbres et haies glissent. Tu revois l'espace au-dehors où chaque jour tu navigues. Quand le phallus de l'homme te déchire, épée rapide, tu hurles dans le silence, dans ton silence:

²⁰The use of the veil in feminist protest has other examples in North Africa. In 1923, Egyptian feminists Huda Shaarawi and Saiza Nabarawi publicly removed their veils in the train station of Cairo after attending an international feminist conference in Rome (Badran and Cooke 279). In *Q mes sœurs musulmanes, pleurez!*, the Algerian Zoubaida Bittari describes being beaten for leaving the house to see a dentist: "I threw my veil on the ground, stamped on it, and ran like a madwoman to the neighborhood police station, where I told my story" (quoted in Badran and Cooke 286).

"non!... non!" Tu te bats, il te fouaille, tu tentes de revenir à la surface. "Laisse-toi faire!" susurre la voix à la tempe. La déchirure s'étend, les rues déroulées en toi défilent, les ombres des passants reviennent et te dévisagent, chaînes d'inconnus aux yeux globuleux.

Le phallus demeure, la brûlure s'avive, dans le noir qui tue en toi les images de défense. Tu ne perçois qu'un gargouillis. Le mâle s'est détaché, tes jambes pendent, lamentables; dans la lumière de la lampe qui a giclé, les yeux en larmes, tu considères le flot de sang qui coule sur les draps, sur le matelas dénudé... L'homme a disparu dans la salle de bains. Revenu, il te jette une serviette; elle gît sur tes jambes maculées.

"Il voit mes jambes! Il voit mon sang! Il en a acheté le droit!..." (67)

Again, marital coitus is experienced as a violence and a violation linked to property. But this violence is contrasted with an escape from the home, the harem, the husband, and his sexual demands. By reliving her outings and unveilings at the site of the conjugal bedroom, Hajila continues la lutte des sexes (French allows this sexual parallel of class struggle more easily than English) and physically resists intercourse. Remembering her day-time outings at night also provides Hajila with the framework to understand her position in a financial exchange between men²¹ wherein her husband has bought the rights to her body.²² Isma's narration of the violence of marital coitus allows her to rewrite the

²¹The notion of the exchange of women between men was articulated by Claude Lévi-Strauss in Les structures élémentaires de la parenté. Luce Irigaray develops Lévi-Strauss's idea of the exchange to elaborate what she calls "l'hom(m)o-sexualité" ("Le marché des femmes" and "Des marchandises entre elles," Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un 165–93). See also Gayle Rubin's reading of Lévi-Strauss, "The Traffic in Women." Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick distinguishes between homosexuality and the "homosocial" bonding between men (what Irigaray calls "hom(m)o-sexualité") by pointing out that the homosocial, for men, actually requires a separation from the homosexual (Between Men 1–5).

²²It is important not to confuse the dowry with a bride price. In Women in Islam, Wiebke Walther explains: "An important part of the marriage contract is the fixing of the dowry (mahr or sadâq, in Arabic). To begin with, the mahr was not a purchase price, as has often been said, but a kind of compensation the bridegroom had to give the parents of the bride for the loss to the tribe of the sons the woman would bear. The evidence for this is that the mahr was not paid when the girl married her cousin on her father's side; that is, when she remained in the tribe. This is still true among Bedouins today. The sadâq was the wedding gift the girl received. As early as the time of Mohammed, a distinction was no longer made between these two terms. The mahr or the sadâq was given to the bride, and it symbolized the status she had" (55–56).

institution of polygamy.²³ Instead of a woman being exchanged among men, it is a man, "the man," who is exchanged from one woman (Isma) to another (Hajila). One might even wonder whether Isma derives pleasure, even sexual pleasure, from narrating another woman's intercourse with her former husband.

In Arabic, the second wife is referred to as the first wife's wound: "Derra: en langue arabe, la nouvelle épouse, rivale d'une première femme d'un même homme, se désigne de ce mot, qui signifie 'blessure': celle qui fait mal, qui ouvre les chairs, ou celle qui a mal, c'est pareil!" (Ombre sultane 100). Djebbar, however, literalizes this wound in the "déchirure" Hajila endures from sexual intercourse and the wound she incurs when struck by her husband with a beer bottle. As the title of the first third of the novel indicates, it becomes the image of women's suffering in marriage: "Toute femme s'appelle blessure." (Here, does "femme" mean "woman," "wife," or both?) In an interview with Mildred Mortimer, Djebbar stated, "Evidemment le pouvoir de l'homme vient du fait que, puisqu'il a droit a plusieurs femmes, il instaure une rivalité entre elles. Donc, elles se blessent mutuellement. Mais qu'est-ce qui se passe si ces femmes s'unissent, si elles, a priori, suppriment la rivalité? On s'aperçoit que, à partir du moment où toutes les deux s'unissent, l'homme perd son pouvoir. C'est lui qui se blesse en réalité car, ayant perdu son pouvoir, il n'est plus rien" ("Entretien avec Assia Djebbar" 205). Djebbar thus rewrites the relation between wives in a polygamous marriage to transform competition into solidarity and turn this wound against the husband. Out of this solidarity comes a resistance to the compulsory institutions of heterosexual marriage.

The wounds inflicted on Hajila by her husband, both physical and psychological wounds, can be healed in the women's space of the hammam.²⁴ Isma instructs Hajila to

²³In her interview with Djebbar, Mildred Mortimer asks about Ombre sultane, "Vous faites un procès contre la polygamie, n'est-ce pas?" Djebbar responds, "Un procès? Non. Un roman n'est jamais un procès" ("Entretien avec Assia Djebbar" 205)

²⁴Hamman, in Arabic, simply means a public bath. It is often translated as "Turkish bath." There are separate hammam for men and women, though some hammam serve both men and women at separate times of the day. Pre-pubescent boys may go to the hammam with their mother up until a certain age.

demand her weekly visit to the hammam once her physical wounds heal.²⁵ Indeed, after a sickness, the ritual cleansings of purification are carried out at the hammam,²⁶ which is also the place of purification after sexual intercourse.²⁷ In Hajila's case, the wound that must heal is caused, in part, by sexual intercourse. She is doubly impure, and her visit to the hammam serves to heal the wound that results from marital coitus as well as to mark the healing of the wound from the beer bottle. In fact, the women's space of the hammam provides relief and refuge from any marriage or harem: "Hammam, seule rémission du harem... Le bain turc secrète pour les séquestrées (comme autrefois le chant de l'orgue pour les nonnes forcées) une consolation à cette réclusion. Dissoudre la touffeur de la claustration grâce à ce succédané du cocon maternel..." (163). In Journeys through the French African Novel, Mildred Mortimer describes "three traditional forms of female enclosure of the Arab world" as Djébar deals with them in her novels. The harem and the haïk represent a "threatening confinement," whereas the hammam is a "comforting refuge" (12). Djébar describes the hammam as such a refuge: "Hammam, comme un répit ou un jardin immuable. Le bruit d'eau supprime les murs, les corps se libèrent sous les marbres mouillés. Chaque nuit, le bain maure, qui sert de dortoir aux ruraux de passage, devient un harem inversé, perméable—comme si, des peaux mortes, cette prison liquide devenaient lieu de renaissance nocturne" (158–59). Though it can be like a prison, it is also the negation of women' imprisonment: "L'idée même d'aire close, et donc de prison, se

²⁵In Das Bad in arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter, Heinz Grotzfeld mentions rules obliging husbands to give money to their wives for the hammam, but claims that the rules are often ignored: "Manche Vorschriften, z. B. die, daß der Ehemann seiner Frau kein Geld für den Badbesuch geben soll, stehen in so eklatantem Widerspruch zur Widerlichkeit, daß man sich wundert, wieso die Verfasser der Traktate diese Lehrmeinungen weltfremder Fuqahâ' immer wieder auführen" (2).

²⁶Grotzfeld also writes, "Ins Bad ging man außer um des reinen Vergnügens willen zur rituellen Waschung, bevor man neue Kleider anzog, wenn man von der Reise ankam, wenn man von der Krankheit wieder genesen war" (7–8).

²⁷Bouhdiba writes, "Le hammam est en effet un lieu de purification. On va au hammam pour se purifier des souillures.... Il y a la purification mineure qui restaure ce qui est perturbé par les besoins de la digestion et la purification majeure qui fait suite à l'activité sexuelle" ("Le hammam" 9). Grotzfeld writes, "Von größter Bedeutung für den Besuch der Bäder war die Lehre des Islam von der rituellen Reinheit (tahâra). Wer in Zustand der ganâba (große rituellen Unreinheit) ist, kann die tahâra nur durch den gusl... wiedererlangen.... Da man u.a. durch den Geschlechtsverkehr in dem Zustand der ghanâba gerät, muß allein dies schon den Bädern zu einer Stammkundschaft verholfen haben" (8).

dissout ou s'émiette" (162).²⁸ As we have seen, Djebbar's treatment of the harem and the veil is much more ambivalent than Mortimer's description would allow. The above passage, however, does describe the hammam as a relief from seclusion. It is also like a return to the mother's body, a theme that will also be important in men's writing of the hammam and childhood narratives. In addition, the hammam is the space where the various wives in a polygamous marriage meet:

Deux femmes—ou trois, ou quatre—qui ont eu en commun le même homme (durant des mois, des années, ou une vie entière car dans ce prétendu partage, c'est la durée surtout qui lancine), si elles se rencontrent vraiment, ne le peuvent que dans la nudité. Au moins celle du corps, pour espérer atteindre la vérité de la voix; et du cœur.... Deux femmes, de part et d'autre d'une présence d'homme, frontière ambiguë. (159–60)

In the hammam, these wives, not separated by clothing, can rewrite polygamy, as Djebbar suggested in the interview quoted above. In the context of this nudity, perhaps the "frontière ambiguë" (or husband that is supposed to make them rivals) takes on a sexual or erotic tone.

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba cites the hammam as a place of homosexual encounters ("Le hammam" 12).²⁹ Likewise, there are several descriptions of the hammam in Ombre sultane that might be read as homoerotic: "Chaque après-midi, les enfants pleurent et écoutent avec volupté leurs propre pleurs. Les mères s'essoufflent puis soupirent de béatitude; les vierges se laissent admirer dans des instants de nudité ou accidentelle, ou concertée; les matrones se font pétrir par la masseuse vieillie, trop fardée, seule parmi les baigneuses à rappeler la douceur captieuses de la mort" (159). Here, "volupté," signs of beatitude, virgins who allow themselves to be admired nude, perhaps on purpose, and massages, are

²⁸In Fatima Mernissi's Dreams of Trespass as well, the hammam is an important site of female bonding (see especially pages 231–42).

²⁹Heinz Grotzfeld confirms the presence of homosexual themes in classical Arabic literature about the hammam (84–91).

not necessarily homoerotic. Virgins might wish to be seen by mothers looking for wives for their sons, an activity that often occurs in the hammam, the only place where a man, through his mother's eyes, might gauge a prospective wife's physical appearance. Nevertheless, combined, these elements give the impression of letting go ("abandon" in French) to sensual pleasures that might be erotic. In another passage, Isma is implicated in this potential homoerotics: "Elle se proposa de me laver: m'étriller, me masser, m'asperger, me frotter le cuir chevelu, pour finir, me rincer et m'envelopper dans la laine 'comme une nouvelle mariée,' me promet-elle, tentatrice, presque entremetteuse. Je refusai" (162). As above, where a common husband provides the excuse for several wives to meet in the nude, here the pleasure of a massage is linked to marriage. Heterosexual institutions, in the hammam, seem to be mere excuses for women to get together in the absence of men and share sensual pleasure. The masseuse tempts, but Isma cuts short her temptation with a refusal.

In Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement, Djébar includes another visit to the hammam with its own homoerotic aspects:

Baya traduisit, en chuchotant, à Anne, les mains sur ses seins qu'elle poignait et c'est alors que la Française ne demanda plus rien, contempla fascinée les corps usés autour d'elle. Bras d'une masseuse, dressée debout sur la dalle, qui s'agenouilla ensuite, ceinturait le corps d'une baigneuse, face, ventre et mamelles écrasés contre la pierre, les cheveux en masse rougeâtre, les épaules ruisselant des traînées du henné délayé.

La masseuse entrouvrait les lèvres sur les dents en or qui luisaient; ses seins longs, traversés de vénules jusqu'à leur bout, pendaient.... A l'autre bout de la salle chaude qu'elles quittaient, parmi des vapeurs épaisses sentant fortment le soufre, Anne aperçut deux ou trois baigneuses qui, ayant auparavant éloigné d'elles leurs enfants, se rasaient méticuleusement le pubis. (43–45)

Again, shaving one another's pubic hair is not an unusual activity in this context.³⁰ Again, however, with the minutely described female bodies, this passage testifies to a female gaze focused on other female bodies, a gaze with at least the suggestion of a homoerotic possibility. A number of critics have already explored the homoerotic potential of Djébar's novels. Clarisse Zimra has discussed the homoerotic aspects of Djébar's early novels in "Writing Woman: The Novels of Assia Djébar." Diane Long, in "Sexualité cachée, désir voilé dans la littérature maghrébine," and Francesca Canadé Sautman, in "Gynosociabilité et la femme-homme: Politique d'un espace érotique féminin dans cinq œuvres de Ben Jelloun, Djébar et Emna Bel Haj Yahia," have discussed the homoerotic aspects of later works such as Femmes d'Alger and Ombre sultane. I would suggest that the question of whether Djébar's novels contain a homoerotic aspect is marked by undecidability. The hammam scenes quoted above both could be and are not necessarily homoerotic. There seems to be no dividing mark between the homosocial space of the women's hammam and the homoerotic potential this space evokes. The hammam, in Ombre sultane and Femmes d'Alger, seems to be the space of what Adrienne Rich calls the "lesbian continuum." To attempt to understand the implications of this space within Djébar's works, I shall turn briefly to Rich's essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence."

In her essay, Rich maintains "that heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a political institution" (182).³¹ As a framework for describing the institution of compulsory heterosexuality, Rich uses characteristics of "male power" elaborated by Kathleen Gough in "The Origin of the Family" (69–70): "men's ability to deny women sexuality or to force it upon them; to command or exploit their labor to control their produce; to control or rob them of their children; to confine them physically and prevent their movement; to use them as objects in male transactions; to cramp their

³⁰In "Le hammam," Bouhdiba writes, "Il n'est pas rare de voir au hammam tel client au public ostensiblement s'épiler le sexe" (8). Grotzfeld's treatment of the subject in Das Bad shows that the practice has a long tradition. He devotes an entire section to the process of "Epilation" (75–78).

³¹In her reference to motherhood, Rich is drawing on Nancy Chodorow's study of motherhood as an institution that must be socially reproduced (The Reproduction of Mothering).

creativity; or to withhold from them large areas of the society's knowledge and cultural attainments" ("Compulsory Heterosexuality" 183). A number of practices Rich uses to characterize compulsory heterosexuality are noticeably non-Western: "the practice of suttee on widows in India" (180), "child marriage, arranged marriage," "the harem," "female infanticide," "genital mutilation or... binding the daughter's feet (or mind) to fit her for marriage," "the veil," "geisha," and "kisaeng prostitutes" (184). Is it a coincidence that all of these non-Western practices can be associated with the loosely-defined geographical region known as the "Orient"? In some cases, such as the veil and harem, "Oriental" means of oppressing women become metaphors for the universal oppression of women. This use of "Oriental" metaphors is especially clear where foot-binding represents the binding of every girl's mind to make her suitable for marriage. Any use of Rich's essay to describe a Maghrebian form of compulsory heterosexuality must first come to terms with the way she uses "Oriental" signifiers of women's oppression without taking into account the cultural contexts in which such practices occur, without taking into account the negative effects simply abolishing these practices might have for women.³² In addition, the practices Rich describes as being a part of compulsory heterosexuality are not unique to heterosexuality as defined in a strictly modern, Foucauldian way. In fact, the "Oriental" forms of women's oppression might be said to have nothing to do with heterosexuality at all (again if one uses Foucault's strict definition). Nevertheless, I would suggest that the concept of compulsory heterosexuality might be useful in contexts where it is more problematic to speak of heterosexuality as a dominant sexual identity (that is, in every context except the West of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries). In a context where marriage between members of the opposite sex is the dominant mode of institutionalizing sexuality and reproduction, the concept of compulsory heterosexuality might also be useful. It might, in fact, be more applicable than in the West, where, because of its

³²See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "French Feminism in an International Frame" for a fuller analysis along these lines.

unquestioning dependence on "Oriental" signifiers and its failure to take into account of the specificity of heterosexuality as a sexual identity, it might be less applicable than it claims.

One of the aspects of Rich's essay that might be more applicable to the Maghreb than to the West is that of the "lesbian continuum":

I mean the term lesbian continuum to include a range—through each woman's life and throughout history—of women-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support; if we can also hear in it such associations as marriage resistance... we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology that have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of "lesbianism."
(192)

For Rich, the "lesbian continuum" means a wide range of behaviors and feelings among women, behaviors and feelings that are not necessarily sexual. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in Between Men, elaborates on this continuum by conceiving it as going from homosociality to homosexuality. Sedgwick claims that, unlike for women (and here she accepts Rich without questioning her), for men, there is a break in this continuum: male bonding (the homosocial) must constantly distinguish itself from the homosexual. Sedgwick also claims that this break is not universal: if homosocial networking constitutes patriarchy, and if the break in the homosocial/homosexual continuum is the mark of homophobia, patriarchy doesn't require homophobia to oppress. (The reverse is not true; all possible forms of homophobia would also be sexist, she suggests). Ancient Greece is the example she gives of a patriarchal society in which homosocial bonding did not preclude homosexual behavior. I, however, would like to slightly revise and complicate Sedgwick's view. The institution of pederasty, which did work quite well within

patriarchy, did not permit just any homosexual behavior, only specific ones. It was still not acceptable, for example, for an adult, male Athenian citizen to be the passive partner in anal intercourse.³³ Rather than providing an example of a society with no break on the homosocial/homosexual continuum, Ancient Greece distinguished between the homosocial and the homosexual with a break which lay in a different place along the continuum, closer to the homosexual end than in the modern English context Sedgwick describes. There might be a society where there is no such break, but I can think of no examples. Likewise, Rich's assertion that there is no break in this continuum for women is hard to fathom. If it were impossible to distinguish whether all non-sexual behaviors were homosocial or homosexual, there would be no way for lesbian bashers to select their targets. If we take the United States as an example, it is easy to think of behaviors that do not arouse homophobic suspicions when occurring between women but that do between men, which does not mean that there are no behaviors that arouse suspicion between women. It is less the case that there is a break in the continuum for men and not for women than that the break lies at a different point, and even among Western societies, the place of the break may vary. Certain expressions of homosocial affection among men that are commonplace in France, for example, would arouse suspicion in the United States. To allow for this variety, I would propose a notion of the continuum that is, in fact, a continuum of continuums, in which the place of the break can vary widely from society to society. Indeed, within any given society, the place of the break varies from group to group, class to class, sex to sex, and age to age, and within any given group, the place of the break may vary according to individual differences and variations from the norm. Finally, within any individual, the place of the break may vary from context to context, age to age, and place to place along migrations.

³³On the institutions of sexuality in Ancient Greece, see K.J. Dover, Greek Homosexuality, the later volumes of Michel Foucault's Histoire de la sexualité, David M. Halperin, One Hundred Years of Homosexuality, Eva C. Keuls, The Reign of the Phallus, and John J. Winkler, The Constraints of Desire.

In the case of Djebbar's hammam scenes, the behaviors described seem to lie on the continuum before the break from homosocial to homosexual. Any homosocial behavior, however, could also be homosexual; it simply does not arouse suspicion as such. Djebbar seems to approach the break as closely as possible, to accumulate as many homosocial practices as possible that are almost homoerotic, that almost cross the barrier without ever actually doing so. She thus moves along what Rich would call a "lesbian continuum" with great agility. Rich describes "marriage resistance," "bonding against male tyranny," and "the giving and receiving of practical and political support" as activities occurring along the lesbian continuum. They also occur inside Djebbar's hammam,³⁴ and this homosocial sensuality is linked with resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. Bouthaina Shaaban, in her interviews with Arab women in Both Right and Left Handed, also moves easily from questions about the oppressiveness of marriage or heterosexual institutions to questions about whether her interviewees have ever considered or engaged in lesbian relationships (30–31, 65, 72, 118–22) and thus seems to operate along a similar notion of continuum.

As suggested above in the passage describing the hammam as a "cocon maternel," a trip to the hammam is also a trip back into time. The hammam also contains the past: "Hammam, refuge du temps immobilisé" (162). Going to the hammam, for Isma, involves a return to childhood, to the mother's body: "Je retourne à la source, antre des vestibules d'hier, étuve d'enfance entretenue.... [J]e ne m'abîme que dans l'eau mère: hier, celle de la volupté, aujourd'hui ruisseaux d'enfance remémorée" (158). As in Kateb's and Dib's works, the mother is associated with water, a source, spring of water and source of life. If the hammam provides a site of resistance to compulsory heterosexuality, this resistance is also rooted in the origins of the female autobiographical subject. Isma finds similar roots when sleeping with her husband: "Mêler larmes et sourires dans l'embrasement de mille nuits et de leurs couloirs! Dans l'antre maternel, nous nous réinstallons, moi, l'épouse aux antennes inaltérées, lui, le fils que je tire loin, plus loin... J'ai recréé sa naissance ou je l'ai

³⁴Diane Long, in "Sexualité cachée, désir voilé," uses Rich's description of the lesbian continuum to characterize Djebbar's hammam as homoerotic.

engloutie, je ne sais. Mais je t'en ai dépouillée, ô mère devant laquelle je m'incline, à laquelle je me lie, mais que j'écarte enfin de mon amour" (62). In contrast with Hajila's experience of marital coitus, Isma finds in it a way of returning to origins in the body of her husband's mother:

Quand je m'endors, je prends la main de l'époux comme si, dans le sommeil où nous nous écoutons, nos doubles traversaient des landes dévastées. D'autres nuits, l'image de la mère s'insinue entre nous, à l'instant où la lassitude nous couvre de son amnésie.... Hantise de l'origine, épée droite fichée en l'homme, qui le blesse et le redresse. Moi, je renie la matrone omniprésente. Je la renie précisément lorsqu'elle nous réunit. (59)

The omnipresent matron is her husband's mother, who constitutes a rival for Isma and, as the haunting of his origin, threatens to separate the couple. Whereas Hajila experiences intercourse as a sword ripping into her, Isma, in intercourse returns her husband to his origin, which she uses as a sword to penetrate him. This origin, paralleling the one Djébar returns to through autobiography, wounds the husband as polygamy is intended to wound women. Like Nafissa, who inverts the sexual order through her participation in the Algerian revolution in Qui se souvient de la mer, Djébar's feminist subject, rooted in a history of women's resistance to colonialism and sexism, rooted in her own story of who she is, turns the tools of male power against "the man," "the husband."

This return to origins is also a return of origins (as one would speak of the return of the repressed). The origins of female subjectivity return to the present to haunt it ("hantise de l'origine"). If read as allegory, Isma's return to the origins of her subjectivity could also represent a return to national origins. The origins found within the hammam and in resistance to compulsory heterosexuality could also be the origins of a feminist nation, a nation not constructed from the building blocks of heterosexual families and, therefore, not built on the oppression of women. If the origins uncovered in Ombre sultane and L'amour, la fantasia are also the Nation's origins, then the Nation is indeed a queer nation,

founded on resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. The other figure of haunting represented in the novel is that of Hajila circulating veiled in the streets: "[T]u n'existes pas plus qu'un fantôme!" (37). The same image occurs in another passage: "[M]ains tremblantes, visage crispé, fermant les yeux de désespoir, créant dans ce noir ton propre noir, tu te réenveloppe du haïk! Dehors, te revoici fantôme et la colère grisâtre replie ses ailes sous la blancheur du drap" (42). As she circulates veiled through the public spaces of the streets, Hajila haunts the Nation. She threatens to unveil and set off an explosion as Nafissa does in Qui se souvient de la mer. It is this haunting that Isma captures in the narration of her story and that Djebbar captures in turn through her articulation of the feminist subject as a menace to the Nation of official discourse.

Fleeing from the Identity Police: Leïla Sebbar

Leïla Sebbar was born in Algeria of a French mother ("une Française de France"—as was often said in colonial Algeria—that is, a French woman born in France as opposed to a pied noir) and an Algerian father, both parents being school teachers (Sebbar, "La langue de l'exil" 8). Often referred to as a Beur writer, Sebbar does not quite fit the definition of the term "Beur," since she was born in Algeria and not France, since both of her parents are not Algerian and especially not Algerian immigrant workers. Sebbar's character, Shérázade, however, the protagonist of a three-novel trilogy, is a Beur. In the introduction to her English translation of Shérázade: 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts, Dorothy S. Blair writes, "The eponymous heroine shares many of the characteristics of her streetwise companions and squat-mates; she is wayward, insolent, impulsive, exploitative, fearless and totally amoral. She works peripatetically in fashion boutiques in the Halles district, but supplies her basic needs by shoplifting. She takes part in burglaries and armed hold-ups. Yet she seems to retain a certain intransigent innocence, purity even" (n. pag.). Despite this moralizing though romantic vision of Shérázade, in my reading of the trilogy, I shall argue that Shérázade is a model of feminist subjectivity and the embodiment of the feminist menace to identity, national, gendered, or otherwise. She escapes paternal control as well

as the police who would return her to her father's control and who enforce her status as second-class citizen (because she is Arab) in France. She defies both male heterosexual and Orientalizing gazes, successfully defends herself against attempted rape, and complicates any easy notion of roots or national origins.

The first novel of the trilogy, Shérazade: 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts (1982), begins after Shérazade has left home, probably because her father beat her.³⁵ In this way, it could be said to be a sequel to Sebbar's Fatima, ou les Algériennes au square (1981)—which tells the story of a girl's memories just as she has decided to run away from home—even though the protagonist of Fatima is named Dalila and not Shérazade.³⁶ Shérazade moves into a squat with members of the post-68 revolutionary left and children of immigrants: Pierrot, a revolutionary and the son of Polish immigrants, Krim, the son of a garbage collector, Djamila, Basile, and Driss. The novel tells Shérazade's adventures as she circulates across the Parisian city-scape, both at home in France, the country of her acculturation, and in exile, that is seen as Other by the French of European origins. She must constantly beware of the French police who have her description as a run-away, doubly beware because she is an Arab and thus much more likely to encounter police harassment. Shérazade has a romance with Julien, a pied noir Orientalist whose parents were teachers in colonial Algeria and supporters of the FLN. Shérazade shoplifts, participates in a burglary and an "auto-réduction" (i.e. a hold-up) with her leftist friends, and finally ends up leaving Paris, supposedly to go to Algeria (a return to her origins). Pierrot agrees to take her part of the way in his car, loaded with weapons to be used in

³⁵The novel, however, is somewhat ambiguous on this question:

Elle ne sortait pas beaucoup mais elle n'était pas la seule, et les raclées du père n'étaient pas si terribles, tout de même.

Ce n'était pas une raison.

Son père ne l'avait pas mariée de force. Il avait accepté plusieurs fois qu'elle refuse un parti qui se présentait. Pourtant combien auraient pu lui convenir. Les prétendants disaient même qu'elle continuerait ses études à leurs frais; ils proposaient des dots élevées; ils avaient une situation intéressante; certains étaient dans le commerce et ça marchait bien. Alors pourquoi dire toujours non? (69–70)

³⁶Mildred Mortimer, in "Language and Space," describes the Schérazade trilogy as a sequel to Fatima (306).

revolutionary armed struggle. They have an accident, and Pierrot is killed as the car explodes. The novel's ending thus resembles a scene from Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot le fou.³⁷

Les carnets de Shérázade picks up in Marseilles, where Shérázade got off the boat to Algeria at the last minute. As a return to origins, therefore, Shérázade's journey fails. She hitches a ride with a truck driver, Gilles, to whom she recounts her adventures in the manner of her homonym, the protagonist of the Arabian Nights. From a distance, she follows the route of the Beur March against racism in France. Narratively, the Beur March replaces the return to Algerian, site of origins, as the itinerary of identity.

Le fou de Shérázade begins as a film crew is waiting for Shérázade to return. Julien has written a film script for her, and the set of the film is to be the HLM where Shérázade's family lives. Shérázade, however, is being held hostage in Lebanon by Arab militants who are convinced she is a spy, working either for the Christians or Israel. (When Shérázade speaks Arabic, her captors are unable to understand her.) In captivity, she begins to study Arabic and reads Adonis, Darwich (two contemporary Arab writers), and the Qur'an. She is finally released and comes home to complete the film, which, centered around a transported olive tree, narrates a notion of roots that are transplantable, of identity rooted in narrative fiction.

One of Shérázade's characteristics is her resistance to compulsory heterosexuality, her refusal to submit to male domination. In Shérázade, she often gets invited to dinner or clubs by older white men who then expect more than her company for dining or dancing. At a certain point, she stops being the sweet little girl of their expectations and gives them a taste of their own medicine: "Pourquoi soudain devenait-elle méchante, grossière, vulgaire, c'était mal pour une jeune fille... Elle entendait susurrer ces moralités jusqu'au moment où elle se levait, traitait l'homme de—vieux porc dégoûtant et de vipère lubrique... C'est Basile qui lui avait appris cette injure de la Chine populaire maoïste, et elle partait

³⁷In Les carnets de Shérázade, Shérázade punches out Godard (or a Godard look-alike) when he makes lewd propositions to her.

droite et raide avant de se mettre à courir" (86). The men who take her out expect a return on their investment: after dinner, or a drink, or cover charge to a club, they feel they have a right to her body. Shérázade, however, abruptly removes her body from the market place and associates her resistance to male rights to her body with revolutionary struggle.³⁸ In Carnets, she actually uses a firearm to defend herself against rapists. She says to her attackers, "Ceci n'est pas un viol... c'est un hold-up de campagne.... Je veux l'argent aussi. C'est un hold-up contre des pauvres petits chômeurs qui ont failli être des violeurs passibles de dix à quinze ans de prison. Je vous ai sauvé de la taule, ça se paye" (212). She then takes all their valuables, effectively rewriting the rape script her attackers came with the expectation of performing. She later explains her actions to Gilles, the truck driver who is giving her a lift:

Ils m'auraient violée tous les trois, et deux d'entre eux seraient venus aider l'autre, ils m'auraient battue si j'avais résisté. Je suis sûre, tu m'entends, sûre qu'ils n'auraient pas hésité. Pour eux, un viol c'est la fille qui a cherché, ils ne se sentent pas coupables. Je t'assure. A Paris, j'ai assisté à un procès pour viol, les types pensaient pas qu'ils étaient des salauds, mais vraiment pas. Et ils battaient la fille, ça leur paraissait normal, ça se fait pas toujours en douceur... Ces gars-là pensaient que ça se passerait sans bagarre, sans violence, c'est ce qui les a rendus vulnérables et j'avais pas peur à cause du P 38 et parce qu'ils n'avaient pas de couteau. Il faut avoir l'air d'être consentante, ils perdent leurs défenses et là, c'est à la fille de trouver une ruse. (213)

She explains how she uses their own assumptions against them, rewriting what Sharon Marcus calls "the rape script." She also reflects on the institutionalized aspects of rape, the role of the courts, how the rapists being tried are not abnormal men, distinguishable from all the other, supposedly good, men; any man could be a potential rapist. At one point,

³⁸Cf. Luce Irigaray's suggestion: "Et si les 'marchandises' refusaient d'aller au 'marché'? Entretien entre elles un 'autre' commerce?" (Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un 193).

Gilles—the supposedly nice guy, the guy who tries to convince his buddies that just because Shérázade is not under the control of a single man (father, boyfriend, husband, pimp, police), it does not mean that she is the common property of all the men who want her (34–35)—reflects on why he hasn't raped Shérázade: "Mais tu es restée, tes yeux n'étaient pas noirs, tu as dit que tu me raconterais des histoires et c'est vrai, tu m'en as raconté comme Shéhérazade, pour m'empêcher de te tuer, de te violer? Peut-être bien, après tout..." (280). And again, it is through rewriting scripts that she accomplishes her task. Her role-model, Shéhérazade of the Arabian Nights, tells tales to the Sultan to keep him from cutting off her head and taking another wife, who will lose her head in turn. Shéhérazade risks her life and uses the power of words to save the lives of other women. Sebbar's Shérázade uses her story-telling skills to rewrite the scripts of gender that make every man a potential rapist. As Ben Jelloun's story-tellers are models for the Maghrebian writer, Shérázade, as a story-teller, is a model for the feminist Maghrebian (or Beur) writer, who rewrites old fictions (the fictions of gender roles) to create new ones. Sharon Marcus's notion of rewriting rape scripts is not simply a matter of words, trying to talk the rapist out of raping, or trying to give him more confidence in himself (which would imply that the rapist is an insecure man, a deficient man, not man enough, unlike the rest of men); Marcus's rewriting also involves self-defense, fighting back, as Shérázade defends herself with a P.38.

She also uses her gun to rewrite male narratives of revolution. At one point, Basile tries to impress Shérázade with his feminist vision of revolution:

[I]l expliqua que les femmes allemandes et italiennes appartenaient à des groupes terroristes, qu'elles pouvaient aussi bien que les hommes se servir des armes, qu'elles n'étaient pas seulement bonnes à servir de boîte aux lettres, d'agents de liaison, que l'égalité commençait là et que si dans une révolution on utilisait les femmes comme secrétaires et infirmières on pouvait aussi leur donner du pouvoir, des responsabilités... Shérázade, si elle voulait pourrait très bien devenir chef de

réseau.... Pierrot qui n'avait rien dit, cita les combattantes vietnamiennes et algériennes, d'autres aussi qui avaient participé à des guerres de libération et qui, à l'indépendance, s'étaient retrouvées privées de la liberté et de l'égalité pour lesquelles elles s'étaient battues... (45-46)

Shérazade responds with admiration: "Vous en savez des choses... si vous avez le pouvoir un jour, ce sera super pour les femmes. Je vais me battre pour ça" (46). Her response is perhaps ironic because it implies that women's liberation will result when "enlightened" male revolutionaries take state power. Her response, however, is punctuated with a gunshot: "Elle jouait avec le P.38 de Basile. Le coup partit juste dans l'œil gauche de Che Guevara dont le poster jaunissait au mur depuis des mois. Basile poussa un cri et arracha le P.38 à Shérazade" (46). Shérazade reveals the danger of armed women within revolutionary struggle: once armed, they might no longer accept just following male directives. She shoots Che Guevara in the eye (thus proving her marksmanship), thereby demonstrating that not even male revolutionaries will submit her to their control. Basile, for all his nice words on arming women, attempts to disarm Shérazade once she shows she means business. She then changes from the role of pretty innocent girl who stands by her man (the traditional role of women as supporters of men, which many revolutionary movements have perpetuated rather than challenged) to the role of a woman who will not be walked on. She says to Pierrot, "Et maintenant, ne me traite plus de minette ou je te démolis..." (46).

In addition to escaping the French police, her father, rapists, and other men who try to control her, Shérazade dodges male gazes that try to bind her to the idées reçues of femininity and especially "Oriental" femininity. In one passage, Shérazade is at a party with her friends France and Zouzou. As usual, they are the hit of the party because the Parisian chic uppercrust appreciates their "exotic" beauty. But when a photographer begins to take pictures of Shérazade without her permission, she reacts violently:

Shérazade arracha son appareil photographique à un professionnel qu'elle avait vu à l'affût depuis un certain temps, et qui profitait de ce moment de confusion pour la photographier. Elle lança l'appareil au sol à plusieurs mètres d'elle et partit avec Zouzou sans prendre garde à la crise qu'elle allait provoquer. L'appareil avait coûté une petite fortune. Shérazade l'avait jeté avec une telle violence qu'il s'était cassé. Le photographe en pleurait de rage "La salope, elle me le paiera, si je la coince, elle me le paiera... Ça vient où ça ne devrait pas, ça excite tout le monde, ça joue les allumeuses, ça pose avec les petites copines, des gouines encore celles-là et en plus ça détruit le matériel... C'est mon outil de travail... elle me le paiera... et qu'elles retournent dans leur pays ces petites garces"... (124)

The anonymous photographer thus resembles many Western tourists who photograph the "locals" or the "natives" just as they would buildings, monuments, natural wonders, or any simple object, that is, without thinking they first need to ask permission. In some societies, there are even taboos against having one's image stolen. Shérazade responds to having her image stolen by taking it back and showing that only she will control her image. The photographer, dazzled by Shérazade's beauty just minutes earlier, responds with a homophobic ("des gouines encore, celles-là"), racist, and sexist ("qu'elles retournent dans leurs pays ces petites garces") tirade. The photographer thus demonstrates how the uglier forms of racism and sexism can coexist quite comfortably with a so-called admiration of "exotic" beauty, what Kobena Mercer calls "racial fetishism."³⁹ The photographer's use of the neuter pronoun "ça" reinforces the thingness that he sees in Shérazade. The photographer's actions, therefore, parallel those of Shérazade's dates, who suddenly turn angry when they don't get what they were expecting.

³⁹Mercer develops the notion in "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe" (*Welcome to the Jungle* 171–219), which combines an early criticism of Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men and a later revision of that criticism. The second part "revises the assumption that 'fetishism' is necessarily a bad thing" (190), but without abandoning a criticism of racial fetishism altogether.

In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey describes the male gaze that characterizes Hollywood cinema: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (19). It is precisely this "to-be-looked-at-ness" that Shérázade seeks to undo. In the title of one of Mulvey's sections, she even asserts, "Destruction of Pleasure Is a Radical Weapon" (15). At times, Shérázade seems to engage in such a destruction, by destroying the tools (cameras) by which men construct this paradigm. Since Mulvey's essay first appeared in 1975, many critics (including Mulvey herself)⁴⁰ have complicated her paradigms. Judith Mayne, for example, has written:

Many critics have challenged or extended the implications of Mulvey's account, most frequently arguing that for women (and sometimes for men as well), cinematic identification occurs at the very least across gender lines, whether in transvestite or bisexual terms. However complex such accounts, they tend to leave unexamined another basic assumption common both to Mulvey's account and to contemporary psychoanalytic accounts of identification, and that is that cinematic identification not only functions to affirm heterosexual norms, but also finds its most basic condition of possibility in the heterosexual division of the universe. ("Lesbian Looks" 127)

In my discussion of Madonna's music videos, I have argued that, by offering a female gaze that can take pleasure in looking at either men or women, Madonna's videos articulate counter-paradigms to the one Mulvey proposes. She undoes any male monopoly of spectatorship and constitutes herself as a spectacle that returns the male gaze to its sender

⁴⁰See Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by Duel in the Sun."

("Madonna in Living Color" 32). Thus on the one hand, Mayne's reading and mine offer a critique of Mulvey's rigid dichotomies. On the other, my argument that Madonna's videos subvert the male gaze also relies on Mulvey's paradigm in a certain way. My reading recognizes that though there can be dissident uses of the gaze Mulvey characterizes as male, though her dichotomies can be and often are deconstructed, though women can seize the gaze for their own pleasure, though men can identify with the spectacle instead of the camera's gaze (an identification I would suggest as being of central importance in camp), the paradigm Mulvey describes and characterizes as insidious is still a dominant one and worthy of being destroyed. Shérázade, likewise, approaches the male gaze (of which Mulvey still offers the best analysis) with a multi-pronged strategy. She criticizes dominant paradigms of the male gaze, suggests ways of dislodging the paradigms from their position of dominance (by force, if necessary), and at the same time, suggests that these paradigms themselves are not as all-powerful as they might seem, that even from a feminist perspective, one might find ambivalent ways of identifying with this gaze.

In another passage, France, Zouzou, and Shérázade pose for a photographer. He dresses them in skimpy clothes to resemble animals in a jungle:

France tigrée et Shérázade zébrée en mini-jupe et short ultra-court, des bas résille noirs, les épaules dégagées, l'une en jaune et noir à rayures régulières, l'autre en blanc et noir à rayures irrégulières. Elles avaient les cheveux ébouriffés en crinière et de larges ceintures barbares comme Spartacus devait en porter. Zouzou avait mis une tenue léopard dont le pantalon était un short fendu et un débardeur qui dégageait presque les seins. (153)

The three women are here posed in front of a camera by a man. Their brown and black skin can be the object of a desiring gaze only when seen in the context of the jungle as savages, as animals; their beauty is an exotic, even animal beauty. As missionaries and colonizers worked in tandem to characterize native African sexualities as uncontrollable, savage, and perverse, the only sex the photographer can envision with these women is wild

sex. The photographer himself points out the parallels between his activities and colonization: "On aime beaucoup les scènes de jungle et de forêt vierge en ce moment... il manque une panthère, mais j'ai de quoi dans le coffre. Ce sera pour tout à l'heure. Attendez, j'ai une idée, vous allez prendre chacune une mitraillette comme des guérillères, j'en ai là, des vraies pas chargés. Les jouets font toc, c'est mieux comme ça..." (154). As Djébar describes the colonial invasion of Algeria as a penetration "quasiment sur le mode sexuel" and a "défloration," the photographer (like all the men who will share his gaze by looking at his photographs) penetrates a virgin forest. By taking a picture (prendre une photo), he takes (prend) tout court, with all the sexual implications the verb "prendre" can have in French. The photo shoot of exotic women becomes a safari where the photographer/hunter shoots women/animals. And he "takes" with an action resembling colonial exploitation.

In another passage, Shérazade looks through a colonial photo album, Femmes algériennes 1960:

Les visages des femmes dévoilées devant l'appareil photographique que manipulait le Français soldat-photographe, pour le recensement de plusieurs villages de l'intérieur, ces visages avaient de la dureté et la violence de ceux qui subissent l'arbitraire sachant qu'ils trouveront en eux la force de la résistance. Ces Algériennes avaient toutes devant l'objectif-mitrailleur, le même regard, intense, farouche, d'une sauvagerie que l'image ne saurait qu'archiver, sans jamais la maîtriser ni la dominer. Ces femmes parlaient toutes la même langue, la langue de sa mère.

Shérazade feuilletait l'album photographique et les larmes coulaient, malgré elle. (220)

She explicitly makes the comparison between photographing colonized women and containing the Algerian revolution and, therefore, maintaining French colonial rule in Algeria. The camera becomes yet another weapon for the French soldier to use in the

service of colonization. In Les carnets de Shérazade, the truck driver Gilles has also looked at photo albums of colonized women:

J'avais pas pensé à ça. Elle aurait pu s'aphyxier là-dedans. J'aurais retrouvé un cadavre... J'aurais livré un divan avec une fille endormie, allongée comme les femmes des harems... Le pantalon blanc trop large pour elle ressemble à un pantalon bouffant de femme arabe ou turque.

Il a feuilleté des albums de photographies coloniales, des cartes postales où on voit des Mauresques nues qui posent sur des divans de maisons ottomanes. Parfois elles portent seulement un pantalon court qui dégage la cheville. Dans les sex-shops, on propose souvent des négresses et des Orientales pour les amateurs... Des femmes et des petites filles.⁴¹ (89)

And these albums provide the paradigm with which he looks at Shérazade. The photographer's camera fixes ("fixer," in French, means both to stare and to fix, i.e. to freeze in place) Shérazade as if she were dead; Gilles uses his memory of colonial postcards to imagine Shérazade dead. The harem, here, feeds both colonial and male fantasies about women.

As in the manner described by Malek Alloula in Le harem colonial, Shérazade's photographer asks the women to pose as lesbians for the sole purpose of exciting male desire:

Alors, voilà ce que vous faites, d'abord vous vous embrassez sur la bouche vous pouvez faire semblant dès que je le dis—top—vous changez de partenaire vous faites comme si vous dansiez dans une boîte—les bals de femmes ça existe—et

⁴¹This album could contain the very postcards Malek Alloula describes in Le harem colonial. In The Eloquence of Silence, Marnia Lazreg accuses Alloula of carrying out precisely what he criticizes: "The book reproduces postcards that colonists made of Algerian women striking sexy poses à la French, purportedly to reveal Frenchmen's orientalist imagination. More importantly, the author claims that by making the picture available to the world... he 'return[s] this immense postcard to its sender' thereby achieving his own 'exorcism.' In fact he has achieved none of this. The narration he provides to guide the reader's interpretation of the pictures betrays his own feelings about bared women's bodies, for whom he at times expresses his desire. It is he, and not Frenchmen (who incidentally also published nude pictures of French women) who conceived of the models as part of a colonial 'harem'" (190–91).

ensuite vous êtes allongées couchées l'une sur l'autre, à tour de rôle, c'est simple. Mais dégagez-vous bien qu'on voie les seins, les fesses, il faut pas être pudibondes. Si vous étiez dans un sauna ou un hammam puisque c'est la mode, vous seriez toutes nues ça ne vous gênerait pas, eh bien là, c'est pareil. (154–55)

Whereas the photographer gave the women guns to pose with, he himself retained the weapon, his camera, to shoot (at) women. He made sure the guns were not loaded so that the women, seemingly unarmed, would remain the target, the exact word Sebbar uses to describe Shérazade while in front of the photographer's gaze in Les carnets de Shérazade: "Lam prit cinq rouleaux de photos de Shérazade. Depuis les séances chez Julien, Shérazade n'avait plus servi de cible à un œil photographique" (193). As at the party, where Shérazade destroyed her photographer's weapon, here, the three women turn the tables against the photographer and his male exoticizing gaze. They pull out the P.38 and destroy the entire studio. Although the fantasy of armed women guerrillas sexually excited the photographer, once armed, they destroy his fantasy by refusing to pose in the fetishistic models he has prescribed for them. They rewrite the script and turn the guns on the shooter.

From these examples alone, one might argue that Sebbar, through Shérazade, offers a similar critique as Laura Mulvey. If the gaze in dominant paradigms of looking is male, the only way of remedying this dominance is to destroy the gaze, with violence, if necessary. Shérazade seems to view such a destruction of the male Orientalizing gaze as one possible solution. Yet in other passages, she takes on the male Orientalizing gaze in other ways. She ridicules it, identifies with it, or sees possibilities of rewriting it through parody. In one passage of Les carnets de Shérazade, the heroine happens upon a group of men watching pornographic movies. Instead of seeing men identifying with the camera-phallus and fantasizing about penetrating—along with the camera and male actor—the woman on screen, she looks at the screen, she sees a larger-than-life penis, and she laughs: "Shérazade écarta discrètement le rideau interdit et aperçut sur l'écran un phallus géant.

Elle ne put s'empêcher de rire. Les hommes se retournèrent, furieux" (121). She makes a mockery of the phallus and phallic power, and the men are angry because she has uncovered a dirty little secret. The male fantasy involved in pornography is not just about naked female bodies; it is also about penises. In this homosocial setting where men are fantasizing about other men as well as about women,⁴² where they are also fantasizing about the large penises they may or (more likely) may not have, the irruption of a woman and a female gaze destabilizes the assumption that their homosocial behavior is in no way homosexual. In this way, Shérazade lashes (out at) men at the site of their vulnerability.

The full brunt of Shérazade's ambivalent position vis-à-vis the male Orientalizing gaze is played out in her relation with Julien. Like the other men who desire Shérazade discussed above, Julien finds a paradigm for his gaze in Orientalist texts. Instead of the "low" forms of exoticizing texts such as exotic pornography and colonial postcards, Julien's models are to be found in the "high" arts, especially Orientalist painting. As Gilles sees Shérazade's beauty through the Western *idées reçues* of the harem, Julien sees her through Matisse's *Odalisque*. The following exchange occurs when they are looking at the painting in a museum together:

— Mais c'est vrai. C'est incroyable! Mais oui. Tu as raison. Elle a les yeux verts.

Il avait regardé fixement Shérazade, la prenant aux épaules:

— Comme toi. (13)

On the one hand, Shérazade resists Julien's gaze, his desire to fit her into an Orientalist stereotype (in spite of the variation of green eyes) of what Oriental beauty should be. Before leaving Paris, supposedly for Algeria, Shérazade leaves a note that directly refuses

⁴²In "The Force of Fantasy," Judith Butler, elaborating on the work of Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, writes, "According to Laplanche and Pontalis, a fantasy does not entail an identification with a single position within the fantasy; the identification is distributed among the various elements of the scene..." (109). If watching pornography could be considered as engaging in fantasy, then fantasizing about a phallus for heterosexual men involves not only an identification with it but also a desire for it. Fantasizing about heterosexual intercourse on the screen would then involve not only identifying with the man but also the woman.

comparison with Matisse's vision of the Oriental Woman: "Sur un bout d'enveloppe que Julien ne découvrit que le lendemain matin, elle avait écrit 'Je ne suis pas une odalisque'" (206). Like the photographer at the party and the quasi-pornographic photographer at the studio, Julien likes taking pictures of Shérazade and even wants to write a film script just for her. Again, Shérazade thwarts his efforts to fix her into an image by tearing up all the photographs except one. On the other hand, she does leave the one photograph, which she likes, and finally returns to star in Julien's film, thus accepting to go before the camera's gaze. Though she comes and goes in and out of Julien's life as she pleases, thereby thwarting any desire on his part for her to settle down, she does sleep with him before leaving Paris and tells him that she loves him.

She even harbors a peculiar attraction for the same Orientalist images she resists being compared to. While looking at Matisse's Odalisque, she experiences the following reaction: "Elle sent battre son cœur. Ça lui est arrivé pour les Femmes d'Alger. Shérazade revient sur ses pas, essaie de procéder par ordre, n'y parvient pas, recommence, regarde avec soin chaque tableau, à cause de Matisse, sans savoir encore pourquoi Matisse" (244). Later, the narrator states, "Elle ne comprend pas pourquoi ça l'émeut" (245). Before leaving Paris, she makes her rounds in the Parisian museums to see Orientalist paintings of Oriental women, and she continues such trips to the museums in the provinces in the second volume of the trilogy. Before leaving Paris, she buys up all the postcards of Matisse's Odalisque. When the salesperson asks, "Elle est plus belle sur l'original, vous ne pensez pas?" Preferring the copy to the original, Shérazade answers no (246). It is just before embarking on a return to origins that Shérazade experiences this curious identification with, not her original roots, but a Western stereotype of her identity. In this sense, Matisse's painting is not the original (as the salesperson claims) for which Shérazade buys up all the copies. Matisse's Odalisque is itself the copy of a Western idée reçue. She buys the copies of a copy and puts these copies into circulation across France.

The Odalisque postcards could be seen as the "high" version of the "lower," perhaps more pornographic (though not because they show more skin—is the "high" thus exempt from being pornography?) postcards Gilles uses as the model for looking at Shérázade. There is no original Oriental woman behind Matisse's Odalisque. But Shérázade does not have access to the origin of her own identity anymore than Matisse would have. Her return to origins fails in the end; instead to returning to Algeria, she ends up repeating another journey, the march Beurs organized to combat racism in France, and her intended return to origins is replaced with an acknowledgment of hybridity.⁴³ It is also replaced by a sort of pilgrimage to various museums where other Orientalist paintings of Oriental women can be seen. It is as if, after colonization and the resulting diaspora, of which Shérázade is a part, no return to the before of colonization, no return to the before of diasporic experience, can occur. As Djébar must rewrite colonial history to design for herself a past, Shérázade must negotiate between various colonialist images of who she is, come to terms with these stereotypes, destroy them, and construct an identity out of the ruins of the old. As when Shérázade replaces Matisse's Odalisque with a cheap copy, one of the ways she learns to escape these Orientalist stereotypes is by turning them into kitsch, obvious cheap imitations of the real thing. In Les carnets, whereas Shérázade finds that "Loti était un maniaque grotesque," her friend Marie

trouvait que les caprices orientalistes de Loti étaient plutôt amusants et en tout cas innocents. Au moins, il ne se conduisait pas comme un bourgeois rochelais conformiste, plutôt comme un riche original. Marie ne comprenait pas la hargne de Shérázade. Ces orientalleries accumulées l'avaient exaspérée, pas Marie.

⁴³I use the term "hybridity" as Bhabha defines it: "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that save the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminating—or in any mixed metaphor, a negative transparency" (The Location of Culture 112).

—Un Orient de Prisunic... Il l'a trouvé dans Bonux... avait dit Shérazade en riant, avant de s'envelopper dans la soie, pour sa nuit exotique. (162)

Shérazade thus discovers the possibility of reading Loti in the way Emily Apter has suggested, the possibility of exaggerating Orientalist stereotypes to the point of turning them into kitsch. Within this K-mart Orient, there lie a number of possible identifications that derail any Orientalist attempt to pin down Shérazade into a fixed stereotype.

I now return to the image with which I began my discussion of Leïla Sebbar, that of Shérazade dodging the French police. After a disturbance in the subway one day, "Shérazade échappa de justesse au contrôle d'identité" (209). I propose this image, Shérazade escaping the I.D. check as well as any attempts to control her identity, as the feminist model of subjectivity and national identity offered by Sebbar. Shérazade escapes the rapist's attempts to force her into the role of the raped woman in the rape script, she escapes the role of exoticized sex object of the colonizing male pornographic imaginary, and she escapes the more artsy role of the Odalisque proposed by the educated Orientalist.

In *Écarts d'identité*, Azouz Begag and Abdellatif Chaouite describe Beur "identity":

Ce livre sur les écarts d'identité s'intéresse aux conséquences incontrôlées de la migration des hommes d'un lieu à un autre. Ce n'est pas un énième recueil sur les souffrances des immigrés en France ou sur les Beurs; les gens qui bougent dérangent et provoquent des désordres. Nous, les enfants de ces travailleurs-paysans qui ont quitté leur pays et leur vie, qui sommes-nous par rapport aux Français de souche, à nos parents? Comment nos mère et nos pères ont-ils pu accomplir des voyages aussi fabuleux, comment ont-ils fait pour vivre en France depuis trente ou quarante ans sans être vraiment dedans? Que nous restera-t-il de leur souvenir quand ils seront morts? (21–22)

For Begag and Chaouite, Beur identity is an identity in movement that occupies an in-between space escaping easy definition. Neither French nor Algerian, or in Bhabha's terms, not quite/not French, not quite/not Algerian, the Beur—always écarté(e) from any

geographical referent of origin—has no place or origin for rooted identity. In the glossary at the beginning of the study, they define "ecarts d'identité" as the "différence de couleur entre un passeport vert et une carte d'identité jaune" (10). The "écart d'identité" is thus somewhere in between the bureaucratic means of regulating identity, or controlling identity by the "papers" it requires a nation's citizens, residents, and even visitors to carry. When Shérázade escapes the "contrôle d'identité," she locates herself in this in-between space.

The marketplace of identity described by Sebbar also resembles, in some ways, the description of the "Black Atlantic" offered by Paul Gilroy. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy, from a position he characterizes as "anti-anti-essentialism" (99–103), acknowledges the importance of rooted identity: "In these conditions, where obsessions with origin and myth can rule contemporary political concerns and the fine grain of history, the idea of tradition can constitute a refuge. It provides a temporary home in which shelter and consolation from the vicious forces that threaten the racial community (imagined or otherwise) can be found" (188–89). In particular, he understands the importance of Afrocentrism in black identities within the African diaspora, especially in resistance to racism and other forms of oppression. Yet, he also acknowledges that all national identities (including those proposed by American black nationalism) are "imagined communities," to use Benedict Anderson's term. While recognizing the political need for locating origins of black identity in Africa, Gilroy nevertheless proposes his own in-between, as the location for an understanding of identity: "Dealing equally with the significance of roots and routes... should undermine the purified appeal of either Africentrism or the Eurocentrisms it struggles to answer" (190). This in-between is the Black Atlantic criss-crossed by migrations, including the ships of the slave trade:

I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organizing symbol for this enterprise and as my starting point. The image of the ship—a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion—is especially important for historical

and theoretical reasons that I hope will become clearer below. 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)⁴⁴

I would propose a similar image, of identities crossing the seas, in this case the Mediterranean, for understanding the model of identity offered by the Shérazade trilogy. Shérazade plots a return to Algeria that she never undertakes physically, she travels to the Middle East, she criss-crosses metropolitan France along the route of the Beur march (and with this last example, routes and roots are combined as in Gilroy).

The final volume of the Shérazade trilogy offers the possibility of a rooted identity in spite of all this dodging of the identity police, in spite of this constant *écartement de l'identité*. The third novel begins as a film crew digs up an olive tree, "l'arbre des Ancêtres" (9), "un olivier centenaire gardé par une sorcière" (26). The olive tree is taken to the HLM where Shérazade grew up for the film she is to star in. This tree, like the trees described by writers of Algerian identity such as Kateb and Dib, writers Shérazade reads at the public library, represents the roots of national identity. Meanwhile, Shérazade has left in search of roots in another region: "Pourquoi il a écouté cette fille et ses histoires d'olivier, il n'aurait pas dû la laisser partir, elle prétendait qu'elle jouerait mieux si elle allait sur les lieux mêmes, la terre des Ancêtres, quels ancêtres? (26). Yet, like Nedjma, at the site of the origins of Arab identity, Shérazade has been taken hostage. Because her Arabic is incomprehensible in the Middle East, Shérazade is not Arab. As Western men tried to force her in front of the camera's gaze, her kidnappers usher her in front of television

⁴⁴For a discussion of Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, see the issue of *Found Object* 4 (1994) devoted to this work. In particular, see the following articles: Howard Winant, "Notes on Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*," Robert F. Reid-Pharr, "Engendering the Black Atlantic," Michael Rothberg, "Small Acts, Global Acts: Paul Gilroy's Transnationalism," Norval Edwards, "Roots, and Some Routes Not Taken: A Caribcentric Reading of *The Black Atlantic*," Tommy Lott, "Slavery, Modernity and the Reclamation of Anterior Cultures," and Tommy Lott, "Black Cultural Politics: An Interview with Paul Gilroy."

cameras to display her again on Western television in order to strengthen their demands. Again, a woman has been kidnapped to further the national struggle.

Throughout the third volume, the woman who guarded the tree before it was uprooted, searches for the tree: "Arracher un olivier centenaire, c'est un crime... Faut-il, pour une image, détruire à la folie? Il ne sait pas que déraciner un olivier planté par les Ancêtres, c'est déraciner la vie, l'arracher au ventre des femmes..." (67). When she finally reaches the tree, she says, "Maintenant, je peux mourir" (201). The novel never specifies where the tree was uprooted or where the woman is from. She could be from any Mediterranean region. Like Shérazade, she has been separated from the lands of her ancestors, her identity has been uprooted, and at the end of the novel, she returns to roots that have been transplanted. Read as a return to national origins, Le fou de Shérazade demonstrates that roots are not planted before the narration of return to origins. It is the narration itself that plants, replants, even transplants roots. For this reason, the controversy over Alex Haley's Roots is perhaps a moot one. Shérazade shows that in a world of uprootedness, of diaspora, of crossing borders, and of métissage, people manage to write roots for themselves, rewrite official narratives of return that might exclude them in order to include themselves, and articulate models of subjectivity in a postmodern, postcolonial, late-capitalist world where subjectivity is increasingly fragmented if not impossible even for those (namely Western white men) who once held a monopoly on models of subjectivity that were supposedly universal. Shérazade shows that a feminist subject can articulate a rooted identity even while fleeing attempts on the part of the powers that be to impose an identity from without. And from this position of agency she has created for herself, she shows that the feminist subject need not always be in flight. She can, in fact, become an urban guerrilla in the struggle to destroy the power relations that forced her to flee in the first place.

CHAPTER 7

THE JOY OF CASTRATION: CHILDHOOD NARRATIVES, THE DEMISE OF MASCULINITY, AND ALLEGORIES OF THE QUEER NATION

Châtré! Je suis châtré! Je tiens haut, dur et
ferme, la canonisation!

—Jean Genet, *Les nègres*

As has often been the case with literary movements that coincide with liberation struggles (witness the example of African American slave narratives), Maghrebian literature—in its "youth"—often consisted of autobiographical, semi-autobiographical, or pseudo-autobiographical narratives. Abdallah Bonnifour contrasts Maghrebian autobiography with Western autobiographies, which he sees as usually "crowning" an author's work: "Or, le genre autobiographique est fondateur de la littérature du Maghreb" ("Autobiographie" 87). Charles Bonn links autobiography with a search for national identity: "Le retour à l'enfance est aussi un retour aux enfances d'une littérature algérienne hésitante, et qui n'a pas fini de se chercher" (*Littérature algérienne* 118–19). While North African militants organized independence movements, however, a new brand of nationalist literary criticism often condemned early childhood narratives for neglecting the political by concentrating on personal concerns and for pandering to a French ethnographic gaze and desire for the quaint. More recent novels by the Algerian feminist Assia Djebar—especially *L'amour la fantasia*—disclose the fallacies of earlier nationalist criticisms by weaving together what some critics saw as incompatible, namely the personal and the political. *L'amour, la fantasia* incorporates childhood narratives into the history of the Algerian revolution and thus underscores the importance of narratives of return to both national and individual roots in the consolidation of an anti-colonial consciousness. Djebar's feminist novel offers a paradigm for rereading earlier male childhood narratives whose politics one can now understand as both sexual—in their challenge of patriarchal structures and privileges—and nationalist—in their allegorical telling of a coming to national identity. In these early works as well as later childhood narratives, the personal is political.

In the context of Maghrebien structures of sexual difference, recalling or resurrecting a boy's childhood within narratives of adult male subjectivity can also bring back the feminine world boys belong to until their expulsion into the domain of men and male privilege. Resurrected, this expulsion, experienced as violence, also haunts the adult narrator's masculinity. At times, the narrating subject experiences this challenge not as a threat but as jouissance. When a return to childhood or the origins of subjectivity parallels a return to national origins or roots, this challenge to or demise of masculinity disrupts the allegorization of the Nation; the Nation allegorized by childhood narratives becomes very much a queer Nation.

Férid Boughedir's film Halfaouine (Tunisia, 1992) tells the story of an adolescent boy, Noura, at the threshold of manhood and describes his expulsion from the space of women. Halfaouine juxtaposes what several social scientists have described as notable rites of passage along a Maghrebien boy's journey from the feminine to the masculine world, Noura's expulsion from the women's hammam or bath (the most concrete example of a women-only space) and his previous circumcision, which he relives as the threat of castration during his brother's circumcision. Albert Memmi's Tunisian novel La statue de sel (1953) offers a paradigm for understanding the destabilizing potential of the specter of castration haunting Noura's passage into masculinity. In spite of religious differences between the circumcisions Boughedir and Memmi recount (Memmi's narrator is Jewish), Memmi stresses possible identifications across cultural differences and offers a possibility of experiencing the memory of circumcision and the accompanying castration anxiety as jouissance, the joy of castration. Mohammed Dib's Algerian novel Qui se souvient de la mer (1962) associates a similar delight in emasculation and the resurrection of childhood through narrative. In Dib, the male narrator's masculinity and male subjectivity are undone by his wife's involvement in urban guerrilla warfare; the fires of her bombs sweep into the conjugal bedroom and do irreparable damage to the narrator's notion of who he is. Yet the

memory of his expulsion from the feminine sphere is as important in the demise of his masculinity as his wife's challenge to traditional gender roles.

Halfaouine: A Boy's Expulsion from the Feminine

Noura, having been chased from the women's hammam through the shouts and blows of women bathers, finds refuge in his bedroom while the celebration of his younger brother's circumcision continues outside. His brother is laid on a table, pants removed, legs spread. A barber pulls the foreskin, approaches a pair of scissors. Cut. Noura grabs his own groin as his brother screams in pain.

In La sexualité en Islam, the Tunisian sexologist Abdelwahab Bouhdiba describes both circumcision and expulsion from the women's hammam as important events in a Maghrebian boy's life, events that mark the passage from the world of women into the world of men: "L'émancipation du fils, les distances qu'il doit inévitablement prendre vis-à-vis de la mère représentent un moment essentiel de la vie que la circoncision, l'expulsion du hammam ont entre autres préparé mais de manière qui semble terriblement insuffisante. L'enfant est happé par le monde adulte masculin..." (272). Boughedir's Halfaouine recounts such a gobbling up ("happer") in the story of a boy, Noura, caught between childhood and adulthood. Noura's traumatic expulsion from the hammam, an expulsion that coincides with his brother's circumcision (which provokes in Noura the fear of castration), marks his passage from boyhood to masculinity. Before this trauma, Noura, like other young Maghrebian boys, has the freedom to cross the divide that more or less separates the sexes; his presence does not disturb women's spaces, and he need not worry that hanging around women might threaten his masculinity. The expulsion follows a scene of homosocial bonding,¹ in which Noura shows off the soft-core pornographic magazines stolen from his father to his older friends. Drooling over the pictures, his friends point out that he is still young enough to take advantage of his age in order to gain entrance to the women's hammam, and they convince him to gaze at the naked or near-naked female

¹I am using the notion of homosociality as defined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in Between Men (1–5).

bodies inside and to return with detailed descriptions of what he has seen. Using peer pressure, they push him towards heterosexual desire, which he seems to be merely discovering. The narrative of his own heterosexual gaze will thus improve his standing in a group of young men where his masculinity has yet to be affirmed. Because he always resisted visits to the hammam, his mother reacts to his request for a bath with total disbelief, which signals that, previously, Noura's trips to the hammam did not elicit a heterosexual desire strong enough to motivate the visit. Heterosexual desire, almost imposed in this scenario, comes into being at the urging of homosocial peer pressure and as a part of the apprenticeship of becoming a man, not as part of a "natural" development.

At the hammam entrance, the bath attendant hesitates to allow Noura entrance. She sees a different gaze in his eyes; he has become a man. She thus detects the difference between man and boy in the presence of a heterosexual gaze.² As in Judith Butler's account of gender roles in Gender Trouble, where she describes heterosexual roles as performances that must be learned and constantly rehearsed and reinstated, in Halfaouine, the gender role of man necessarily involves a performance of heterosexuality, and the apprenticeship of masculinity involves learning heterosexual desire. Noura is at that awkward moment where he has yet to master the role of heterosexual man. Halfaouine, like many other Maghrebian childhood narratives, reveals how (to play on Simone de Beauvoir's famous line) "one is not born a man, but becomes one."³ Manhood results not from biological male nature but from a lengthy, intricate apprenticeship, socially organized as a continual series of repetitions or rehearsals of acceptable roles, deviations from which are severely punished. For the hammam attendant in Halfaouine, a heterosexual gaze or desire separates boys from men. The presumably pre-heterosexual boy poses no threat to

²In Dreams of Trespass, Fatima Mernissi describes her cousin's expulsion from the women's hammam, which seems to have resulted from a similar gaze: "Then came the day that Samir was thrown out of the hammam because a woman noticed that he had 'a man's stare'" (239).

³Beauvoir wrote, "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient" (Le deuxième sexe 2: 13). In her readings of the Cameroonian novelist Calixthe Beyala, Odile Cazenave discusses how Beyala, in her narratives of coming to masculinity, reveals how (again quoting Beauvoir) "one is not born a man, but becomes one" ("Voicing the Male and the Female"). Patricia-Pia Célérier performs a similar reading of Beyala in "Effacing Gender?"

the women inside the hammam (or the harem, for that matter).⁴ In spite of the attendant's reluctance, however, Noura's mother convinces her to let him in.⁵ When Noura returns to retell what he saw, his friends remain unimpressed because he managed to see only breasts and no genitalia that were not covered by bath gloves or water pots. They accuse him of being too much of a child to know which parts of female anatomy are the most important for a man to see, and they threaten him with exclusion from their all-"men's" group. Noura responds to their threat as a challenge and announces that during his next visit to the hammam he will manage to see all. Later, when Noura accompanies female friends and relatives to the hammam as part of the circumcision celebration, his mother must again convince the attendant to allow him in. This time, however, once they are inside, the attendant's assistant surprises Noura gazing at a woman and waiting for her to uncover her genitals, and he is expelled.

In Bouhdiba's version of a boy's expulsion from the women's hammam, the separation from the realm of women occurs with few regrets:

Or c'est, nous l'avons vu, le moment précis où l'enfant exclu du hammam des femmes commence à prendre le chemin du hammam des hommes. C'est comme un rite d'initiation au monde jusqu'alors étranger des mâles. La conduite du hammam se structure de manière neuve au moment même où l'on est ôté à sa mère, en sorte que le premier hammam pris avec les hommes est comme une consécration, une confirmation et une compensation. C'est la confirmation de son appartenance au monde des mâles.... (*La sexualité en Islam* 209)

⁴Zayd Motî' Dammâj's *Al-Rahîna: Les aventures d'un jeune otage de l'imâm-roi au Yémen du temps jadis* tells the story of a pre-pubescent hostage who serves in the king's harem because he is still too young to pose a threat there. The social presumptions about pre-pubescent boys allow the women to have sexual playmates without arousing the suspicion of their adult male overseers. The novel thus demonstrates that the supposed lack of danger posed by pre-pubescent boys has nothing to do with biology but is a matter of social convention. Likewise, the coming to heterosexual desire represented by becoming a man is also a social convention.

⁵Bouhdiba hints at a similar reluctance on the mother's part to admit her son has grown up: "[U]ne mère a toujours tendance à voir dans son fils un éternel enfant" ("Le hammam" 8).

The typical boy is immediately welcomed into the men's hammam, where his father's friends congratulate him. He lives this first visit as a consecration, a confirmation of his manhood. In Halfaouine, however, Noura lives this expulsion more as a loss to be mourned. He even holds a grudge against his friends who seem to have forced him into heterosexuality: after his expulsion, when he meets them in the street, they attempt to initiate a homosocial bonding in which he can boast about his heterosexual exploits, but he refuses to talk and runs away angry. At this moment, the loss that heterosexuality requires seems not to be worth the privilege it will later grant.

Bouhdiba describes the expulsion, which he discusses in two passages of La sexualité en Islam, as much milder than the one in Halfaouine: "Il faudrait que le jeune homme se laisse aller à un geste inconsidéré ou à un propos déplacé pour que la tenancière vienne dire doucement à la mamam: 'Ton fils a grandi, ne l'amène plus avec toi'" (206). In the second passage, he writes, "[N]'a-t-il pas été rejeté par le hammam des femmes? N'a-t-il pas entendu la tenancière affirmer 'C'est un grand'? N'a-t-on pas reçu les félicitations des amis et compagnons du père que l'on rencontre maintenant pour la première fois en petite tenue...?" (209). Bouhdiba's remarks on the hammam were originally published eleven years before in a journal article titled "Le hammam: Contribution à une psychanalyse de l'Islam," in which he describes the expulsion as being considerably harsher. The first version of the first passage (which describes a simple, private, and polite request in the later version) actually describes an expulsion: "C'est alors l'expulsion, pas trop méchante d'ailleurs" (9). The first version of the second passage describes the expulsion as occasionally violent: "[N]'a-t-il pas été rejeté et parfois même de manière violente du hammam des femmes?" (11). This mention of violence, though perhaps contradicting the first version of the first passage ("pas trop méchante"), actually corresponds to Noura's experience in Halfaouine.⁶

⁶According to Malek Chebel, boys of Noura's age are no longer permitted to bathe with their mothers: "Il fut un temps où l'on autorisait l'entrée au hammam à des prépubères de huit ou neuf ans, sans que les femmes, dans leur ensemble, ne voient là de motifs valables pour se plaindre, dès lors que le garçonnet ne manifestait aucune curiosité sexuelle. Aujourd'hui, il n'est plus possible de faire entendre raison à une

If Halfaouine portrays a violence at the origin of manhood, in "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" Ernest Renan describes a parallel violence at the origin of the formation of every Nation, a violence that must be forgotten for the Nation to be naturalized as a geo-political entity. Narratives of return to national origins in Maghrebian novels such as Ben Jelloun's La prière de l'absent and Kateb's Nedjma often disrupt official discourses of nationality by disclosing precisely this violence. In childhood narrative, there is a similar return to origins, the source of life, but also of subjectivity, which is always gendered. At the source of gender, there is a parallel violence, which Monique Wittig describes when she writes, "Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it" (The Straight Mind 43–44). For gender to be naturalized, this violence must be forgotten, or at least forgotten as a form of violence, in other words accepted as just the way things are.⁷ In childhood narratives that double as national allegories the violence at the origin of gender allegorizes the violence at the origin of the Nation.

In Bouhdiba's subsequent rewriting of the boy's expulsion from the women's hammam, he also seems to have forgotten this violence at the origin of manhood, which consecrates the separation of the sexes. In Halfaouine Noura as well seems to forget this violence later: after the expulsion, because he refuses to go to the men's hammam with his father, his mother instructs the orphan girl she has taken in to wash Noura at home while the other women go to the hammam. Upon returning, they find her undressed with Noura

tenancière de hammam: un enfant mâle de plus de cinq ou six ans doit aller avec les hommes" (Encyclopédie 457). If such is the case, Noura's expulsion would be a rare exception rather than the rule. There could be several possible explanations for the differences between Chebel and Halfaouine (or even Bouhdiba): The difference could be regional—perhaps what Chebel describes holds true for Algeria but not for Tunisia—or temporal—perhaps the expulsions that Bouhdiba, Boughedir, and, to a certain extent, Memissi describe were more characteristic at the time they were adolescents. In any case, this difference in opinion regarding whether expulsion from the women's hammam remains an important rite of passage for all Maghrebian boys underscores the dangers of reading literary (or in this case, filmic) texts as ethnographic evidence. One example of an expulsion (or even several) does not prove a generalization. Rather than make sweeping generalizations about Maghrebian boys' expulsion for the hammam, I have chosen to discuss the symbolic significance of the individual expulsion represented on screen. I do not use Halfaouine as evidence for the expulsion Bouhdiba studies, but rather Bouhdiba's explanations as a way of elucidating a filmic text in an interpretation that would still hold true even if Bouhdiba's descriptions no longer did.

⁷Ben Jelloun's La nuit sacrée, for example, tells the story of an adult raised to be a man who discovers his/her female sex. In order to "become a woman," the main character must forget the violence at the origin of his/her gender, most notably a rape, but more generally, the violence of the imposition of gender.

giving her a massage, and Noura's parents decide to kick her out of their home. The night before her departure, Noura goes to bed with her. After this first heterosexual experience, he seems to recover from his loss and remembers the hammam as the idealized site of the complete satisfaction of his heterosexual gaze. The film visually represents his memory through a flash-back that resembles the following description by Bouhdiba:

Chaque plongée dans le bain du hammam est une replongée dans l'enfance. Phantasmes d'enfance, évocations du passé, aspirations, désirs, tout se mêle dans ces vapeurs froides et chaudes qui apaisent le corps et excitent l'esprit. Innombrable hammam, lieu hanté de tant de souvenirs, de tant de scènes, de tant de visions mêlées où la mère et ses sœurs, les charmantes cousines, les énigmatiques voisines composent ce bouquet onirique de la féminité que chaque homme porte en soi. (*La sexualité en Islam* 209)

Noura's memory, however, like Bouhdiba's description, constitutes a rewriting that projects a young man's heterosexual desire back onto his supposedly pre-heterosexual boyhood. In contrast, the film seems to point to other ways of rewriting this memory in which heterosexuality is not consecrated but questioned.

By juxtaposing Noura's expulsion from the hammam with his brother's circumcision, the film *Halfaouine* emphasizes the parallel between the two events. As Vincent Crapanzano writes, circumcision marks the passage from boyhood to manhood in the Maghrebian context: "Circumcision is said to make a man and a Muslim of a boy" (*Tuhami* 51). Bouhdiba, Crapanzano, and the Algerian sexologist Malek Chebel all point out that when boys are old enough at their circumcision to remember it later, they often associate it with the threat of castration. Chebel writes, for example, "Chez l'enfant maghrébin, la menace de castration prend les contours réalistes de la circoncision toujours imminente" (*L'esprit de sérail* 173). Bouhdiba describes "la crainte qu'on ne la lui coupe s'il n'est pas encore circoncis ou qu'on ne recoupe ce qui reste après la circoncision" (*La sexualité en Islam* 224). Crapanzano also describes such a fear on the part of his informant: "Tuhami

could feel nothing. He did not look down. He was afraid his penis had been cut off" (Tuhami 50). Crapanzano goes on to describe a general fear of castration among Moroccan men:

(Boys are sometimes told that they will undergo a second circumcision if they are not good.) Moroccan men often joke about circumcision, especially in the baths. They talk of the mutilated and those with jagged foreskins and those—they are actually very rare—who have lost their penises. There is much anxiety. The lines between manhood and womanhood, that great social-symbolic cleavage in the Arab world, is not very clear after all. (51–52)

He associates this castration anxiety with definitional distinctions between masculinity and femininity, distinctions that are consecrated by a boy's expulsion from the hammam for Bouhdiba but that become more unclear when the topic of circumcision comes up. Interestingly enough, Crapanzano cites the hammam as the site of such anxiety. In Halfaouine as well, the hammam is not only the site of a definitional crisis in the distinction between masculinity and femininity, but is also related to anxiety about castration.

Noura becomes aware of this threat as he lingers around women at the circumcision ceremony and is threatened with castration. A woman grabs him and jokingly informs him that he, too, will be circumcised. As both Bouhdiba and Crapanzano point out, once the foreskin has been removed, a second circumcision could only be the equivalent of castration. Noura's tormentor explicitly makes the association between circumcision and castration by saying that, this time, they will remove the little bit of his penis that is left so that nothing will remain. Another woman reproaches the first for making such a threat: now a man, Noura should be called Monsieur Noureddine.⁸ The first woman replies that, with such a small penis, Noura cannot possibly be a man. Instead of physically castrating

⁸In a conversation in Berkeley on 23 January 1995, James T. Monroe pointed out to me that Noura, in fact, is a woman's name. In the film, it is probably a nickname for Noureddine, a man's name. In becoming a man, Noura will therefore abandon the name of woman for the name of man.

him, she cuts him down to size, so to speak, and thereby denies his masculinity. At this point, Noura's father enters, carrying a basket of vegetables. At first, the irruption of a man into a women's space interrupts the women's talk. The film cuts to very black, thick coffee boiling over, marking this male irruption as a contamination. But the breach of separation of the sexes does more than disrupt the women; it also disturbs the man, who casts his eyes downward during the entire period of his presence in the women's space.⁹

The father then rushes out of the women's space as the women joke about the phallic shapes of the carrots, cucumbers, and eggplants in the basket.¹⁰ The father runs away from these women who are making a mockery of the penis, supposed site of manhood, as if his presence in this women's space could adversely affect his own masculinity. Ahlem Mosteghanemi writes, "L'enfant apprend instinctivement à fuir le monde féminin comme s'il redoutait d'être contaminé par ce malheur que la femme semble douer [sic] pour répandre autour d'elle" (*Algérie, femme et écritures* 53). Femininity is thus contagious, and it is perhaps this contagion that Noura's father flees. Noura's father then forces him to repeat the following rules of being a man: 1) a man does not cry; and 2) a man does not hang around women's skirts. When Noura cannot remember the second rule (the precise rule he had been breaking), his father strikes him. His father's punishment for forgetting the script of manliness reinforces the association of castration with hanging around women's skirts. To be a man, Noura can no longer frequent women's spaces. To do so would be to risk castration (as the women literally threaten him), contamination by the feminine, and the father's punishment. Manhood, therefore, exists because of a threat of punishment, castration.

⁹Downcast eyes are often seen as a sign of women's respect for men. Ben Jelloun's novel, *Les yeux baissés*, deals with precisely this topic.

¹⁰A woman had just accused the first woman—who threatened Noura with castration—of taking out her frustrations on Noura. According to the former, the latter was only releasing her frustrations due to her husband, who spends all his time away from her at work. Implying that her frustrations are sexual and hinting at the use of dildos, another woman added that the first woman's husband sold vegetables yet had no cucumber to offer her.

To become a man, a Maghrebian boy must be circumcised, which Bouhdiba, Chebel, and Crapanzano all point out, involves a fear of castration. Halfaouine makes clear the association of circumcision and castration when Noura's brother is circumcised and Noura, having just been expelled from the hammam, grabs his own groin at the same moment. Noura thus relives circumcision, and since he is already circumcised, reliving it can only take the form of castration. The women's threat at the party is realized; before Noura can become a man, he must be castrated. Manhood thus exists thanks to a double bind—castration could take away manhood, but without castration, manhood cannot exist—and this double bind is especially evident at the moment of circumcision. Though "circumcision is said to make a man and a Muslim of a boy," (Crapanzano, Tuhami 51, my emphasis), as Chebel explains, the privileges of manhood are postponed until a later date: "Car il faut admettre que si la circoncision marque une étape dans la vie de l'enfant, ce n'est certainement pas au profit d'une accession réelle au monde de la masculinité achevée, qui ne s'opère qu'à la puberté. En fait, tout fonctionne comme si l'enfant payait le prix par anticipation, longtemps avant la jouissance sexuelle promise, ainsi qu'on le voit, pour ne prendre qu'un exemple, dans les rituels africains" (L'esprit de sérail 174). Chebel also describes what he labels as a typical exchange between father and son at the moment of circumcision. The father says, "'Voyons! Ne pleure pas, c'est la fille qui pleure.' L'enfant répond: 'J'ai envie d'être une fille, une fille c'est mieux'" (L'esprit de sérail 177).¹¹ Circumcision is relived not as the attainment of a privilege, which is postponed, but as a trauma, and this trauma, allowed to haunt the present of masculinity, even threatens the privilege it is supposed to give access to. Remembering a time when male privilege, put off until some far-away future time, did not seem to be worth its price, seems to beg the question as to whether it is still worth it. In the case of Noura's brother (who probably is not older than three), it is clear that he will not be expelled from the feminine

¹¹Chebel has also devoted an entire study to the subject of circumcision, Histoire de la circoncision des origines à nos jours.

world immediately after circumcision, just as Noura has had continued access to the feminine sphere up until this point. Remembering childhood brings back the threat to masculinity that circumcision (with its accompanying fear of castration) poses to adult male subjectivity. Albert Memmi shows how this resurrection operates by staging a similar remembering of circumcision.

Albert Memmi and the Joy of Castration

When, unlike Noura, the adult male subject no longer flees the feminine from fear of being contaminated or castrated, masculinity—which is predicated on this fear—can never be quite the same. Memmi's *La statue de sel* narrates a return to childhood, wherein the memory of circumcision provokes the threat of castration, experienced by the narrator as a form of *jouissance*. One day in a tramway, the Jewish narrator, Alexandre Mordekhai Benilouche, witnesses a scene involving a young Muslim boy. A Muslim stranger asks the father whether the boy has been circumcised and learns that he has not. The stranger then asks the boy how much his penis would cost. After the boy refuses higher and higher prices, the stranger puts his hand in the boy's pants to take the penis without paying. The boy must defend himself according to a well-known scenario:

Visiblement, il connaissait la scène, déjà on lui avait fait la même proposition. Moi aussi, je la connaissais. Je l'avais jouée dans le temps, assailli par d'autres provocateurs, avec les mêmes sentiments de honte et de concupiscence, de révolte et de curiosité complice. Les yeux de l'enfant brillaient du plaisir d'une virilité naissante et de la révolte contre cette inqualifiable agression. Il regarda son père. Son père souriait, c'était un jeu admis. (186)

The men in the tramway all get a good laugh, and the father is proud of his son who successfully defends his penis and (by association) phallic privilege and power at such an early age. The boy is rewarded for successfully enduring one of the trials that make up the apprenticeship of masculinity. As Noura must recite the rules of manliness, here, becoming a man requires learning a script whose successful performance will grant access

to male privilege. This passage reveals that sexual pleasure ("concupiscence") results as much from the approval of other men for correctly performing an expected task as from the satisfaction of heterosexual desire.

It is important not to elide differences between Muslim and Jewish (even Maghrebian Jewish) experiences, practices, and rituals of circumcision such as the difference in ages at circumcision and therefore men's ability to remember it. In spite of these differences, however, all the men in the tramway identify with the young boy's performance: "Décidément, nous nous sentions en famille, entre Méditerranéens" (187). The Jewish narrator identifies with the threat of castration faced by the Muslim boy and reads into the boy's experience one from his own past. Another difference in Jewish experiences of circumcision involves its function as a corporeal trace of a religious pact with God. Though Muslims are expected to follow the example of the Prophet, who was circumcised, the Qur'an does not mention circumcision.¹²

In "'This We Know to Be the Carnal Israel': Circumcision and the Erotic Life of God and Israel," Daniel Boyarin describes the erotic nature of this bodily marker of belonging to a religious community: "The physical act of circumcision in the flesh, which prepares the male Jew for sexual intercourse, is also that which prepares him for divine intercourse. It is difficult, therefore, to escape the association of sexual and mystical experience in this [midrashic] text" (493). In his analysis of Rabbinical writings, Boyarin also describes circumcision as a feminizing procedure:

Circumcision is understood by the midrash as feminizing the male, thus making him open to receive the divine speech and vision of God.... Israel is a female partner with respect to God, but many of the adepts in Israel are male. An event

¹²Malek Chebel writes, "Bien que non exigée par le Coran, la circoncision est en effet un usage fortement recommandé (*sounna mouakkada*) par toutes les grandes écoles théologiques, et en particulier par les chaf^{ites}" (*L'encyclopédie* 142). In his nineteenth-century text, *El Kitab des lois secrètes de l'amour*, Omar Haleby asserts that converts to Islam need not undergo circumcision: "Mohammed, béni soit son nom! ayant constaté les bons effets hygiéniques et sociaux de la circoncision, la laissa aux croyants, mais sans en faire une obligation absolument religieuse.... C'est donc un tort... de voir dans cette ablation une cérémonie religieuse, conforme à celle des juifs" (164–65).

must take place in their bodies that will enable them to take the position of the female, and that event is circumcision.... This transformation is still powerfully enacted at the ritual level today, when at a traditional circumcision ceremony the newly circumcised boy is addressed: "And I say to you [feminine pronoun!]: In your [feminine] blood, you [feminine] shall live." These texts strongly suggest the possibility that circumcision was understood somehow as rendering the male somewhat feminine, thus making it possible for the male Israelite to have communion with a male deity. (495–96)

Likewise, Memmi emphasizes the erotic aspect of circumcision as a sign of alliance with God when he writes,

Nous étions tous attirés par ce mystère auquel nous avons participé, malgré nous, dans l'inconscience de nos premiers jours, qui nous scellait dans la grande chaîne sacrée qui, à travers les siècles remontait jusqu'à Dieu. Ce mystère nous attirait par l'extraordinaire consécration qu'il promettait, nous troublait parce que l'alliance avec Dieu était sexuelle, nous effrayait parce qu'ils s'imposait à nous avec cette fatale nécessité, que nous voyions tous les jours enchaîner nos frères et voisins nouveau-nés. (La statue de sel 190)

As Abraham (the first circumcised) is also considered to be the father of Muslims (or especially Arabs), this religious aspect of a pact with God cannot be totally absent in Islam. Yet circumcision as a sign of virility is much more important in an Arabo-Muslim context. Obviously, if a baby is circumcised almost immediately after birth, circumcision is less likely to mark the passage to masculinity.

The tramway episode elicits from the narrator a reaction similar to Noura's in Halfaouine: "Lorsque l'enfant hurla, je sentis mon sexe frémir à l'appel brusquement resurgi du fond de mon enfance.... Oui, je le connais bien ce frisson désagréable et voluptueux. Avant d'aller à l'école primaire, je fréquentais un koultab" (La statue de sel 188). For Mordekhaï, however, remembering provokes a sensation of sexual pleasure as

well as of pain, and the site of this pleasure/pain is the penis. Circumcised in accordance with Jewish tradition, he cannot remember his own circumcision as many Muslim men can.¹³ Instead, he remembers a performance of circumcision at the *kouttab*, or religious school, one day after the rabbi had left the classroom. Older boys played the rabbi and chose a younger boy to play the "victim." At first the narrator fears being selected for the latter role: "Mais le risque m'avait lié à la victime, avait déclenché en moi les affres du calvaire. Je ressentais l'angoisse du tout petit tremblant, porté sur les épaules du surveillant, comme un agneau de sacrifice" (191).¹⁴ Like Noura at his brother's circumcision, Mordekhai identifies with the boy being circumcised: "J'avais mal au bas-ventre, au même point, comme si le couteau allait me blesser" (193). As in Noura's case, since the victim is already circumcised, a second circumcision can only evoke the threat of castration: "Mon cœur battait de peur et d'émotion confuse.... Allaient-ils vraiment lui couper le membre? J'en avais une douleur vague et cependant non désagréable au bas-ventre" (192). And as in the tramway, the threat of castration elicits sexual pleasure as much as pain:

La peur intolérable qui me tenait collé au mur, la honte devant cette nudité, se mêlaient de ce sentiment que je ne peux oublier: un plaisir complice et consentant. Je ressentais dans mon sexe cette peur voluptueuse se traduire en frissons électriques. Comment oublierais-je cette complicité? Oui, je participais à la cérémonie, à la pâture collective, ancestrale.

¹³Vincent Crapanzano describes variations in the ability of Muslim men to remember their circumcision: "Tuhami did not remember his circumcision. Some Moroccan men do. He was perhaps too young" (49).

¹⁴This use of Christian images (calvary, sacrificial lamb) to describe Jewish experiences might seem a bit odd. In fact, Memmi uses the term "première communion" to describe Mordekhai's bar mitzvah (75–87). Perhaps this usage points out how writing in French, supposedly the vehicle of secular thought, necessarily requires an number of specifically Catholic images. French *laïcité*, therefore, would come in a very Christian package. In *Circonfessions*, Jacques Derrida writes, "[D]ans ma famille et chez les Juifs d'Algérie, on ne disait presque jamais la 'circoncision' mais le 'baptême,' non la Bar Mitzwa mais la 'communion,' avec les conséquences de l'adoucissement, de l'affadissement, par acculturation apeurée, dont j'ai toujours souffert plus ou moins consciemment..." (72).

Ce fut physiquement intolérable, et je me sentis défaillir lorsque la main droite du sacrificateur, armée du rasoir, descendit vers le petit bout de chair blanche qui émergeait entre l'index et le majeur de sa main gauche.

Brusque fut la délivrance, explosèrent d'un seul coup ma peur, ma honte, ma jouissance, mon dégoût, et l'insupportable tension du silence angoissé de tous: à bout de nerfs, la victime venait d'éclater en sanglots" (193).

Shame and fear become sources of jouissance, which the narrator associates with the collective homosocial performance of a rite of passage on the way to masculinity.

As the boy is about to be "circumcised," the narrator cannot take his eyes off the victim's penis: "Pourquoi, pourtant, ne suis-je pas arrivé à tourner la tête, pourquoi mes yeux sont-ils restés fixés sur le minuscule membre blanc, que je devinais de loin, dans la lueur qui tombait des soupiraux verdissés par les moisissures sans âges?" (193). Since the victim not only risks castration but is also a spectacle, the object of other boy's gazes, the narrator must identify with his position as the object of a male gaze as well as with this fear of castration. The narrator's jouissance thus results in part from an enjoyment of specularity, which Silverman attributes, along with the threat/promise of castration, to "male subjectivity at the margins." Likewise, Memmi's narrator rereads the circumcision, which is supposed to separate him from the feminine, in a way that actually strengthens his connection to it. By narrating his own childhood and recalling the fear of castration (experienced as jouissance), the adult male subject questions his separation from the feminine as well as his masculinity through the resurrection of a time when he was integrated into the domain of the feminine.

Bouhdiba, in describing a man's memory of former visits to the women's hammam, describes a femininity within each man: "Phantasmes d'enfance, évocations du passé, aspirations, désirs, tout se mêle dans ces vapeurs froides et chaudes qui apaisent le corps et excitent l'esprit. Innombrable hammam, lieu hanté de tant de souvenirs, de tant de scènes, de tant de visions mêlées où la mère et ses sœurs, les charmantes cousines, les

énigmatiques voisines composent ce bouquet onirique de la féminité que chaque homme porte en soi" (*La sexualité en Islam* 209). However, he articulates this femininity as an internalized heterosexual desire confined to the space of the hammam. By staging circumcision or projecting the hammam onto the screen, Memmi and Boughedir bring specters out of the hammam into the discourses of male subjectivity. In the performance of circumcision, the tension Memmi describes consists in not knowing whether the performance will "only" be a performance, or whether the victim will be circumcised again and lose more than his foreskin (which is no longer there). Boughedir's film seems to play with a similar tension; because it is part of a filmic narrative, the circumcision scene in Halfaouine is also a performance. Will the boy actor playing the role of Noura's brother be circumcised in "real life" as the scene is filmed? Boughedir defers the moment of suspending the filming of the about-to-be-circumcised penis until the last possible minute. Though the spectator does not actually see blood or the removal of foreskin, it is hard to image that the boy actor is not "actually" circumcised. In other words, the circumcisor's scissors seem to have already passed the "point of no return" before which circumcision might be stopped once the penis is no longer being filmed. Rather than the foreskin, however, the film is cut; through montage, the cut replaces circumcision on screen. Halfaouine toys with the danger, pain, and perhaps even pleasure of circumcision in such a way that possibly allows at least some spectators to share Noura's identification with his brother as Mordekhaï identifies with the victim on stage. The film creates the possibility that spectators will experience a pleasure similar to Mordekhaï's, the joy of castration. Memmi gives circumcision new meaning and rewrites narratives of coming to masculinity by using the very circumcision that grants access to manhood in order to bring about the demise of that same manhood. In its remembering of circumcision through performance, therefore, La statue de sel offers a paradigm that allows us to understand Noura's experience of his brother's circumcision as a remembering of his own.

Dib: Haunting Memories and the Demise of Masculinity

The narrator of Mohammed Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer recounts his own childhood, and the novel associates this remembering with the demise of its narrator's masculinity brought on by his wife's participation in the Algerian revolution. Like Noura, Qui se souvient's narrator remembers growing up in and belonging to a women's space, his expulsion from which marks his becoming a man. He associates his childhood with his mother, whose presence he prefers to his father's: "Je jouais à côté de [mon père], c'est-à-dire que, sans bouger, sans attirer l'attention sur moi, j'allais retrouver mes amis. Une fois que j'avais assez joué, il m'était permis de rejoindre les femmes" (35). The narrator plays in a paternal space only because he has to, and after a minimum contact with his father, he can return to the feminine, maternal space he prefers. His father is an oppressive presence that disturbs the narrator whenever he must endure it: "Mon père... m'écrasait sous la vigueur de ses sens et de ses muscles, son égoïsme naturel, l'inflexibilité de son caractère.... Aussi, dès que je me trouvais en sa présence, me troublais-je. Je demeurais sans défense contre la panique qui fondait sur moi; dans un tel tête-à-tête, le plus innocent abandon de conduite, comme le plus calculé, pouvait tourner à chaque instant à ma confusion" (77-78).

In contrast with the father's harshness, distance, and even violence, the mother represents a soothing, comforting presence. Qui se souvient de la mer uses a number of poetic associations, most notably the homophony in French between mother and sea (mère/mer) to describe the domain of the feminine in which he grew up. This homophony acquires additional meaning in its connection to the French word source (both spring and source), which, when applied to the mother, identifies her as a source of life and associates her with water by both evoking amniotic fluids and recalling a centuries-old mythological association of the mother with water. These associations gain political significance when the mother as a source of life is equated with national origins and childhood narrative functions as national allegory. Whereas the narrator's childhood memories and his obsession with the sea as an adult might seem marginal in relation to the political events

occurring around him, in its very title, Qui se souvient de la mer associates remembering with the sea and therefore the mother, an association explicitly made in one passage in which woman, wife, mother, and sea all perform the same function: "Sans la mer, sans les femmes, nous serions restés définitivement des orphelins; elles nous couvrent du sel de leur langue et cela, heureusement, préserva maints d'entre nous!" (20-21). Likewise, the following passage also attributes maternal and nurturing qualities to the sea: "Imperceptible, comme ce parfum d'algues et de sel, l'air replit. Berce mon corps, dissous mon ombre..." (31). The sea lulls, soothes (bercer) as the mother rocks the cradle (bercer); in French, one could say that la mer berce comme la mère. This image leads to another, that of the lullaby (berceuse), which the narrator explicitly mentions in another passage: "Je me mis à chanter à mon tour une vieille chanson, une berceuse, du temps de mon enfance" (63). This lullaby could be described as the "chant de la mer" (64) or de la mère. The sea/mother's lullaby provokes an act of memory on the narrator's part, a return to the womb, the place where amniotic fluid combines water and mother as source de la vie. Again, this return to the womb, comforting at times, can also be threatening: "On dirait qu'il a été avalé par le vagin de la terre!" (135). The sea spits out dead bodies, victims of colonial violence, as well as it soothes. The remembering of the sea in the title brings peace and is also a haunting—"La mer vint me hanter une fois de plus" (114)—just as a return to childhood may recall a comforting presence as well as torment: "[J]'étais tourmenté par ces souvenirs qui ne me lâchaient pas..." (125).

One of the haunting memories the narrator brings back is that of his separation from his mother at his father's order. The incident follows a childhood injury he incurs upon leaving the house for the first time. Unaware that the home's protection does not extend into the street, he goes out without shoes, steps on glass, and wounds his foot, which takes a year to heal. During this time, his mother cares for him in a manner consistent with her soothing attributes:

Pourtant, je m'apercevais combien la présence de ma mère pouvait m'être bienfaisante, combien sa voix, douce, un peu monotone, allégeait ma souffrance, surtout à la tombée de la nuit, quand elle s'élevait à mon chevet dans la pénombre du crépuscule. Arrivant des chambres éclairées, maman venait ainsi me faire recommencer de longues heures de veille, aider le malade à affronter la nuit. Que n'accepterais-je de subir pour me retrouver sous cette patiente, cette bienveillante influence? (93)

However, at one point, the father intervenes and forbids her to comfort the narrator, thereby separating the two. The separation of the narrator from his mother and therefore from the sphere of women is marked by a wound, cut, rupture, or blesseure symbolique. This break (coupure) could also recall more physical cuts or wounds that separate the male child from his mother's body (cutting the umbilical cord) and from the childhood world situated within women's spaces (circumcision). Like expulsion from the women's hammam in *Halfaouine*, the narrator's wound in Qui se souvient de la mer occurs almost as a punishment for venturing beyond the women's space. In both the film and Dib's novel, becoming a man is lived as yet another punishment administered by the father, and at that particular moment, is in no way seen as desirable or natural or as constituting a privilege.

A nostalgic desire to return to the mother's womb is certainly not unique to Maghrebian literature. In Révolution dans le langage poétique, Julia Kristeva characterizes Lautréamont's and Mallarmé's poetry—which she labels as avant-garde—as consisting of a language closer to the mother's body. The theme or trope of a return to the womb is also common in the works of other nineteenth-century French poets. Yet, this longing for an impossible return to the womb may not in any way threaten more dominant models of male subjectivity and may be a melancholy for what must be lost and mourned in the consolidation of male subjectivity. In her reading of Freud's Mourning and Melancholia, Butler describes what must be lost in the consolidation of gender identity: "Because identifications substitute for object relations, and identifications are the consequence of

loss, gender identification is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of the prohibited object is internalized as a prohibition" (*Gender Trouble* 63). To be a man, a man must deny an identification with the feminine, a denial that is experienced as a loss, a loss that is nonetheless kept, internalized, and lived (like Bouhdiba's "bouquet onirique de la féminité que chaque homme porte en soi") through a melancholic mourning of that loss. In contrast, the male childhood narratives analyzed here remember this loss and bring what is mourned back to haunt the melancholic male subject/narrator. The disavowal or denial of femininity upon which adult male masculinity is predicated thereby becomes less absolute and less efficient.

There may be reasons, however, why an adult Maghrebien man might wax nostalgic on his childhood that are not incompatible with patriarchal privilege. Many accounts of boyhood point out that, since mothers are rewarded for giving birth to boys, boys receive privileged treatment in comparison to their sisters.¹⁵ This privilege, however, often does not disappear with adulthood since the wife supposedly replaces the mother in this respect. What distinguishes many Maghrebien childhood narratives from, say, familiar tropes of nineteenth-century French poetry, is that rather than mourning an irretrievable loss, these narrating subjects resurrect the past. By recalling his childhood, the narrator of *Qui se souvient de la mer* reconstructs this feminine space he once belonged to and identifies with the child he used to be: "Au fond de moi, je demeure inconsolable comme un enfant perdu. Placé, de la sorte, brutalement en face de moi-même, je constate que mon attitude est d'ailleurs celle d'un enfant" (46). Nafissa Zerdoumi writes, "Il est bien rare, en Algérie, que les adultes parlent de leur enfance" (*Enfant d'hier* 274). The public remembering of coming to adulthood and, therefore, to masculinity as well as femininity seems not to be a common practice, and the forgetting of the violence at the origin of gender seems to be a common one, according to Zerdoumi's description of traditional Algerian milieus. As Charles Bonn remarks, however, Maghrebien literature is most noticeable as an exception

¹⁵Fouroulou in Mouloud Feraoun's *Le fils du pauvre*, for example, receives twice as much food as his sisters at meals.

to this rule (La littérature algérienne de langue française et ses lectures 26). Remember what should be forgotten, Maghrebian childhood narratives reveal and display this violence and bring it back to haunt adult subjectivity. The haunting represented by childhood memories that just will not go away is nourished, allowed to continue, and endlessly cherished. The past of childhood is brought back into the present of narration so as to infect that very same present. The masculinity of the adult male subject, when contaminated by his not-so-masculine past, cannot emerge unscathed.

Dib's associations of the mother, water, and memory (which returns as a haunting) allow us to return to the role of the hammam in Halfaouine. Abdelwahab Bouhdiba describes the hammam with the same chthonic images Dib associates with the mother:

Le hammam est un lieu surévalué sexuellement. On peut même dire que c'est un milieu utérin.... On descend au hammam tout comme on descend aux enfers. On glisse dedans, on s'y enfonce avant de se trouver dans la mathara où la khilwaq, le lieu le plus intime, le plus démoniaque aussi. C'est aussi un lieu où coulent des ruisseaux brûlants et rafraîchissants. Ils viennent de la fournaise. Ils coulent dans les profondeurs du sol. Un mystère accompagne ce "fleuve" qui vient d'un trou, traverse un trou, s'enfonce dans un trou. Aller au hammam, c'est s'enfoncer dans un mystère. C'est retourner en rêve au sein maternel. (La sexualité en Islam 211)

He associates the hammam with the mother's body and amniotic fluids ("milieu utérin") and underground waters. Going into the hammam involves going back to one's childhood; it is also like a return to the womb. Though this return to the mother's body has a comforting aspect ("le lieu le plus intime" and "retourner en rêve au sein maternel"), it is also marked very ambivalently as being infernal. The hammam is a mysterious place, a dark continent, the dark continent of femininity in Freud's psychoanalytic account. The hammam is haunted ("le lieu...le plus démoniaque"), by djinnoun or spirits as is popularly believed, but also by memories: "Nous naissons, enfants, au hammam. Et devenus

adultes nous le peuplions de nos souvenirs, de nos phantasmes, de nos rêves et c'est là pour tout musulman une manière précise de revivre son enfance et ce à partir de son expérience au hammam" (Bouhdiba, La sexualité en Islam 204). Going to the hammam as an adult involves a return to childhood:

Du coup le hammam va être un retour imaginaire au monde ancien, monde de jadis perdu mais retrouvé à chaque nouvelle séance. Chaque plongée dans le bain du hammam est une replongée dans l'enfance. Phantasmes d'enfance, évocations du passé, aspirations, désirs, tout se mêle dans ces vapeurs froides et chaudes qui apaisent le corps et excitent l'esprit. Innombrable hammam, lieu hanté de tant de souvenirs, de tant de scènes, de tant de visions mêlées où la mère et ses sœurs, les charmantes cousines, les énigmatiques voisines composent ce bouquet onirique de la féminité que chaque homme porte en soi. (La sexualité en Islam 209)

For Bouhdiba, as in Halfaouine, the haunting of the hammam thus involves a resurrection of childhood memories as well as the feminine world of boyhood. The return to the hammam is a return to the source/spring of the mother's body. On the one hand, Bouhdiba acknowledges that his resurrection of the feminine affects adult male subjectivity, since every man carries within him "ce bouquet onirique de la féminité" represented by childhood memories of the feminine. On the other, Bouhdiba keeps the danger of memories of the feminine under control by situating them in a heterosexual relation to the male subject. The male subject almost desires the women in his memories ("les charmantes cousines, les énigmatiques voisines") as Noura does in the film.¹⁶

The inclusion of a childhood narrative in Qui se souvient de la mer (a narrative of revolution) suggests that, rather than detracting from collective political concerns in favor of more personal ones as a certain nationalist criticism has suggested, childhood narratives

¹⁶In fact, Bouhdiba later argues that this memory of heterosexual desire explains homosexual activities between adult men in the hammam. According to him, these activities occur because men project their memories of heterosexual desire within the women's hammam onto the men's hammam. Homosexual activities are thereby explained as an inferior substitute for heterosexual fulfillment.

can be an integral part of narratives of revolution. The childhood narrative in Qui se souvient de la mer is thus inseparable from the demise of the narrator's masculinity carried out by his wife, the urban guerrilla, as her explosions spread into their conjugal bed. The resurrection of childhood, like the fires of Nafissa and her bombs, does irreparable damage to his being as a "real" man.

**Dib, Djebbar, and Memmi: Childhood and National Origins,
Childhood and Revolution**

In La statue de sel, what I have called the joy of castration also plays a political role in the novel's narrative economy. The novel is the Bildungsroman of a Jewish Tunisian on the way to assimilation of French culture through various educational opportunities. As such, it has often been read as an account of the alienation of the assimilé or évolué as they were often called in French colonial discourse. He discovers, however, that in spite of the promise of total assimilation offered by the French civilizing mission to an elite from the colonized peoples, the promise that anyone, regardless of their origins, could become as French as the French by assimilating French language and culture, total assimilation is always out of reach. Mordekhai's disillusionment with Europe comes abruptly and violently in the face of pogroms, labor camps, and deportation, under Nazi occupied Tunisia, often with French complicity. In spite of all his attempts to separate himself from the "Orient," he finds himself in an impossible double bind. Yet, when read carefully, La statue de sel seems to undo this familiar narrative of the impossible double bind of the colonized person in order to offer a way out of the either/or choice between pure tradition and a modernity equated with accepting the colonizer's culture. Told in the context of an examination in the French colonial school system,¹⁷ Mordekhai's childhood narrative comes at a time when he rejects the possibility of assimilation into French culture by refusing to complete the exam. Going back to childhood is thus going back to a time prior

¹⁷Samia Mehrez writes, "The entire text of La statue de sel is presented to the reader as a lengthy, seven-hour, written answer to an examination question..." ("The Subversive Politics of Radical Bilingualism" 265). Most people could not write a novel of hundreds of pages in seven hours. It is unclear whether the narrator actually writes the narrative within the novel or rather experiences it as a flashback.

to alienation, going back to roots in the native land. But at the roots of an anti-colonial national identity, Memmi uncovers a model of masculinity incompatible with official version of Nation and national identity with their prescriptions of sexual normativity. He repeats the often-rehearsed nationalist narrative of return to roots with alterations: he finds roots for Jewish identity in Africa, he finds Jewish roots for a Tunisian national identity, he allows the personal to represent the political, and at the origin of masculinity, he rewrites the fear of castration as a jouissance.

La statue de sel has often been read as an account of the alienation of the assimilé or évolué as they were often called in French colonial discourse. Such is the account of Isaac Yétiv in Le thème de l'aliénation dans le roman maghrébin d'expression française: "Dans La Statue de sel, roman d'Albert Memmi, le héros offre un exemple typique de la situation du Juif intellectuel de Tunisie des années 40..." (41). Yétiv characterizes Memmi as an "aliéné au troisième degré" (145–59). Memmi represents an example of triple alienation because of his status as a Maghrebian Jewish intellectual:

Pour le groupe d'intellectuels juifs du Maghreb, la situation est encore plus complexe car si l'évolué arabe est tiraillé entre deux cultures, entre deux forces de sens contraires, son homologue juif est soumis à une triple tension: étant né et ayant grandi dans un pays à majorité arabe, il en a subi l'influence, épousé certains traits de caractère, acquis certaines habitudes. Cependant, il est resté étranger à la culture arabe, le judaïsme de son enfance le satisfaisant pleinement.... (41)

According to Yétiv, the Jewish intellectual is more alienated than the Arab intellectual because s/he is already removed from Arab culture before colonial education and then becomes further removed from both Arab and Jewish culture through education in and through French culture. Memmi describes a similar dynamics of alienation in Portrait du colonisé:

Pour beaucoup d'entre nous, qui refusions le visage de l'Europe en colonie, il ne s'agissait nullement de refuser l'Europe tout entière. Nous souhaitions seulement qu'elle reconnaisse nos droits, comme nous étions prêts à accepter nos devoirs, comme le plus souvent nous avions déjà payé. Nous souhaitions, en somme, un simple aménagement de notre situation et de nos relations avec l'Europe. A notre étonnement douloureux, nous avons découvert lentement, constaté qu'un tel espoir était illusoire. ...[C]et aménagement ne pouvait avoir lieu parce qu'il était impossible. La colonisation contemporaine portait en elle-même sa propre contradiction, qui tôt ou tard devait la faire mourir. (157–58)

Having accepted French culture, the colonized intellectual realizes this acceptance is far from being mutual.

La statue de sel, at one level, describes such an alienation. The narrator at first chooses French culture over that of his homeland: "...[J]'ai choisi vigoureusement la culture occidentale et je me moque de la Barbarie" (357). He discovers, however, that in spite of the promise of total assimilation that the French civilizing mission offers to an elite from the colonized peoples, the promise that anyone, regardless of their origins, could become as French as the French by assimilating the French language and culture, total assimilation is always out of reach: "J'avais refusé l'Orient et l'Occident me refusait" (352-53). In spite of all his attempts to separate himself from the "Orient," he finds himself in an impossible double bind:

Moi je suis mal à l'aise dans mon pays natal et n'en connais pas d'autre, ma culture est d'emprunt et ma langue maternelle infirme, je n'ai plus de croyances, de religion, de traditions et j'ai honte de ce qui en eux résiste au fond de moi. Pour essayer d'expliquer ce que je suis, il me faudrait un auditoire intelligent et du temps: je suis de culture française mais Tunisien. ...[J]e suis Tunisien mais juif, c'est-à-dire politiquement, socialement exclu, parlant la langue du pays avec un accent particulier, mal accordé passionnellement à ce qui émeut les musulmans;

juif mais ayant rompu avec la religion juive et le ghetto, ignorant de la culture juive et détestant la bourgeoisie inauthentique; je suis pauvre enfin et j'ai ardemment désiré en finir avec la pauvreté, mais j'ai refusé de faire ce qu'il fallait. (364).

In attempting assimilation, he has abjected the "Orient" of his birth. But what he is ashamed of still exists in a residual form inside of himself.

Julia Kristeva, in her study of abjection, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, describes a similar dynamic between attraction and repulsion, between separation and connection in the psychic experience of abjection. The abject par excellence is the mother's body, which the subject, especially the male subject, must separate himself from to constitute himself as a separate, independent, and individual subject: "L'abject nous confronte, d'autre part, et cette fois dans notre archéologie personnelle, à nos tentatives les plus anciennes de nous démarquer de l'entité maternelle avant même que d'ex-ister en dehors d'elle grâce à l'autonomie du langage" (20). The "horror" comes from the fact that what he has abjected is also a part of himself. Abjection is the repulsion at something that is partially part of oneself: "Mais puisque cette nourriture n'est pas un 'autre' pour 'moi' qui ne suis que dans leur désir, je m'expulse, je me crache, je m'abjecte dans le même mouvement par lequel 'je' prétends me poser" (10–11). Mordekhaï's relation to the "Orient" is also one of abjection, and it is not surprising that one of the most cited passages of the novel involving this abjection involves the narrator's mother.

One day, Mordekhaï returns home at an unexpected time to find his mother participating in an exorcism ceremony, where she is dancing in a trance-like state. He reacts with disgust towards what he sees as an embodiment of her Oriental "superstitions":

En cette femme qui dansait devant moi, les seins à moitié nus, livrée inconsciente à ces dérèglements magiques, je ne retrouvais rien, je ne comprenais rien. Dans mes livres, la mère était un être plus doux et plus humain que les autres, symbole du dévouement et de l'intelligence intuitive. Comme ses enfants devaient se sentir

reconnaissants et heureux, fiers d'une telle mère! Ma mère, à moi, la voici: Cette loque envoûtée par l'épouvantable musique, par ces musiciens sauvages, envoûtés eux-mêmes par leurs obscures croyances... ma mère, la voici, c'est ma mère... (180)

Thus, a rejection of the "Orient" involves an abjection of the assimilé's Oriental mother. In the above passage, the standard for "good" mothers is found in the narrator's books, which are undoubtedly written in French. Rejecting the Orient to embrace the West therefore means embracing colonial family values. As the Orient he tries to reject is still a part of him, so too, is the mother he abjects: "Elle m'était étrangère, ma mère, étrange partie de moi-même, plongée au sein des continents primitifs. C'est elle pourtant qui m'a enfanté. Quels sombres liens m'enchaînent à ce fantôme, arriverai-je à émerger du gouffre?" (181). His Oriental mother haunts him like a ghost complicating any attempt on the narrator's part to separate himself from her and constitute himself as a fully independent male subject, who would in this context also be assimilated to the culture of the colonizer. The image of the "gouffre" adds a sexual aspect to his psychological conundrum and links this conundrum to his mother's body, which he cannot escape.

The Orient is part of him in another way: his body has been marked as Oriental by circumcision: "Pourrais-je jamais oublier l'Orient alors qu'il est greffé dans ma chair, qu'il me suffit de me toucher pour vérifier sa marque définitive?" (188). Confirming Orientalness would involve a tactile, auto-erotic experience. In an argument with his father, his father implies that rejection of the Orient also involves a rejection of circumcision.¹⁸ Up until this point, I have repeated Memmi's use of the term "Orient." When the narrator states that his mother does not conform to the colonial ideal of motherhood taught in his school books, he hints that the Orient he rejects may be as much a construction of

¹⁸When Mordekhāi maintains that it is hypocritical to claim to obey religious law by not turning off electric lights on the Sabbath, yet at the same time, pay someone else to turn off the lights, his father begins to ask a series of questions. He first implies that Mordekhāi is not Jewish. Mordekhāi answers that he will turn off the lights in his house on the Sabbath, that there is no difference between Jews and Muslims, and that he might marry a non-Jew (164–66). When the father asks, "Je suppose que tu ne circonciras pas tes garçons," Mordekhāi answers, "Je ne sais pas" (166).

colonialist discourse as the "actual" place of his birth. He reveals that the Orient he abjects, like the one Said describes in Orientalism, is an Orient he has also accepted by accepting the idées reçues of its representations as taught in French colonial pedagogy.¹⁹

The narrator's rejection of the Orient also involves a rejection of what constitutes Oriental sex in Western sexologies of the Arab or Muslim world. In one passage, the narrator differentiates his own sexual practices from those of his colleagues:

Jamais je n'avais pu accepter les jeux sexuels des garçons. Je refusai avec mépris et scandale lorsqu'on m'apprit qu'un grand élève s'offrait pour caresser précisément et jusqu'à la jouissance tous ceux qui le désiraient. Mes camarades organisaient ces parties de plaisir collectif dans un terrain vague non loin du lycée. Ils s'alignaient, paraît-il, le dos au mur et Giacomo passait devant chacun, à tour de rôle. Dans la salle des surveillants d'internat, j'étais le seul à refuser de raconter mes aventures, le seul à ne pas évoquer, à ne pas décrire avec complaisance les attributs féminins et masculins, mille fois par jour. Je trouvais cette promiscuité de fort mauvais goût et d'ailleurs je n'avais rien à raconter.
(257-58)

His colleagues would conform to the paradigm of sexuality wherein an active/passive binary is more important than a hetero/homo one. Their (homo)sexual activities in no way threaten male identity and is totally consistent with homosocial bonding. The narrator rejects this paradigm as he seeks a French girlfriend and visits brothels. The use of the "paraît-il" comes in the middle of the description of a collective homosexual pleasure to remind the reader that the narrator was not present; the event is not being told by an eyewitness. At the end of the passage, the narrator reveals another possible motive for distancing himself from such practices: he has none of his own to relate. The possibility of his own jealousy also undermines his attempt to define himself in opposition to "Oriental sex."

¹⁹This colonial pedagogy would thus conform to Bhabha's description of the Nation as pedagogy.

The fact that, when ashamed of his mother's Oriental-ness, he must admit that his abject Orient is also a part of himself, suggests that "Oriental sex" might also be less external to his identity than he leads one to believe. This possibility also comes out during his remembrance of the homosocial performance of circumcision. Both the tramway incident and the Mordekhai's memory of the kouttab consist of homosocial scripts for the performance of masculinity. In the tramway, men delight in participating in a boy's apprenticeship of the defense against castration and emasculation. At the kouttab, boys play/perform a rite of passage along the road to masculinity. Both events elicit, however, a pleasure that cannot be heterosexual. The homosocial performances provoke a homoerotic jouissance. The rupture between the homosocial and the homoerotic seems to dissolve. This lack of a break between the homosocial and the homoerotic is what constitutes many characterizations of "Oriental" sexualities. Though in one part of the novel, the narrator attempts to distinguish himself from his male colleagues for whom male bonding also involves boasting about homosexual activities, in another part, he describes a situation where, similarly, the homosocial does not exclude the homoerotic. Not only does the narrator disclose the jouissance of "playing with boys," but this jouissance come not from an identification with the aggressing actors or participants, but from their "victims." The narrator's libidinal delight comes from an enjoyment of specularity and the threat/promise of castration that Silverman attributes to "male subjectivity at the margins." In the narrative sequence of events, the kouttab episode occurs only several pages after the narrator's discovery of his dancing mother. Just after attempting to abject his mother/Orient and separate himself from them only to find that they are too much a part of him to reject, he reflects on another way the Orient is inscribed on his body through the mark of circumcision. Circumcision, which is supposed to separate him from the feminine, is reread in such a way that actually strengthens his connection to it. In his narration of his past, the narrator disrupts the heterosexual abjection of homosexuality, the masculine abjection of the femininity, and the Western abjection of the Orient.

While La statue de sel has been read as a narrative of alienation, of the double bind of the assimilé who can never be assimilated enough to satisfy the colonizers, the narrator's childhood functions politically within narrative to question the rejections and abjections necessary to be accepted into French culture. These rejections and abjections parallel those necessary for the constitution of the male subject as separate from the feminine and of masculine subjectivity as heterosexual.²⁰ In addition to undercutting the bases of masculinity, the childhood narrative—similarly to a return to roots—also leads to a rejection of assimilation. At the end of the examination that frames the entire childhood narrative, the narrator (unlike the author) refuses to complete and hand in his response and therefore rejects further advancement in careers within the colonial apparatus open to a Tunisian elite. The demise of masculinity in La statue de sel has important implications in the narrative of national identity that the novel constitutes. Memmi thus seems to counter official prescriptions of a single source of the Nation where the Nation's citizens' national identities are firmly rooted. But, rather than uprooting national identity, he extends alternate and multiple roots. In this way, Memmi's model of national identity parallels Edouard Glissant's replacement of a single root with multiple rhizomes, a replacement that allows for a multiplicity of subject positions within the Nation and opposes any attempt to fix a single source of the Nation, of national identity, to legislate a people's roots in a way that could be used to marginalize, exclude, even exterminate those who do not share the roots.

Many specters lurk within Maghrebian literature: "La mer vint me hanter une fois de plus," proclaims Dib's narrator in Qui se souvient de la mer (114), and the sea's haunting also turns out to be "ces souvenirs qui ne me lâchaient pas" (125). As the mother/sea that soothed his childhood returns to haunt his adult masculine present, the revolutionary bombs exploding around him sets fire to his masculinity, and he experiences this burning as a jouissance. His jouissance allows us to read the jouissance experienced by Memmi's

²⁰Rachid, in La répudiation, carries out such an abjection both of femininity (in the character of Céline) and of homosexuality (in the character of his brother Zahir).

narrator when threatened with castration as also resulting from the challenge to masculinity that remembering circumcision (whose memory also returns like a haunting) elicits. As it is often said that the hammam is haunted by djinoun, one can also find other specters inside Halfaouine's hammam: the memory of a boy's childhood that comes back to frighten him with the threat of castration. These masculinities, pursued by the castrating specters of femininity, burn with the fire of Nafissa's bombs.

In Qui se souvient de la mer, Halfaouine, and La statue de sel, bringing back the past to relive it and allow it to haunt the present, offers a way of claiming a national identity while disrupting dominant narratives of national identity that carry out a return to national origins or the Nation's past in ways that exclude or try to homogenize the Nation. These returns to the origins of subjectivity reveal a childhood that contradicts the ideal of male subjectivity and thereby "queers" adult masculinity. Read allegorically, they articulate a national identity that rejects colonization, yet rereads the Nation of colonial discourse to make it queer, a place where the joy of castration and the demise of masculinity are not menaces but are welcomed. Such childhood narratives, then, become allegories of the Queer Nation.

HAUNTINGS: AN EPILOGUE

Many specters lurk within Maghrebian literature, which offers up its secrets and ghosts as keys to its own reading. "La mer vint me hanter une fois de plus," proclaims Dib's narrator in Qui se souvient de la mer (114), and the sea's haunting also turns out to be "ces souvenirs qui ne me lâchaient pas" (125). The mother/sea that soothed his childhood returns to haunt his adult masculine present. As it is often said that the hammam is haunted by djnoun, one can also find other specters inside Halfaouine's hammam: the memory of a boy's childhood that comes back to frighten him with the threat of castration. Sometimes secrets that will not stay hidden produce these hauntings, such as the ghosts of Sindibad's homoerotic friendship in La prière de l'absent. Sindibad's remembering brings these specters out of their hiding place, guarded by the Secret Empire, into nationalist discourse. Likewise, in Ombre sultane, Hajila haunts the public space of the Nation as she circulates veiled in the street. As Nedjma's house overlooks a haunted patio, the Nation (personified by Nedjma) is haunted.

Djnoun also haunt sources of water, as in the image of the source/spring that recurs in several novels. Nedjma bathes at the source of the Nation; along her migrations, Zahra bathes at the source of gender; Shérázade bathes with another woman in a spring; and Isma and Hajila bathe together in the hammam. When the ghosts of Sindibad's past return, a spring gushes forth as an alternate source for national identity. The spring/source of national identity also haunted in Maghrebian rewritings of the Nation. The haunted Nation is challenged by the ghosts of its past, of its secrets, and of those it excludes. Instead of running away from ghosts, the authors studied herein cherish these hauntings, multiply them, and allow them to continue indefinitely. When national identity is haunted, it is insecure about itself. When heterosexual masculinity is haunted, it suffers from a state of destabilizing panic. When the Nation is haunted, the narratives of origin are deconstructed.

Ghosts are present, but they cannot be seen, and like traces, they are uncertain. The haunted Nation must make room for those who are not supposed to be there.

Ghostly Readings

The danger of reading a haunted literature would be to confine ghosts to the pages of literature thereby keeping criticism safe from these phantoms. In refusing to deal with representations of sexual dissidence, marginal sexualities, and gender insubordination in Maghrebian literature or in dealing with them in ways that reinforce marginalization, much criticism in this area has repeated exactly what many authors criticizing official national discourse for doing—confining marginalized citizens to the Nation's closets. Maghrebian novels, however, also offer paradigms of their own reading and a theory of reading Maghrebian literature. When critics follow these paradigms, their criticism should also be haunted by the same ghosts. These challenges, subversions, and hauntings should also infect critical discourse. This study constitutes a narrative of hauntings, a narrative of interpretation or of reading, a theory of reading Maghrebian literature.

Rachid Boudjedra's Les 1001 années de la nostalgie and Leïla Sebbar's Le pédophile et la mamam show that one can read sexuality in Maghrebian literature and nevertheless resist paradigms of sexual tourism within reading. Boudjedra's novel offers examples of both how and how not to read sexuality. He shows that sexual readings can be deployed as a revolutionary force, as the protagonist reads classical Arabic literature to discover strategies in the struggle to oust the foreign filmmakers, who have read the same texts in Orientalizing ways. These strategies are also deployed against a home-grown political elite. The struggle in Les 1001 années is also a struggle between two ways of reading. The sexual revolution of Les 1001 années one to understand the representation of homosexuality in Boudjedra's La répudiation as a political deployment and the revolution in Mohammed Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer as a sexual revolution.

Tahar Ben Jelloun's Moha le fou, Moha le sage adds a theory of writing to the allegories of reading sexuality found in Les 1001 années and Le pédophile et le mamam.

Moha, as a postcolonial writer, speaks his words publicly (like a storyteller) and allows the words of others to speak through him (like a public writer). He says what should remain silent and projects words into the public sphere, and these words, formerly used against the colonizer, are now weapons used against the new elite. Moha le fou, Moha le sage demonstrates the political purpose of postcolonial writing and especially of the public revelation of secrets within postcolonial writing. The unveilings of marginal sexualities in other Maghrebian novels can then be read through Moha as the writer blurting out secrets on the public square.

Boudjedra's La répudiation unveils a particular secret, that of homosexuality. This novel makes the connection between the veil and the closet and connects both coming out and unveiling with political opposition to post-independence elites who have their own history of collaboration with colonial powers. La répudiation makes clear the role of sexualities unveiled by Moha's voice in political critique. Tahar Djaout extends this unveiling of homosexuality to the writing of history. In Les chercheurs d'os, he articulates a paradigm of writing history as digging up bones, which are the political skeletons in the closet of national history. He reveals how history has been written by national powers to cover up the goals of the revolution. In L'invention du désert, the political skeletons of official history also become sexual skeletons. Reclaiming the history of homosexuality parallels reclaiming alternate visions of revolution in which the struggle against colonialism continues against new national elites. Ben Jelloun's La prière de l'absent extends the insights on unveiling marginal sexualities made by Boudjedra and Djaout to the very definition of the Nation. Within a narrative of return to national origins, a sexual coming out corresponds to a political coming out or the revelation of dirty political secrets. These comings out bring about the failure of an official narrative of national identity and propose alternate roots for national identity. In La prière de l'absent, the unveiling of marginal sexuality rewrites the Nation as a heterogeneous space that includes rather than excludes those marginalized because their sexualities fall outside the Nation's family values.

With the paradigms for understanding the political role of unveiling marginal sexualities constructed through a reading of post-independence novels of Boudjedra, Djaout, and Ben Jelloun, one can go back and reread the combat literature of the period leading up to independence. Rereading combat novels through postcolonial literature shows that many of the sexual concerns of postcolonial writers were already present in combat literature. The revolution, at least according to the visions of Maghrebian novelists, was sexual all along. Mohammed Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer shows that a revolution in the sexual sphere can accompany a revolution in the political sphere. As in Les 1001 années, unveiling sexualities once veiled releases an explosion that can be directed at the colonizer. In his vision of the Algerian revolution, the ruin of the colonial state brings about the demise of masculinity. Dib introduces a childhood narrative into his narrative of revolution to show not only that the personal can be political and that going back to childhood through narrative can be compatible with and useful in revolutionary struggle, but also that this childhood narrative contributes to this challenge to masculinity. His use of childhood narrative makes possible my readings of other childhood narratives. Kateb Yacine's Nedjma represents the classic paradigm for narrating a return to national origins in the writing of national history in the case of Algeria. Nedjma, however, also presents the paradigm for the deconstruction of such a narrative. Nedjma, as a product of métissage or sexual impurity and a sexually liberated woman, sets off that deconstruction. For the return to origins to succeed, Nedjma must be veiled. Official narratives of return thus depend on the seclusion of women. Feminist writers will rewrite national origins or roots by unveiling what the official version veils.

Ben Jelloun's L'enfant de sable and its sequel, La nuit sacrée, make clear the parallel between the narration of Nation and the narration of gender. Both narratives depend on roots, and at the root of both narratives, one finds a violence that must be forgotten before the narrative can work. The narrative aspects of Nation and gender must be forgotten for the narratives to be effective. These two novels also point out that national identity and

gender are embodied through imperfect performances of perfect ideals. In the split between the ideal and the imperfect day-to-day manifestations of an abstract perfection, Ben Jelloun offers a model of widening the split to change not only the performance, but also the script. For in this case, the ideal is not an unchanging essence, but its existence depends on its continual enactment.

Assia Djebar's L'amour, la fantasia, like Qui se souvient de la mer, combines a narrative of childhood with narratives of revolution. Autobiography represents a return to personal origins that parallels returns to national origins. At the root of many narratives of the journey to womanhood lies seclusion, veiling, and compulsory marriage. In Djebar's autobiography, however, a girl escapes this confinement. At the origin of Djebar's feminist Nation, in both autobiography and history, Woman is unveiled. When deployed in national struggle, this feminist version of national identity is nonetheless just as effective if not more effective than the more misogynist one. Djebar's Ombre sultane narrates the story of a literal unveiling. Djebar concretizes what many male writers describe only figuratively and writes compulsory heterosexuality out of official prescriptions for what good citizens should be doing in bed. Women can find a space for resistance by going back to alternative origins. Leïla Sebbar's Shérázade trilogy articulates a paradigm for feminist roots of postcolonial subjectivity. Sebbar demonstrates that roots can be planted in spite of migrations, hybridity, métissage, and diaspora. She combines self-defense, active resistance, guerrilla tactics, and a more subtle technique of rewriting through parody, the scripts of gender and compulsory heterosexuality written by men and French stereotypes of the "Oriental."

As Ben Jelloun writes the narrative of becoming a woman in L'enfant de sable and La nuit sacrée, male childhood narratives recount the story of becoming a man. In both cases there is a violence at the origin of gender. Many male writers unveil this violence and resurrect it to bring about the demise of masculinity. Férid Boughedir's Halfaouine makes the association between circumcision and expulsion from the women's hammam and

associates reliving circumcision through memory with castration. Becoming a man is traumatic; reliving the trauma creates the desire not to be a man. Albert Memmi's La statue de sel shows that this trauma can be remembered with pleasure, that the loss of masculinity can be used to envision rewriting male subjectivities without the privileges they usually entail, privileges that exist at the expense of women and marginalized sexualities. When earlier childhood narratives are read through Djébar's L'amour, la fantasia and Dib's Qui se souvient de la mer, this demise of masculinity finds a revolutionary purpose in the definition of national identity. When read as national allegories, these narratives offer origins of the Nation where boys are not men and do not want to be and where marginalized male subjectivity is at the root of the Nation.

Within the paradigms I have outlined here, much work remains to be done. Other childhood narratives such as Mohammed Dib's La grande maison, Mouloud Feraoun's Le fils du pauvre, Mouloud Mammeri's La colline oubliée (which contains representations of homoerotic desire), and Driss Chraïbi's Le passé simple (which contains several mentions of pederasty) can now be read as national allegories that allegorize the Nation as queer. Abdelhak Serhane's Messaouda and Les enfants des rues étroites, both of which contain descriptions of homosexual sex, as well as other "perversions," could also be read along these lines. Though I have extensively studied several novels of Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun, many I have not mentioned are also very rich in their articulations of sexual desire. Ben Jelloun's Harrouda describes the perverse fantasies of boys, and his Les yeux baissés deals with lesbian desire. Boudjedra's Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée describes the reactions to sexual advertisements of an Algerian immigrant lost in the Parisian metro. His L'escargot entêté describes an Algerian functionary's obsession with the hermaphroditic sexuality of snails. Of Boudjedra's novels written first in Arabic, La pluie contains a lesbian character (which does not exist in the Arabic version¹), La macération contains the representation of sodomy, and Le démantèlement contains a very

¹Farida Abu-Haibar, "Striking a Balance: The Bilingual Novels of Rachid Boudjedra."

complex character who is a homosexual gynecologist and the "[p]oème célèbre pour être le plus obscène de la littérature arabe" (211). Rachid Mimouni's Le fleuve détourné offers a page-long description of the advantages and disadvantages of sexual intercourse with various animals (39–40) as well as male prostitution and numerous obscenities.

The novels of writers such as Abdelkebir Khatibi, Nabil Farès, and Mohammed Kaïr-Eddine, whose novels I have not examined at all, may provide other insights or even contest some of my findings. The works of less known women writers will have to be studied to determine whether their exclusion from the Maghrebian "cannon" is justifiable. Less traditionally narrative novels by Abdelwahab Meddeb, Edmond Amran El Maleh, and Nina Bouraoui will offer interesting insights as to whether the extreme breakdown of narrative also results in a further fragmentation of national and sexual identities. Finally, studying the role of sexuality in other literary genres such as theater and poetry will determine whether my findings are limited to the novel as a genre.

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